

## REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

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1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE 5 June 1998	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Implications of Threat Perceptions on Security Cooperation in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations		5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) LCDR Steven C. Cade, USN			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-G Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-1352		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES			
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.		12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A	
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) This paper investigates the impact of national threat perceptions on security cooperation within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The research includes a review of alliance theory and a study of security regimes which have historically influenced cooperation in Southeast Asia, namely the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), the Five Power Defense Arrangement (FPDA), and security initiatives of ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).  Using case studies on the key states of Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam, a comparative analysis identified the following common threat perceptions: security of the maritime zones; contributions by external forces to internal instability; regional disputes impinging on the sovereignty of one or more of the ASEAN states; and uncertainty over China's interests in Southeast Asia. As an organization of small states not having a significant security guarantor, ASEAN must consider improvements in cooperative security without antagonizing China. An acceptable option for ASEAN is to pursue new increased military cooperation in response to non-state-sponsored threats, such as piracy or natural disaster. This would enhance ASEAN's capability to defend against less benign state-sponsored threats while maintaining conditions favorable to diplomacy and regional stability in Southeast Asia.			
14. SUBJECT TERMS ASEAN, ASEAN Regional Forum, ARF, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, China, India, Threat, Threat Perception, FPDA, SEATO, alliance, security, security cooperation, maritime security, Asia, Southeast Asia, multilateral.		15. NUMBER OF PAGES 149	
		16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UL

19980731 066

**IMPLICATIONS OF THREAT PERCEPTIONS ON SECURITY COOPERATION IN  
THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS**

**A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree**

**MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE  
(STRATEGIST)**

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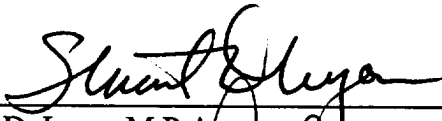
MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE


THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

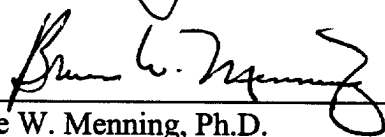
Name of Candidate: LCDR Steven C. Cade, USN

Thesis Title: Implications of Threat Perceptions on Security Cooperation in  
the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

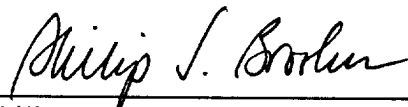
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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

IMPLICATIONS OF THREAT PERCEPTIONS ON SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS, by LCDR Steven C. Cade, USN, 149 pages.

This paper investigates the impact of national threat perceptions on security cooperation within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The research includes a review of alliance theory and a study of security regimes which have historically influenced cooperation in Southeast Asia, namely the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), the Five Power Defense Arrangement (FPDA), and security initiatives of ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

Using case studies on the key states of Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam, a comparative analysis identified the following common threat perceptions: security of the maritime zones; contributions by external forces to internal instability; regional disputes impinging on the sovereignty of one or more of the ASEAN states; and uncertainty over China's interests in Southeast Asia. As an organization of small states not having a significant security guarantor, ASEAN must consider improvements in cooperative security without antagonizing China. An acceptable option for ASEAN is to pursue increased military cooperation in response to non-state-sponsored threats, such as piracy or natural disaster. This would enhance ASEAN's capability to defend against less benign state-sponsored threats while maintaining conditions favorable to diplomacy and regional stability in Southeast Asia.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABRI	Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia (Indonesian Armed Forces)
AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Area
AIJV	ASEAN Industrial Joint Venture
AIP	ASEAN Industrial Project
AMDA	Anglo-Malaysian Defence Agreement
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
CPT	Communist Party of Thailand
CPV	Communist Party of Vietnam
CSCAP	Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
E-IMET	Expanded International Military Education and Training
FPDA	Five Power Defense Arrangement
JMSDF	Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force
KOSTRAD	Army Strategic Command of Indonesia
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OPHC	Offshore Patrol Helicopter Carrier
PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party)

PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLA(N)	People's Liberation Army (Navy)
PRC	People's Republic of China
SEANWFZ	Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SLOC	Sea Lines of Communication
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
UNCLOS	United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea
WPNS	Western Pacific Naval Symposium
ZOPFAN	Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of threat perceptions on future security cooperation within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The research will consist of a review of the objectives of significant security mechanisms currently in place in ASEAN, a case study development of historical and current trends in the threat perceptions of Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam, and conclusions drawn from a comparative analysis of these case studies.

#### Problem Statement

Collectively, the members of ASEAN have enjoyed tremendous social and economic success in its first thirty years of existence. Formed out of a desire for non-aligned social and economic cooperation among Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, ASEAN formally declared responsibility in August 1967 for Southeast Asia's future stability and prosperity.<sup>1</sup> Today the organization can claim significant gains in standards of living and economic development among its membership, which has now expanded to include Brunei, Burma, Laos, and Vietnam. It has achieved success through consensus, despite the notable differences in government systems among the member nations.

Many of ASEAN's accomplishments can be attributed to slow but steady progress in political, social, and cultural exchanges and dialogue between members. On the other



hand, much more significant progress, especially economic, can be attributed to individual policies of ASEAN members.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the most important common denominator in ensuring collective and individual prosperity has been regional stability, brokered by mutual cooperation and understanding of the security initiatives within ASEAN.

A credible threat or perception of threat common among the nations of ASEAN may be the critical unifying element of future security cooperation in Southeast Asia. In Europe, the shared economic and political goals and similar Western values that facilitated a strong partnership against a Soviet threat have helped maintain cohesion amidst NATO's post-Cold War expansion and an uncertain security environment.<sup>3</sup> However, the nations of ASEAN have long held disparate interests, and since the fall of the Soviet Union could be seen as even more reluctant to pursue a formal multilateral defense commitment. Nevertheless, the prosperity of the ASEAN nations and the absence of a well-defined threat à la Cold War does not warrant regional complacency in managing disputes, including considerations of a future security alliance.<sup>4</sup> As ASEAN expands and faces more difficult security challenges, conflicting views over threats to security could lead to dissension over such issues as international defense and security agreements, bilateral and multilateral military activities, and military modernization programs, becoming impediments to ASEAN collective security. As Walt points out, the endurance of a cooperative security framework such as an alliance of nations is dependent on common perceptions among the nations of threats to security.<sup>5</sup>

Hence the purpose of this research: to examine threat perceptions within ASEAN and their impact on security cooperation. Included in the research is an investigation of the role of threat perceptions in international affairs and the historical basis for formation of cooperative security organizations in ASEAN. This is an important step to support the analysis of threat perceptions in ASEAN characterized by the strategic interests and international foreign policy of key member nations. Specifically, this work seeks to answer the following primary and supporting research questions:

1. What is the role of threat perceptions in establishing collective security arrangements?
2. What are the perceived threats to security among key members of ASEAN?
3. Will conflicting threat perceptions prevent development of ASEAN security cooperation?
4. How will differences in threat perceptions affect future security cooperation measures within ASEAN?

### Background of Problem

Officially, the formation of ASEAN was not for reasons of collective security or defense against an external threat. Since its establishment, ASEAN has been careful to promote economic progress among its members while maintaining a nonthreatening posture towards its more powerful neighbors in Asia. During the Cold War era the nations of ASEAN shared in common the threat of communism, but limited their response to diplomatic exchanges vice a more formal collective security organization. Only a limited number of nations in Southeast Asia participated in multilateral security

arrangements during this period. Specifically, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), led by the U.S., included the Philippines and Thailand. The Five Power Defense Arrangement (FPDA) included Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United Kingdom.

Notwithstanding this low-profile approach to security issues, throughout its thirty-year history the leaders of ASEAN have recognized and actively supported the notion of intraregional security cooperation and open dialogue as integral to economic, social, and cultural progress. As Donald K. Emmerson writes:

Collective defense was controversial in 1967. . . . The genius of ASEAN's founders lay in the sophistication of their naiveté. They knew full well that they were creating an association for the sake of regional security among its members, yet, they refused to create any military arrangements conducive to that goal. They did this knowing that the views of the five founding states on regional security and how to bring it about, not to mention the founders' affiliations to powerful outsiders, were disparate enough to doom any effort to establish or even to anticipate establishing ASEAN as a military alliance. . . . The way to foster the long-run security of the ASEAN area in 1967 was to divert the attention of member countries to constructive domestic tasks, notably, economic development.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, as early as 1971 the ASEAN foreign ministers formally recognized regional security as a common concern in their declaration of Southeast Asia as a Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN).<sup>7</sup> The 1976 "Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia" set forth a more explicit underlining of the significance of security within the organization.<sup>8</sup>

By the end of 1991, three substantial factors combined to cause ASEAN to shift its priorities and rethink its policies on multilateral security: the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union, a recognition by ASEAN of the rapid development of

China's economic power, and the U.S. decision to withdraw from its military bases in the Philippines. In January 1992, the ASEAN heads of government summit meeting resulted in the conceptual development of a multilateral security dialogue. It would include "consultative partners" of ASEAN and later be formally designated the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) at the July 1993 Annual Ministerial Meeting. The consultative partners included Australia, Canada, China, the European Community, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Korea, and the U.S., emphasizing from the start the important role these powers played in contributions to regional security.<sup>9</sup>

Like its parent organization's diplomatic support for economic, cultural, and social progress, the ARF has advanced a consensual approach to security. Its focus is centered on maintaining an open dialogue on security issues as opposed to forming a collective security arrangement. It remains to be seen whether the ARF can achieve substantive progress in resolving significant security problems such as conflict prevention or resolution. Reviews of ARF initial proceedings have characterized them as informally structured and tentative in progress. The results of the first meeting of the ARF in July 1994, in which participants agreed on "further study" of confidence building measures and security cooperation, reflected this unhurried approach.<sup>10</sup> In the meantime, the challenges to regional security only promise to become more complex. India is rapidly approaching long term rival China in size of population, increasing the strain on the region's resources and raising the potential for Sino-Indian-ASEAN economic competition. Even more pressing for Southeast Asia are the uncertainties related to

China's defense modernization and claims in the South China Sea, both of which continue to support fears of regional hegemony.

Issues internal to ASEAN combined with these external influences and others will pose difficult problems to resolve in a multilateral forum. Increased defense spending, even though generally regarded as keeping pace with the growing economies of ASEAN, have brought forth concerns of an arms race in Southeast Asia. Vietnam's entry into ASEAN in 1995 and Burma and Laos in 1997 have introduced a greater level of economic and political disparity to the organization. As U.S. Secretary of State Albright remarked in her address to the July 1997 meeting of the ARF, "The admission of Burma presents a challenge: to avoid the possibility of a chasm within ASEAN, between one part that is open, integrated and prospering, and another that is closed, isolated and poor."<sup>11</sup> The Cambodian coup of 1997 and potential ASEAN leadership changes in the future decade add additional questions to regional stability and security.

Since its inception, the ARF has successfully negotiated the initial steps toward developing regional trust and understanding of political-military views of individual nations and promoting improved multilateral ties. The past two meetings of the ARF, on 23 July 1996 at Jakarta, Indonesia and 27 July 1997 at Subang Jaya, Malaysia, have made strong progress in developing confidence building measures in support of disaster relief, search and rescue, and peacekeeping operations and in improving military transparency through information sharing and personnel exchanges. Recognizing the positive effect on regional security of more global initiatives, the ARF also endorsed participation in the United Nations (UN) Conventional Arms Registry as a confidence building measure, the

authority of the UN Law of the Sea in assisting with peaceful resolution of disputes such as those in the South China Sea, and support for the establishment of additional nuclear weapons free zones modeled after the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty.<sup>12</sup>

Although the ARF's initial success in security dialogue is encouraging, ASEAN is far from assembling a comprehensive architecture able to resist a significant challenge to security in Southeast Asia. Competing interests of regional powers and the expanding ASEAN membership will make consensus building increasingly difficult and challenge the progress of ARF in productive regional security dialogue. Instead, its "limited objective," as Michael Leifer writes, may be "to improve the climate in which regional relations take place in the hope that bilateral and multilateral problems may be easier to manage."<sup>13</sup> In this vein, Asia will benefit from the ARF as a viable outlet for discussion of regional security concerns. However, it appears unlikely that the ARF will be the proponent for a more formal defense arrangement.

Stepping back from the ARF and viewing current security cooperation within ASEAN as whole, the organization may well be on its way towards a commitment to common defense. Consider Stephen M. Walt's more liberal definition of an alliance as "a formal or informal commitment for security cooperation between two or more states" including "a commitment for mutual military support against some external actor(s) in some specified circumstances." While formal alliances are easily recognizable by the existence of a treaty or some other binding contract, Walt argues that informal alliances may be inferred by "some tangible form of commitment, such as verbal assurances or

joint military exercises.”<sup>14</sup> ASEAN collectively has yet to make the jump to committing military support against an external threat, but on the other hand it has not yet faced circumstances which would necessitate such an action. However, bilateral and limited multilateral defense interactions among the Southeast Asian states are currently in force in some areas, such as mutual support for fisheries protection, combating piracy and other transnational crime, and participation in joint military exercises. These activities and the security dialogue of the ARF have set a precedent for the beginnings of a formal security arrangement in ASEAN. As Malcolm Chalmers notes, a merit of security cooperation in ASEAN has been its utility as “a longer term insurance policy, keeping the alliance option open should a clearer external threat emerge.”<sup>15</sup>

#### Limitations and Assumptions

The vulnerability of nations with limited capabilities to counter an external threat tends to limit public announcement of perceptions of threat. Instead, these nations are more likely to strike a conciliatory tone in the spirit of diplomatic cooperation and preservation of national security interests.<sup>16</sup> This may be especially true of the ASEAN states, whose very association has emphasized political consensus in decision making and restraint in confronting its own members on difficult issues, let alone publicizing views of external threats. Accordingly, documents, such as defense white papers and other national policy statements included in this research to the extent they were available, are limited indicators of threat perception. For these reasons, this research concentrates on evidence of threat perceptions demonstrated indirectly in reporting of government actions

and decisions related to defense issues and in the extensive research on security cooperation in Southeast Asia conducted by regional subject matter experts. The assumption made is that this data is representative of the decisions of the policy-making elite in each nation and that from these resources the author is able to compile an accurate interpretation of national threat perceptions.

### Delimitations

In the interests of examining a manageable amount of research data related to current trends in threat perception and security cooperation in ASEAN, the review of sources focused on the period from 1994 to the present. This period was selected for the following reasons: the period is post-Cold War/post-Desert Storm, events which brought an obvious shift in threat perceptions and security priorities worldwide; it follows the U.S. withdrawal from the Philippines in 1992, at the time considered by many in ASEAN as a significant weakening in security for the region;<sup>17</sup> and it corresponds to the formative years of the ARF. Sources prior to this period were used to establish the historical basis of threat perceptions; in many instances current trends in perceptions directly correlated to historical data.

The author expects threat perceptions of certain nations within ASEAN to convey more influence over regional security cooperation than others. This expectation is based on the following factors: actual or declared threat currently perceived by a nation, such as the Vietnamese concern over Chinese military deployments and claims in the South China Sea; significant variances from the majority of ASEAN in terms of political



ideology or economic capabilities, such as is the case with Burma and Vietnam; historical influence or stature of leadership within the region, such as can be expected from Indonesia; and relative military strength among the members of ASEAN, such as Thailand's defensive capabilities when compared to that of the Philippines or Burma. With these factors in mind, this research was constrained to a study of threat perceptions of Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Brunei, Burma, the Philippines, Singapore, and Laos were omitted from the research because of their relatively limited military force capability coupled with limited expectations of political-military influence over collective security arrangements within ASEAN. This is not to say that these countries do not have a voice in security decisions of ASEAN, only that their circumstances will most likely limit their influence on decisions relating to security cooperation within ASEAN and the ARF. Recognizing that Cambodia's membership in ASEAN is all but a certain conclusion, it too has been omitted from the research for the same reasoning. A cursory review of threat perceptions in Malaysia revealed several similarities to those security concerns faced by Indonesia and, to a lesser extent, Thailand. Malaysia has thus been left out of this research and a sharper focus devoted to the threat perceptions of Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam.

### Definitions

The following are definitions of terms integral to this research.

External Powers. External powers include the regional powers plus all other nations having significant interests in Southeast Asia and having the political, economic,

or military means to exert influence over international relations in Southeast Asia. As an example, the U.S. is considered an external power under this definition. The impact of external powers on threat perceptions in ASEAN are considered by exception only; if an external power poses a credible threat to security or generates a significant threat perception then it is included as a consideration in the case studies on threat perceptions.

National Security Strategy Objectives. The goals and objectives for maintaining security of and countering threats to U.S. national interests as set forth in the May 1997 report on the National Security Strategy of the U.S., *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*.

Regional Powers. Regional powers are those nations in Asia, but apart from ASEAN, which individually have the political, economic, or military means to exert considerable influence over international relations within Southeast Asia. For the purposes of this research, the following countries are considered regional powers: Australia, China, India, Japan, Russia, and South Korea. Of these six nations, there was no evidence suggesting that Russia, South Korea, or Australia generated significant threat perceptions within Indonesia, Thailand, or Vietnam, currently or in the foreseeable future. By default, therefore, the regional powers considered in the threat perception case studies nominally include China, India, and Japan.

Regional Stability. An environment characterized by regional economic, social, and cultural prosperity, close international cooperation, and peaceful coexistence among the nations of Southeast Asia.

Security Cooperation. Activities, exchanges, and agreements between nations that serve to develop or enhance a nation's military capabilities or contribute to preparation of a nation's armed forces for military operations. It includes treaties or formal agreements related to mutual defense, sales of military equipment, military basing or access rights, and confidence building measures such as bilateral and multilateral military training, exercises, or operations, unit and personnel exchanges, and seminars, symposia, or conferences whose primary objective is to advance such activities.

Threat. An action or potential action or sanction taken by a nation for the purposes of coercion of another nation. Klaus Knorr maintains that the action may be "economic, ideological, or politically subversive," but that the military threat is most effective in achieving coercion. Threats include statements of threat or threats inferred based on actions taken, which are referred to as "actual" threats by Knorr. Threats may also include "potential" threats, based on the capability of a nation to make an "actual" threat.<sup>18</sup> This study concentrates on military threats in analyzing perceptions. Barring a significant influence on military threats and threat response, the economic, ideological, or political aspects of threat perception have not been included in this research.

Threat Perception. The definition for this study is one proposed by Raymond Cohen: "An anticipation on the part of an observer, the decision-maker, of impending harm--usually of a military, strategic, or economic kind--to the state."<sup>19</sup>

### Significance of the Study

U.S. national security strategy objectives in Asia focus on sustaining strong regional economic growth, in turn stimulating economic prosperity at home. The foundation for the success of this strategy is regional stability, supported by America's continued military presence in Asia and involvement in regional security dialogues such as the ARF. Specifically for Southeast Asia, U.S. strategy calls for "security and economic relationships that assist in conflict prevention and resolution," emphasizing the importance of regional stability to the prosperity of ASEAN.<sup>20</sup>

While the ability of ASEAN and the ARF to manage future security challenges in a multilateral format is uncertain, bilateral security cooperation between ASEAN and the U.S. will remain a critical factor in maintaining regional stability. The U.S. has an active program of military activities supporting cooperative engagement in the region. These activities, including military exercises, port visits, exchange programs, and discussions between senior military leaders, serve to build transparency in U.S. military presence and support potential coalition operations. Coupled with more formal security assistance and mutual defense agreements, they complement the efforts of the ARF and are vital enhancements to regional security.

It is unclear how intraregional security cooperation in Southeast Asia will complement U.S. support for regional stability. The author has undertaken this research into regional threat perceptions in the interest of improving understanding of potential security cooperation measures that may be pursued by ASEAN. A better understanding of ASEAN threat perceptions and their impact on bilateral and multilateral security co-

operation will assist defense planners in refining objectives of U.S. security cooperation programs and reinforce a coherent approach to U.S. relations with ASEAN.

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<sup>1</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations, "The ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration, 1967)," in *Understanding ASEAN*, ed. Alison Broinowski (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 270-272.

<sup>2</sup> Tim Huxley, *Insecurity in the ASEAN Region* (Whitehall, London: Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, 1993), 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> Karl W. Eikenberry, "China's Challenge to Asia-Pacific Regional Stability," in *Southeast Asian Security in the New Millenium*, ed. Richard J. Ellings and Sheldon W. Simon (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe for The National Bureau of Asian Research, 1996), 89.

<sup>4</sup> Hans H. Indorf, *Strategies for Small State Survival* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Strategic and International Studies, 1985), 8-9.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "Why Alliances Endure or Collapse," *Survival* 39, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 158-159.

<sup>6</sup> Donald K. Emmerson, "From Confrontation to Cooperation in Southeast Asia: Lessons and Prospects," in *The Future of the Pacific Rim: Scenarios for Regional Cooperation*, ed. Barbara K. Bundy, Stephen D. Burns, and Kimberly V. Weichel. (New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1994), 162.

<sup>7</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations, "Kuala Lumpur Declaration (ZOPFAN Declaration, 1971)," in *Understanding ASEAN*, ed. Alison Broinowski (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 294-296.

<sup>8</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations, "Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (1976)," in *Understanding ASEAN*, ed. Alison Broinowski (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 273-277.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Leifer, *The ASEAN Regional Forum* (London: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1996), 7-8, 22.

<sup>10</sup> James L. Lacy, *Stonework or Sandcastle? Asia's Regional Security Forum* (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, July 1995), S-1, 19.

<sup>11</sup> M. K. Albright, *Statement to the ASEAN Regional Forum: 27 July 1997*, [document on-line] (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State Homepage, 1997, accessed 28 August 1997); available from <http://secretary.state.gov/www/statements/970727.html>; Internet.

<sup>12</sup> See *Chairman's Statement, the Third Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum: Jakarta, 23 July 1996* [document on-line] (Jakarta, Indonesia: ASEAN Web Homepage, 1996, accessed 5 November 1997); available from <http://www.asean.or.id>; Internet; and *Chairman's Statement, the Fourth Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum: Subang Jaya, 27 July 1997* [document on-line] (Jakarta, Indonesia: ASEAN Web Homepage, 1997, accessed 5 November 1997); available from <http://www.asean.or.id>; Internet.

<sup>13</sup> Leifer, 59.

<sup>14</sup> Walt, 157.

<sup>15</sup> Malcolm Chalmers, *Confidence-Building in South-East Asia* (Oxford: Westview Press for Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, 1996), 35.

<sup>16</sup> Indorf, 32-33, 38-39.

<sup>17</sup> Lyall Breckon, *The Security Environment in Southeast Asia and Australia, 1995-2010* (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, 1995), 2.

<sup>18</sup> Klaus Knorr, "Threat Perception," in *Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems*, ed. Klaus Knorr (Lawrence, KS: The University Press of Kansas for the National Security Education Program, 1976), 78.

<sup>19</sup> Raymond Cohen, *Threat Perception in International Crisis* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 4.

<sup>20</sup> *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1997), 23-24.

## CHAPTER 2

### BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT

The political and economic success of ASEAN has provided the impetus for a significant number of published works examining the organization and the region. Much of the older literature, such as Simon's *The ASEAN States and Regional Security* (1982) and Palmer and Reckford's *Building ASEAN* (1987), provide well-developed documentation on a broad spectrum of security issues related to ASEAN affairs, touching on domestic concerns, international relations, and most especially, economic growth within the region. Cooperation in regional security, as an important supporting actor in the success and stability of ASEAN, has by no means been ignored in such studies, but the backdrop of bipolar competition between the U.S. and the Soviet Union frequently overshadowed intra-ASEAN security initiatives. Quite appropriately for the times, research on security challenges of the region frequently focused on anticipating the next moves of the superpowers and adjusting to their impact on ASEAN, rather than charting a course for ASEAN to assert itself in a regional conflict management role.

The end of the Cold War brought new uncertainties to the relative security and prosperity enjoyed by the ASEAN states since the formation of the Association. With Russian influence in Southeast Asia no longer a factor and new security priorities contributing to perceptions of U.S. presence in Asia being on the wane, ASEAN suddenly found it had a more significant role to play in regional security. The literature on ASEAN in the 1990s has reflected this shift in focus. More recent monographs have

devoted considerable research to examining the challenges to ASEAN security cooperation and new structures to support resolution of these challenges. Leifer's informative summary of the ASEAN Regional Forum is one example.

It is not clear what form security cooperation will take in ASEAN, whether it be a loosely bound dialogue concentrating on confidence building and sustaining peaceful prosperity or, at the opposite end of the spectrum of intra-ASEAN relations, ultimately developing into a unified alliance as a deterrent to an external aggressor. Threat perceptions are certain to influence cooperative efforts in Southeast Asia regardless of the format. Recent examples of friction in international cooperation include the contentious debate over the admission of Burma into ASEAN (perhaps as a counter to Chinese influence) and long-standing ASEAN concerns over Chinese intentions in the South Chinese Sea.<sup>1</sup>

Surprisingly then, there are very few studies that have focused on threat perceptions in Southeast Asia. Researchers have typically addressed the impact of threat perceptions on a specific security issue as part of a larger study on regional international relations, rather than a study dedicated solely to the influence of perceptions on cooperative security. *ASEAN and the Diplomacy of Accommodation* by Michael Antolik (1990) is an example of this methodology, as are more recent monographs exploring the implications of an expanded ASEAN, such as the Vietnamese perspective of ASEAN dispute management provided by Hoang Anh Tuan.<sup>2</sup> This thesis attempts to supplement those efforts by examining data on current trends in regional threat perceptions and



analyzing its potential favorable and deleterious effects on intra-ASEAN security cooperation.

### Threat Perception Theory

Three works are particularly noteworthy to mention for their contributions to threat perception theory. They include Klaus Knorr's essay on threat perception from his book *Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems* (1976), Raymond Cohen's *Threat Perception in International Crisis* (1979), and *Regional Hegemons: Threat Perception and Strategic Response*, edited by David J. Myers (1991). Knorr's work, from which many of the definitions and terms used in this research was drawn, was especially helpful to understanding the role of threat perceptions in international relations. The method of comparative analysis used by Cohen in his review of historical case studies in threat perception served as a guide to the methodology of this research paper, described in the following chapter. Myers' volume investigates threat perceptions and strategic response to threat perceptions within different "subordinate state systems," regional groupings all characterized by the influence of an aspiring hegemon. The China-Southeast Asia subordinate state system is one of seven examined.<sup>3</sup> His work, and especially the chapter on China-Southeast Asia by Parris H. Chang and Zhiduan Deng,<sup>4</sup> is helpful for its unique interpretation of threat perception theory and historical background of threat perceptions in the ASEAN region.

In addition to supporting the theoretical development of the definitions provided in the first chapter of this paper, Knorr highlights some of the difficulties associated with

research on threat perceptions. An especially important consideration in any analysis of threat perceptions is that it is an imperfect science. Primarily, it is based on estimates of historical and current trends using data which may be fragmentary or contain contradictions; and secondarily, it tries to predict the future, which is an inherently unreliable undertaking.<sup>5</sup> To make matters more difficult, these estimates are not only concerned with actual or potential threats, but also include a consideration of the probability of a threat to manifest itself and the form of that manifestation--"the quality and magnitude of the implied peril."<sup>6</sup> As a result, there are a significant number of variables in threat perception analysis, contributing to the complexity and imperfection of research in this field.

According to Knorr, an even more significant problem in analyzing threat perceptions involves preconceived or expected threats, and a nation's response due to these preconceptions:

The greatest dangers to realistic threat perception do not inhere in the intellectual difficulties resulting from poor evidence and future uncertainty. The perceiver can gain an awareness of these problems and can make allowances for them. The greater danger lies in rigid preconceptions and attitudes of which the perceiver is unaware, or not aware enough. Such predispositions make him desire to see certain things happen, and to make what he wants to do seem justified.<sup>7</sup>

Knorr cites several historical examples where preconceptions have contaminated accurate threat perception, thus surprising a nation-state. Germany's attack of the Soviet Union in 1941 and the 1973 Arab-Israeli War were both cases where predispositions based on prior experience caused the Soviet Union and Israel to disbelieve indicators of an impending attack.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, preconceptions may cause a nation to act more aggressively or

strengthen its position, evoking hostility from its neighbors. This may further increase the threat perceptions of the nation and cause international tensions to spiral out of control.<sup>9</sup> Knorr's work points out the importance to this research paper of a review of the historical basis of threat perceptions in Southeast Asia.

Cohen's research centered on the role of threat perception during times of international crisis since 1870. The six case studies which he selected, based primarily on the availability of historical data and his own familiarity with the nations investigated, included French perceptions of Germany during the "War in Sight" crisis of 1875, Italian perceptions of France during the "Invasion Scare" of July 1889, Russian perceptions of Germany during the "Liman von Sanders Affair" of 1913, British perceptions of Germany during the Prague crisis of March 1939, Polish perceptions of Germany during the "Polish Corridor" crisis of March 1939, and U.S. perceptions of the Soviet Union during the "Turkish Straits" crisis of August 1946. Cohen's analysis basically consisted of three steps: a reconstruction of the historical evidence of threat perceptions; a systematic comparison of the case studies to identify similarities and differences; and formulation of conclusions.<sup>10</sup>

Like portions of Knorr's research, and Ernest R. May's in *Knowing One's Enemies*,<sup>11</sup> Cohen uses a historical development of the case study to help identify the preconceptions of an actor. To aid his research in this area, Cohen devised the following list of six "background factors" to consider in uncovering evidence of threat perceptions:

1. Previous relations between the perceiver of the threat and the source of the threat, including historical as well as recent events;

2. Any previous experience of threat on the part of the perceiver, and other personal characteristics with a bearing on the subject, including such psychological factors as exaggerated anxiety and mistrust, personal attitudes, and philosophical beliefs;
3. The balance of capabilities between the relevant actors, which shall be defined broadly to include diplomatic capabilities, military and economic means, and the help of allies;
4. Structural factors such as the influence of bureaucratic forms and procedures, institutional interests, and contingency planning;
5. The juridical framework (including agreements, international law, and norms of behavior) within which relations between the relevant actors are conducted;
6. The policy and interest of the perceiver in the area or issue in question.<sup>12</sup>

Although Cohen emphasizes the use of primary source data to account for the explicit evidence of threat perceptions, he recognizes the inherent difficulty of this approach due to its limited availability.<sup>13</sup> The goal of Cohen's research, however, was to supplement the existing theoretical body of knowledge related to threat perception. His work did not involve an assessment of potential current or future actions by the states examined, for it was irrelevant to his research objective; in fact, he had the luxury of being able to compare postcrisis history to the data on threat perceptions developed in each of his case studies. This research paper is aimed at more practical results, and likely much more subjective analysis, due to its ambition of forecasting a developing situation in ASEAN. By its currency it is much more limited in availability of primary source data, and relies to a greater degree on other indicators of threat perception. But like Cohen and others who have benefited from the comparative analysis method, its advantage is a subjective appraisal of a complex topic, leading to results which are "plausible and suggestive, rather than definitive."<sup>14</sup>

It is interesting to note the importance that many of the theorists place on evaluating perceptions of threat, vice analysis of actual threats. This reflects the reality of the decision-making process. No decision maker has perfect knowledge when formulating security policy of a state. Instead, it is only as good as the combined knowledge gained from intelligence sources, opinions of subject matter expert advisors, a review of history, and sound judgment of the decision maker. The more resources a leader has at his disposal in determining a threat and formulating a response, the more likely a truer picture of the threat will become evident, and an appropriate policy course of action selected to counter that threat. In Tilman's analysis, the "reality" of a threat may be present, but a decision maker "reacts, behaves, and plans his actions according to perceptions of reality, and two persons may perceive two considerably divergent 'realities.'"<sup>15</sup>

Given that ASEAN is an organization of nations each with its own unique perspective, Tilman's analysis supports a conclusion that a common actual threat to ASEAN may not translate to a common threat response. The courses of action taken by each nation may be widely divergent. Not only do historical predispositions figure into this problem, but differences in government and social structure also are contributing factors. As Myers points out, a threat originating from a state with similar sociopolitical background as the threatened state (Indonesia and Malaysia come to mind) may be "downplayed," while a threat posed by one state on another with considerable sociopolitical differences (such as Vietnam and Thailand) may be viewed as a more significant threat and treated accordingly. Similarly, the personalities in government may

affect threat perception and threat response, with more authoritarian figures less tolerant of states who appear to threaten their interests.<sup>16</sup>

Differences in threat perceptions then, exacerbated by still more differences in threat response of individual nations, seem likely to reduce the chances for agreement within ASEAN on security cooperation measures. The problem would become even more acute should a common threat to ASEAN be portrayed inaccurately. In his review of intelligence assessment in Europe prior to the World Wars, May discovered a related problem associated with the response (or lack of response) of a nation to a perception (or lack of perception) of threat. Outright deception or inaccurate portrayal of reality contributed to the inability of one state to see another state's point of view, which in turn bred uncertainty in planning and policy decisions. The French miscalculations regarding invasion by Germany in 1914 and again in 1940 are two examples of this phenomena.<sup>17</sup> This problem adds to the subjectivity of this paper's conclusions on possible responses to threat perceptions in ASEAN.

#### Alliances and Small States: Theoretical Considerations

In his book *The Origins of Alliances*, Stephen M. Walt reviews the historical record of alliance formation to present a comprehensive description of the role that alliances fill in response to threats to a state. As noted in the first chapter of this paper, Walt argues that alliances are not merely limited to formal treaties or commitments between two states; an alliance may also be inferred from the existence of an "informal arrangement for security cooperation" between states.<sup>18</sup> In response to a threat, states

may choose one of two options in alliance formation: "balancing," whereby states ally themselves against a threat, or "bandwagoning," in which states ally themselves with the threatening state.<sup>19</sup>

Walt's research shows that balancing is far more common than bandwagoning. He also argues for a distinction between two forms of balancing; one is characterized by a balance of power and one a balance of threat. The balance of power theory holds that states ally themselves against a strong state as a reaction to an imbalance of power between states or coalitions of states. The balance of threat theory is a subtle modification of balance of power theory. Its hypothesis is that in order to reduce its vulnerability a coalition of states, even one weaker in aggregate than the power of the threatening state, may form an alliance against the state representing the greatest threat. Walt concludes from his research that balance of threat theory helps to better explain the logic of the formation of alliances, rather than considering alliances only to be a means of achieving a balance of power.

An alliance may become even more viable if a strong power is willing to assume the leadership or otherwise support the organization. The threat response of small states is particularly influenced by alignment with a strong state, for such an arrangement would represent a significant increase in the aggregate strength of an alliance. According to Indorf, however, the benefit to small states of an alliance with a stronger power must be realized through an identification of its strategic aims, preferably using some type of formal agreement:

For small states, the form of association with a stronger power acquires the utmost policy significance. Whatever the final determination is, it needs to be firmly embedded in a larger strategy. Reciprocal legal commitments, beyond the proverbial mutual consultation at times of crisis, can offer the best guarantees. Too often, small states prefer a reliance upon a much more ephemeral relationship based on friendship which would not impinge upon their non-aligned status. In the international arena, however, states can only share interests while friendship should be left as an expression of personal sentiment.<sup>20</sup>

An alliance with a strong power may at once appear to be a certain benefit to a small state. However Indorf also notes that there are negatives associated with such an arrangement, chiefly a reduction in the small state's "manoeuvrability" in executing its sovereignty.<sup>21</sup> This concept perhaps more than any other helps explain ASEAN's commitment to non-alignment and cultural aversion to interference in the internal affairs of its member states.

The formation of an alliance is obviously not the only choice which a state or group of states may take in response to a threat. Myers proposes four "strategic responses" to the threat posed by a regional hegemon: (1) accommodation of the desires of the hegemon; (2) deterrence through defense or alliance formation; (3) state strengthening, including military, political, and economic strengthening; or (4) attempts to alter threatening behavior by making counterthreats.<sup>22</sup> A more comprehensive study of threat response in Southeast Asia would likely reveal that all four elements are at work to some degree within ASEAN. For small states, however, Indorf notes that deterrence of conflict is the strategy of choice and likewise heavily dependent on a clear definition of the threat.<sup>23</sup> It is thus appropriate that this study focus on the impact of threat perceptions



on security cooperation (and, given Walt's definition, potential allying) as a subset of the strategy of deterrence in ASEAN.

Given that ASEAN at present is normally not considered to be an alliance of nations, a logical question remains: Where does ASEAN currently fit in the spectrum of security cooperation? Amitav Acharya provides a reasonable response in his analysis of security trends in Southeast Asia. Briefly, Acharya's work extrapolates to Southeast Asia the concepts developed by Karl Deutsch in his respected study on North Atlantic security, *Political Community in the North Atlantic Area* (1957). Acharya considers three types of "regional security systems" in his research. They include the *security regime*, the *security community*, and the *defence community*, defined as follows:

#### *Security Regime*

- a. 'principles, rules and norms that permit nations to be restrained in their behaviour in the belief that others will reciprocate'.
- b. competitive arms acquisitions and contingency planning usually continue within the regime, although specific regimes might be created to limit the spread of weapons and military capabilities.
- c. the absence of war within the community may be due to short term factors and considerations, such as the economic and political weakness of actors otherwise likely to use force in pursuit of national aims or to the existence of a balance of power or mutual deterrence situation. In either case, the interests of the actors in peace are not fundamental, unambiguous and long-term in nature.

#### *Security Community*

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

### *Defence Community*

- a. a shared perception of external threat(s) by members of the community.
- b. reciprocal obligations of assistance during military contingencies.
- c. significant military inter-operability and integration.<sup>24</sup>

Based on his analysis of the regional order and economic, political, and military interactions, Acharya concludes that the Southeast Asia region is most appropriately labeled as a security regime.<sup>25</sup> ASEAN nonetheless conveys characteristics of both a security regime and security community, and some may even consider its numerous bilateral military exchanges and exercises as evidence of the beginnings of a defence community. The maturation of post-Cold War international relations in Southeast Asia seems likely to support at least a progression toward a more substantial commitment to security cooperation. This may especially be the case should a significant external threat challenge the existent regional security system.

### Previous Research on Threat Perceptions in Southeast Asia

Based on the number and complexity of variables identified by threat perception theorists, it is understandably difficult to conduct a broad based assessment of threat perceptions in ASEAN. As an organization of small states, the ASEAN region poses additional unique problems. Despite the diversity of its member states, ASEAN has underwritten its phenomenal development by a concerted effort to foster unity, respect for state sovereignty, and compromise over international disputes. There exists within ASEAN a cultural avoidance of contentious debate; consequently, members are reluctant to upset a cooperative exchange of dialogue and confidence-building measures by making

irritating public pronouncements of perceived threats. Moreover, cognizant of their relative weakness and drawing on memories of the involvement of external powers in past disputes, ASEAN is sensitive to interpretations by potential aggressors and has sought to reassure its neighbors in the region of its nonhostile intentions.<sup>26</sup> Explicit official statements of threat perceptions would be of little benefit to furthering this process of cooperation.

Explicit data is arguably the most accurate indicator of a nation's threat perceptions; it represents the distilled thoughts of government decision makers.<sup>27</sup> As defined by Cohen, decision makers include "those ministers and officials who participate in the conduct of foreign affairs and have unrestricted access to the relevant information."<sup>28</sup> They are, in a sense, the researcher's primary source in determining a nation's mindset, providing certainty of perceptions by their opinions and personal response to a threat.<sup>29</sup> Such evidence may be historically recorded within a decision maker's personal documents, official memoranda of a government, or other diplomatic papers. While it may offer the most accurate representation of threat perceptions, access to such source material is limited, especially so if it relates to the most recent experiences of a nation.<sup>30</sup>

While not ignoring such primary source data when available, researchers investigating ASEAN threat perceptions have instead relied primarily on evidence supplied through other means. In addition to explicit data derived from the personal response to a threat by decision makers, Cohen postulates three other indicators of threat perception: observations made by non-decision makers (such as government officials or

foreign diplomats) of the decision makers' reactions to a threat; evidence that decision makers are examining "alternative responses" to a threat, especially through consultation with advisors or discussion with foreign governments; and finally, evidence that a decision maker has established some type of "coping process" in response to a threat, such as mobilizing forces, diplomatic negotiations, or strengthening of defenses.<sup>31</sup> (As further amplification of this last indicator, Myers offers up three specific examples of threatening behavior focused on arms considerations: improvements in conventional arms, acquisition or modernization of nuclear arms, and development of an indigenous arms capability.<sup>32</sup>) These indicators form the basis for the most focused studies on ASEAN threat perceptions, those contained in Charles E. Morrison's *Threats to Security in East Asia-Pacific* (1983) and Tilman's study completed in 1984, and more recently examined in a workshop hosted in 1992 by the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii.<sup>33</sup>

*Threats to Security in East Asia-Pacific* is the result of a project sponsored by the Pacific Forum in Honolulu, Hawaii, to promote improved regional cooperation through mutual understanding of national threat perceptions. It was initiated in 1981, when Morrison and Professor Bernard K. Gordon conducted interviews of over three hundred political and academic leaders in the East Asia-Pacific region. In 1982 the Pacific Forum hosted a conference to advance the initial work completed by Morrison and Gordon, inviting the participation of regional experts and government officials. A large number of conference participants were from Southeast Asia, and hence the study's emphasis is on threat perceptions among the ASEAN nations. The chapters which form *Threats to*

*Security in East Asia-Pacific* are the actual papers presented by participants at the 1982 Pacific Forum.<sup>34</sup>

Morrison's volume tackles the analysis of threat perceptions from two angles, with contributors presenting a balance of U.S. and Asian views. First, an investigation of regional perspectives of threat perceptions and their impact on security cooperation was undertaken. Perhaps the most significant documentation of threat perceptions in this section was the data summarized by Gordon and Vasey from their interviews of key leaders in East Asia.<sup>35</sup> Second, national perspectives of threat perceptions are offered by government and academic leaders of ten East-Asian nations, of which two (Indonesia and Thailand) are the focus of my research. The Pacific Forum did not offer any overarching recommendations on security cooperation, other than making a case for the benefits gained by more dialogue between nations.<sup>36</sup> However, it did highlight the various differences in perceptions among the participating nations, achieving its goal of building transparency in the region, and hence is important background to this research project.

As Morrison notes in his overview of the Forum results:

It is clear that dominant perceptions in individual countries in the region show considerable differences. The failure of policymakers on either side of the Pacific to appreciate these differences and devise programs of cooperation that take them into account can compound misunderstandings and prevent or delay needed or desirable forms of collaboration. Bridging these concerns and differences in perception will be a major challenge to both U.S. and Asian policymakers.<sup>37</sup>

In keeping with Cohen's criteria of threat perception indicators, the personal involvement of key leaders and academic subject matter experts lends credibility to the Pacific Forum's efforts. Some of the participants match Cohen's definition of decision

makers; all could be considered qualified observers of the threat perceptions of decision makers in their respective countries. For example, consider the participants from Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. The perspective of Malaysia is provided by Professor Zainal Abidin B. Abdul Wahid, former assistant secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs. Thailand is represented by Deputy Prime Minister Thanat Khoman and Sarasin Viraphol of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and formerly the political officer in Thailand's Beijing embassy. Indonesia's views are presented by Jusuf Wanandi of Jakarta's Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and a leader in Indonesia's ruling political party and M. Hadisoestasro of CSIS.<sup>38</sup>

Not surprisingly for the period, the threat perceptions of the region were particularly focused on the intentions of the Soviet Union and the Chinese toward Southeast Asia. The Kampuchean crisis was ongoing during the period of the study, influencing to a varying degree ASEAN perspectives of Vietnam and the involvement in Indochina of China and the Soviet Union. Here geopolitics came into play, as Thailand considered China an ally in its actions to contain Vietnamese aggression, while other nations, more detached from the conflict, remained skeptical of the Chinese.<sup>39</sup> There was no consensus on the threat posed by China, with some nations doubting that a threat even existed or the nature of such a threat.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, there was agreement on the existence of a Soviet threat, with only the "salience and strength" of the superpower's hegemony being questioned.<sup>41</sup> This uncertainty was no doubt exacerbated by the reversal of recently improved ASEAN-Soviet relations caused by Soviet military and political support for Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea.<sup>42</sup>

A significant number of issues identified as threats at the 1982 Pacific Forum were internal to individual nations of ASEAN, such as challenges to economic development or the threat of communist insurgencies and religious extremism.<sup>43</sup> One example is Abdul Wahid's discussion of potential instability in Malaysia caused by inequality among Malay, Chinese, and Indian ethnic groups.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, Wanandi and Hadisoastro's contributions to the Pacific Forum reflect Indonesia's principal concern for the challenges by separatist movements to national unity.<sup>45</sup> An investigation of internal threats is important to a full understanding of a nation's response to threat perceptions. However, given the considerable number and diversity of perceived internal threats to the nations of Southeast Asia, it is a topic that is better examined in a separate study. This research will concentrate on external threat perceptions and look at internal challenges only as they relate to external relations, such as the influence of Malaysia over Muslim separatist movements in southern Thailand.<sup>46</sup>

In his study on threat perceptions in ASEAN, Robert O. Tilman offers a slightly different approach than that taken by the Pacific Forum. First, he constrained his research to the ASEAN region alone, and did not touch on problems in Northeast Asia, as the Pacific Forum did. Second, while Morrison presents directly the views of key leaders in each country, allowing the reader to draw his own conclusions, Tilman attempts to synthesize from the data conclusions for each nation in ASEAN. Like Gordon and Vasey's method of data collection which initiated the Pacific Forum, Tilman's study draws his analysis from interviews conducted during visits to each of the ASEAN capitals in 1980, speaking primarily to the "observers" of decision makers.<sup>47</sup>

The most significant challenges to security perceived by Tilman's interlocutors of 1980 include the long-term prospects of China and the Soviet Union as threats, Japanese economic influence and potential for rearmament, and perhaps most remarkable, apprehension over U.S. intentions in the region, particularly as they apply to Japan and China. This third concern is threefold and related to the first two. First, it was associated with U.S. support for Japan's rearmament and assumption of a more significant role in its national defense, stirring emotions in Asians who had not forgotten Japanese aggression in World War II. Second, it is partially attributable to perceived inconsistencies in U.S. policy toward China, which at the time was seemingly tied only to containment of the Soviet Union rather than a full-faith attempt to understand and appreciate relations with China. Finally, it is related to the unpredictability of U.S. foreign policy in general due to the process of democracy and the four year presidential election cycle.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to providing a historical perspective of threat perceptions in ASEAN, Tilman's analysis is beneficial to current research because it contributes to an understanding of the "transformation process" by which decision makers arrive at a particular threat perception. When a threatening signal is projected on an actor, the perception of that signal is influenced by the environment of the actor. Tilman identifies five categories of influences, what he terms "dimensions," affecting threat perception: structural, geopolitical, historical, sociocultural, and economic. This paper is not concerned with investigating a nation's internal processing of information as it arrives at a particular threat perception, but rather an analysis of the end result of this transformation process, the effect threat perception on a nation's security activities.



Nonetheless, it is essential to be cognizant of these influences on threat perceptions for they help to validate the evidence.

The “Structural Dimension” refers to the influences exerted by the bureaucracy of the nation perceiving a threat. Upon receipt of a threatening signal, policymakers and advisors to decision makers will interpret and filter that signal based on a consideration of their own interests in the bureaucracy.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps a good example is the case of the military planner who, in hedging his bets to protect against operational failure, recommends a particular threat response that will counter a “worst case” perception of the threat.

The “Geopolitical Dimension” refers to the influence of perceptions based on the physical proximity of a threat. Tilman offers an appropriate description of this effect: “An enemy that is far away, all other things being equal, certainly seems less threatening than one that shares a common land border.”<sup>50</sup>

The “Historical Dimensions” refers to the past experiences of decision makers, institutions, and nations that shape the views of a projected threat. These influences are extremely complex. Due to the variety of variables shaping an individual’s historical perspective, such as how the historical record is portrayed in schools, in media, and on the local streetcorner, it is difficult to quantify or eliminate bias that may arise from such influences.<sup>51</sup>

The “Socio-Cultural Dimension” refers to the influences exerted due to the demographics of a country, such as ethnic, cultural, or religious affiliations.<sup>52</sup> One example of the impact of the socio-cultural dimension in the U.S. is the lobbying efforts

by domestic special interest groups as a means to help shape policy decisions favorable to foreign affiliations of the special interest group. In a similar vein to Tilman's socio-cultural dimension, David J. Myers argues that threatening signals received from states with similar sociopolitical backgrounds will tend to be minimized, while the same signal from a state with dissimilar sociopolitical makeup may be seen as a valid threat.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, the "Economic Dimension" refers to the various influences based on financial transactions between and within nations. It includes the impact of corruption on security policy formulation and the influence stemming from foreign investors, trade imbalances, and the attendant tensions in international relations when one country feels it is being shortchanged in a financial relationship.<sup>54</sup> Other than to recognize the "Economic Dimension" as a factor in the formulation of threat perception, an analysis of perceptions derived from the influence of financial interactions within ASEAN is beyond the scope of this study.

A third study that is especially useful to review as background to current research is the results of the East-West Center Workshop on threat perceptions and the role of major powers conducted in 1992. Like the conference hosted by the Pacific Forum a decade earlier, participants in the East-West Center Workshop represented a mix of academic and government leaders, observers of decision makers, from thirteen nations of the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>55</sup> The United Nations was also represented, reflecting the growing importance of the region in worldwide international affairs. Unlike the 1982 Pacific Forum, the East-West Center Workshop initially attempted to concentrate on military related threat perceptions. However, recognizing the potential for political and

economic threats to incite military confrontation, the workshop discussions expanded to include consideration of these elements of threat perception.<sup>56</sup>

The report by Kreisberg and others of the proceedings of the workshop does not offer a new or unique means of investigating threat perceptions. It is merely an accounting of the views expressed by the participants and an interpretation of those views by its American authors. Its value lies in its summary of more recent perceptions in Asia and its presentation of recommendations for security cooperation derived from improved understanding of regional threat perceptions among the participants.

Briefly, the East-West Center Workshop identified three areas of greatest concern to the region: uncertainty over the future intentions of China and Japan; the potential for regional territorial disputes, especially those in the South China Sea, to become more volatile; and the threat posed by the North Korean regime, the only near-term significant military threat cited by participants.<sup>57</sup> Of note, a perception of disengagement from the region by the U.S. was echoed in the views of workshop participants, expressing the common fear of regional instability should such a move occur.<sup>58</sup> This consensus was also evident in the workshop's call for new programs in security cooperation, with a greater level of U.S. support in setting up a regional security framework built on the success of ASEAN and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) organization.<sup>59</sup> The representative from the Philippines was the only ASEAN member to disagree with this recommendation,<sup>60</sup> not surprising considering the Philippine Senate's rejection of the treaty on U.S. bases one year prior and subsequent withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Philippines in November 1992.

The results of the 1982 Pacific Forum, Tilman's study of 1984, and the 1992 East-West Center Workshop are important for their documentation of ASEAN's previous experiences, and hence essential to an accurate assessment of current threat perception trends and their impact on future security cooperation. As Klaus Knorr points out, history is replete with examples where preconceptions in international relations have detracted from accurate threat perception. This factor contributed to Britain's underestimation of Hitler's intentions at the start of World War II and the U.S. initial disbelief at the Soviet Union's deployment of intermediate-range ballistic missiles to Cuba in 1962.<sup>61</sup> Ernest R. May offers similar proof in his analysis of intelligence assessments prior to both World Wars.<sup>62</sup> As Sun Tzu so succinctly put it, "All warfare is based on deception."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Strategic Survey 1996/97* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1997), 192-194.

<sup>2</sup> Hoang Anh Tuan, "ASEAN Dispute Management: Implications for Vietnam and an Expanded ASEAN," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 18, no. 1 (June 1996): 61-80.

<sup>3</sup> David J. Myers, "Threat Perception and Strategic Response of the Regional Hegemons: A Conceptual Overview," in *Regional Hegemons: Threat Perception and Strategic Response*, ed. David J. Myers (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 4-10.

<sup>4</sup> Parris H. Chang and Zhiduan Deng, "China and Southeast Asia: Overseeing the Regional Balance," in *Regional Hegemons: Threat Perception and Strategic Response*, ed. David J. Myers (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 191-224.

<sup>5</sup> Klaus Knorr, "Threat Perception," in *Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems*, ed. Klaus Knorr (Lawrence, KS: The University Press of Kansas for the National Security Education Program, 1976), 84.

<sup>6</sup> Knorr, 80.

<sup>7</sup> Knorr, 85.

<sup>8</sup> Knorr, 85-89.

<sup>9</sup> Knorr, 92.

<sup>10</sup> Raymond Cohen, *Threat Perception in International Crisis* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 20-22.

<sup>11</sup> Ernest R. May, *Knowing One's Enemies: Intelligence Assessment Before the Two World Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 527-532.

<sup>12</sup> Cohen, 25-26.

<sup>13</sup> Cohen, 21.

<sup>14</sup> Cohen, 26.

<sup>15</sup> Robert O. Tilman, *The Enemy Beyond: External Threat Perceptions in the ASEAN Region* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984), 2.

<sup>16</sup> Myers, 12-13.

<sup>17</sup> May, 538.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 12.

<sup>19</sup> Walt, 17.

<sup>20</sup> Hans H. Indorf, *Strategies for Small State Survival* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Strategic and International Studies, 1985), 29.

<sup>21</sup> Indorf, 29.

<sup>22</sup> Myers, 22-26.

<sup>23</sup> Indorf, 6-7.

<sup>24</sup> Amitav Acharya, "A Regional Security Community in Southeast Asia?" *Journal of Strategic Studies* 18, no.3 (September 1995): 180-181.

<sup>25</sup> Acharya, 191.

<sup>26</sup> Donald K. Emmerson, "From Confrontation to Cooperation in Southeast Asia: Lessons and Prospects," in *The Future of the Pacific Rim: Scenarios for Regional Cooperation*, ed. Barbara K. Bundy, Stephen D. Burns, and Kimberly V. Weichel. (New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1994), 162-163, 169-170.

<sup>27</sup> Cohen, 24.

<sup>28</sup> Cohen, 24.

<sup>29</sup> Cohen, 24.

<sup>30</sup> Cohen, 21.

<sup>31</sup> Cohen, 24.

<sup>32</sup> David J. Myers, "Patterns of Aspiring Hegemon Threat Perception and Strategic Response: Conclusions and Directions for Research," *Regional Hegemons: Threat Perception and Strategic Response*, ed. David J. Myers (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 342.

<sup>33</sup> Paul H. Kreisberg, Daniel Y. Chiu, and Jerome H. Kahan, *Threat Perceptions in Asia and the Role of the Major Powers* (Honolulu, HI: East-West Center, 1993).

<sup>34</sup> Lloyd R. Vasey, foreword to *Threats to Security in East Asia-Pacific*, ed. Charles E. Morrison (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1983), vii.

<sup>35</sup> Bernard K. Gordon and Lloyd R. Vasey, "Security in East Asia-Pacific," in *Threats to Security in East Asia-Pacific*, ed. Charles E. Morrison (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1983), 33.

<sup>36</sup> Charles E. Morrison, ed., *Threats to Security in East Asia-Pacific* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1983), xvi.

<sup>37</sup> Morrison, xix.

<sup>38</sup> Morrison, 219-221.

<sup>39</sup> Morrison, xi-xii.

<sup>40</sup> Morrison, xii.

<sup>41</sup> Morrison, xii.

<sup>42</sup> Allan Gyngell, "Looking Outwards: ASEAN's External Relations," in *Understanding ASEAN*, ed. Alison Broinowski (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 140-141.

<sup>43</sup> Morrison, xiii-xiv.

<sup>44</sup> Zainal Abidin B. Abdul Wahid, "Malaysian Threat Perceptions and Regional Security," in *Threats to Security in East Asia-Pacific*, ed. Charles E. Morrison (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1983), 103-104.

<sup>45</sup> Jusuf Wanandi and M. Hadisoestasro, "Indonesia's Security and Threat Perceptions," in *Threats to Security in East Asia-Pacific*, ed. Charles E. Morrison (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1983), 84-85.

<sup>46</sup> M. Ladd Thomas, "Thailand," in *Asian Security Handbook: An Assessment of Political-Security Issues in the Asia-Pacific Region*, ed. William M. Carpenter and David G. Wiencek (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 240-243.

<sup>47</sup> Tilman, 5-7.

<sup>48</sup> Tilman, 48-50.

<sup>49</sup> Tilman, 3.

<sup>50</sup> Tilman, 3.

<sup>51</sup> Tilman, 4.

<sup>52</sup> Tilman, 4.

<sup>53</sup> Myers, 12-13.

<sup>54</sup> Tilman, 4-5.

<sup>55</sup> Kreisberg, et al., 33-37.

<sup>56</sup> Kreisberg, et al., v.

<sup>57</sup> Kreisberg, et al., 3-8.

<sup>58</sup> Kreisberg, et al., vii.

<sup>59</sup> Kreisberg, et al., 32.

<sup>60</sup> Kreisberg, et al., 25.

<sup>61</sup> Knorr, 88.

<sup>62</sup> May, 503-508.

<sup>63</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (London: Oxford University Press, 1963; Oxford University Press Paperback, 1971), 66.



## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Case Study Comparative Analysis

The methodology for this research is modeled after the “Comparative Analysis Methodology” used by Cohen in his research on threat perception theory. This method involves an examination of a limited number of case studies based on a common “set of questions,”<sup>1</sup> namely the research questions posed in the first chapter. As opposed to the “statistical-correlative” approach, which requires a controlled analysis of a large amount of data and strict accounting of variables, the comparative method is more subjective. It allows for the exclusion of variables while still gaining a scientific analysis of phenomena.<sup>2</sup> Thus, it is particularly suitable to threat perception analysis, due to the limited amount of data on the topic and the complexity of variables involved in the study of international relations.<sup>3</sup>

Fundamental to the process of comparative analysis is the individual case studies. Before moving to an explanation of the development of case studies selected for this research, it may be helpful to review a formal definition of the case method, offered by Yeheskel Dror:

A monographic research method in which a delimited and interrelated set of phenomena--a “case”--is intensively studied. This research method is mainly directed at contributing to systematic knowledge through induction or deduction, direct impression, depth-understanding and comparison.<sup>4</sup>

As previously noted, this paper is constrained to a development of threat perceptions within Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam. Thus each nation represents a “case” for the purposes of the research.

Using the theoretical aspects of threat perception and response as the basis of data analysis, especially Cohen’s threat perception “indicators” and “background factors,” the case study development for each nation consists of two parts. First, a historical review of threat perceptions and previous experience of threat is undertaken to establish preconceptions which may effect current threat perceptions. Second, an investigation of current trends in threat perceptions is conducted by examining recent foreign policy and defense decisions within each nation.

Using a modified version of Cohen’s historical method of comparative analysis, this research incorporates a four step approach to investigating the impact of threat perceptions on security cooperation in ASEAN:

1. Development of the historical context of perceived threats within Southeast Asia by reviewing the reasons for establishment and contributions of regional structures which ostensibly have had the most significant impact on security cooperation in the region. Besides ASEAN, they include the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the primary multilateral dialogue on current security issues in Asia; the Five Power Defense Arrangement (FPDA) between Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United Kingdom; and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). Documents of interest for this part of the study include official policy statements, government documents, and journals covering the historical record of dialogue on security issues

within ASEAN, especially as it applies to the decisions behind the establishment of the ARF and the strategic and security cooperation objectives of ASEAN.

2. Development of the case studies of Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam, to include current trends in threat perceptions and the historical background forming each nation's preconceptions, as described above.
3. Comparison of case study data to assess similarities and differences in threat perceptions between the three nations. The threat perceptions of each country are presented using a similar format for each case study: first, an overview of fundamental threat perceptions and threat response for the country; second, an analysis of the country's perceptions of the external powers; third, an analysis of the country's perceptions of ASEAN and the policies of other member states which significantly influence the country's threat response; and finally, an analysis of the potential impact on security cooperation initiatives.
4. Formulation of conclusions regarding the potential impact of threat perceptions on future security cooperation mechanisms.

#### Evaluating Current Trends in Threat Perceptions

A variety of published, unpublished, and electronic sources were used to obtain and validate data on current trends in threat perceptions of Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam. Particularly helpful was information available through recent editions of publications of the *Janes Information Group* and journals and periodicals related to international relations and defense issues in Southeast Asia. As expected, very little

explicit evidence on external threat perceptions was available from official policy statements or primary source documents. Defense white papers of Indonesia and Thailand were of limited value in providing explicit data on threat perceptions; Vietnam does not publish defense strategy documents for public release, according to U.S. Embassy officials in Hanoi. Hence the requirement in this paper for a subjective analysis of threat perceptions based on evidence inferred from prior research on security and defense policy. To support an analysis of current trends, examples have been gleaned from security cooperation data, such as publicly disclosed international agreements and other significant diplomatic actions and international military exchanges, exercises, and confidence-building measures.

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Cohen, *Threat Perception in International Crisis* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 16-26.

<sup>2</sup> Cohen, 16-18.

<sup>3</sup> Cohen, 19-21.

<sup>4</sup> Yehezkel Dror, "Case Method," in *Dictionary of Political Science*, ed. Joseph Dunner (Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, Adams, and Co., 1970), 80.

## CHAPTER 4

### THREAT PERCEPTIONS AND SECURITY COOPERATION: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

#### Organizational Structures in Southeast Asia and Implications of Threat Perceptions

In order to fully understand the impact of an individual nation's threat perceptions on security policy and future potential cooperation, it is necessary to review some of the characteristics and threat perceptions resident within prominent security organizations which have influenced international relations in Southeast Asia. There are numerous venues available to the nations of Southeast Asia for the formal discussion of security issues; many are devoted exclusively to defense issues while others may raise security concerns as an adjunct to conference discussions which are primarily economic in nature. They include bilateral defense talks and multilateral forums at various levels of government; some examples include the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP), the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS), the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) organization, among others.

This paper will constrain its review to those organizations which have arguably been the most dramatic contributors to intra-regional military cooperation since the formation of ASEAN in 1967. Besides ASEAN itself, they include the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), predating ASEAN to 1954 and the only formal multilateral military alliance to date involving any of the ASEAN nations; the Five Power

Defense Arrangement (FPDA), borne out of the United Kingdom's historical colonial ties with Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Singapore; and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). The first three sections of this chapter summarize each of these organizations and help define the sources of threat predisposition and response in Southeast Asia. From this base of research the chapter will then move into an analysis of threat perception and response within Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam as representative nations within ASEAN.

### Southeast Asia Treaty Organization

The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was formed under the auspices of U.S. influence, gained by its global dominance at the conclusion of World War II. SEATO, known otherwise as the Manila Pact, was a formal security alliance like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Like its European counterpart, SEATO's charter was specifically oriented toward countering the communist threat, represented regionally by both the Soviet Union and Mao Tse-Tung's new People's Republic.

SEATO differed from ASEAN not only in its formality as a pact for security, but also in its proposal and full underwriting by the U.S. Although the United Kingdom and her colonies and the independent nations of Southeast Asia recognized the new threat of communism, the war left them in no position to coordinate a response. These nations were willing participants in the pact, but it would be up to the U.S. to organize the effort.

While threat perceptions in Southeast Asia, especially due to communist gains in Indochina, were chief among the motivations for SEATO's establishment in 1954, the

U.S. had additional reasons for promoting the pact. First, just as the leaders of ASEAN would formally declare thirteen years later, regional cooperation was expected to aid economic development in Southeast Asia. Second, an organizational structure was desired to fill the power vacuum left over from World War II and amplified by the defeat of the French in Indochina.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that, nearly forty years after the signing of the Manila Pact, concern over a potential new power vacuum in Southeast Asia due to perceptions of U.S. withdrawal from the region was a significant factor contributing to the formation of the ASEAN Regional Forum.<sup>2</sup>

In 1968, the year after ASEAN was formed, the communist threat remained the most significant reason for the continued existence of SEATO and its role as power broker to the region. However, other organizations, ASEAN being the most promising, were beginning to be recognized for their role in securing development through regional cooperation. SEATO was facing considerable criticism at the time due to perceptions of it being a "paper tiger" organization, largely based on its inaction in Vietnam.<sup>3</sup> In a speech given that year, SEATO Secretary General Jesus M. Vargas clearly emphasized the formal constraints of the alliance structure in opposing the communist threat to member nations,<sup>4</sup> keeping with the theoretical design of an alliance as means to counter a common threat. It was also a structure which did not include South Vietnam as a signatory. (Although the original treaty offered protection to Cambodia, South Vietnam, and Laos as "Protocol States," later claims of neutrality by Laos and Cambodia and separate agreements between South Vietnam and the U.S. eliminated any obligations on the part of SEATO to the Protocol States.<sup>5</sup>) Vargas' definition of the communist threat

recognized both external aggression and internal subversion, both prevalent in South Vietnam,<sup>6</sup> but SEATO stopped short of committing a significant military response to a threat that did not affect one of the alliance members directly. Most interestingly, Vargas delineated the limitations of SEATO's viability, stating that "for as long as the Communist threat exists, so long will SEATO be essential. Remove the threat and SEATO becomes grossly unnecessary."<sup>7</sup>

The mission of countering militarily the threat of communist subversion remained the primary objective of SEATO until 1973. Outside of contingency planning, however, the means to conduct joint military operations was extremely limited and utilized only once, when SEATO forces came to the aid of Thailand in 1962 to deter a violation of the Thai border by Pathet Lao guerrillas.<sup>8</sup> After September of 1973, and having lost Great Britain, Pakistan, and France as members, SEATO reduced the military role and shifted its emphasis to economic, political, and cultural development of its member nations. By 1977 the organization had been dismantled.

Throughout SEATO's existence, international relations experts had often called into question the viability of the alliance from the start. Despite its declared mission, the communist threat perception and response was interpreted differently by the members of SEATO due to their divergent national interests.<sup>9</sup> As Alvin J. Cottrell and Stanley L. Harrison wrote:

It is not impossible to have an alliance where there are conflicting interests, but every alliance does require some real community of interest; and when a large number of nations are involved, the motivations become more varied, thus requiring a clearly accepted threat in order to achieve maximum support for a concerted response.<sup>10</sup>



The conflicting interests of SEATO's member nations undoubtedly was the most significant factor in its demise. However, a closer look at the organizational structure reveals even more fundamental problems which plagued the alliance. First, the governing document for SEATO, the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, did not clearly specify what constituted collective defense and the response required of the signatories. Hence, varying interpretations of the treaty by the SEATO membership contributed to an inadequate commitment of military support for the treaty, resulting in a limited ability to execute joint military operations.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, the number of signatories to the treaty was minimal compared to the area which the Manila Pact proposed to protect. Of ten nations in South and Southeast Asia considered eligible for membership in SEATO, only three, Thailand, the Philippines, and Pakistan, chose to commit. Moreover, not all of the nations who became signatories were resolute in their support for SEATO; France's inactive participation and the limited support of Great Britain are two examples.<sup>12</sup> Finally, the relatively weak military strength of member nations and a lack of a formal command structure limited SEATO's capability to form a viable military arm to support its mission.<sup>13</sup> Arguably the root of each of these problems was the absence of a common threat perception. Regardless of the source of weaknesses and despite Secretary General Vargas' remonstrations in 1968, the "paper tiger" label seems appropriate for SEATO.

#### Five Power Defense Arrangement

The Five Power Defense Arrangement (FPDA) has its roots in the Anglo-Malaysian Defence Agreement (AMDA, also known by the acronym ANZAM) signed in

1948 between the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand to guarantee the security of the British protectorate of Malaya. AMDA was formed in response to the guerrilla insurgency occurring in Malaya at the time, commonly referred to as the "Malaya Emergency." Its focus was on the internal threat perceptions of Malaya, but the realities of the Cold War forced it to consider the external threat of communism in Southeast Asia. For this reason it was complemented by the British Commonwealth Strategic Reserve, a concept whereby Australia and New Zealand would provide forces to fight communism in Southeast Asia; it was originally dedicated to the support of SEATO.<sup>14</sup> Thus the mission of AMDA was in some respects similar to the SEATO alliance, albeit more limited in scope and resources.

AMDA was replaced in 1971 with the FPDA, and the group was expanded to include Singapore. Rather than a formal guarantor of security like AMDA, the FPDA became a consultative agreement and concentrated on building defense cooperation among the members.<sup>15</sup> There are several reasons for this change. The independence of Malaysia in 1963 and Singapore in 1965 meant that the United Kingdom no longer had as much interest in the defense of its former colony. Related to this was Britain's decision to reduce its military presence in the region, thus reducing its capability of responding to a threat in Southeast Asia. Perhaps most importantly, the threat perceptions of Malaysia and Singapore were alleviated by the rise to power of anticommunist Soeharto in Indonesia. Indonesia's military was also no longer perceived to be a threat, since it had been significantly weakened by the loss of support from the Soviet Union following Soeharto's takeover.<sup>16</sup>

The reduction of British military commitment to the region meant that Australia and New Zealand found themselves with a more significant role to play in the new organization. Malaysia and Singapore invited Australia and New Zealand to base forces on the Malaya peninsula, beginning a history of military cooperation which continues to this day. The Australian and New Zealand commitment to FPDA became even more important with the fall of Saigon in 1975 and Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in 1978. Threat perceptions in Malaysia and Singapore increased when the Soviet Union established a naval base at Cam Ranh Bay and commenced military exercises in the region. Malaysian and Singapore forces were upgraded during this period and placed at a heightened level of readiness through participation in various exercises with the FPDA.<sup>17</sup> Though it remained an agreement based on consultation, the increased threat from Vietnam and its backing by the Soviet Union caused the FPDA to function as if it were an alliance based on mutual defense.

The withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union meant that the FPDA could relax its role in the security of Malaysia and Singapore. By this point Malaysia and Singapore had developed highly capable armed forces and were no longer as reliant on Australia, New Zealand, and the UK for protection. In addition, the cooperative dialogue of ASEAN, and later the ASEAN Regional Forum, helped to reduce regional tensions by increasing transparency among the nations of Asia and further reducing threat perceptions in the region.

As a result, Australia and New Zealand have scaled back their forces based in Malaysia and Singapore, although both nations continue to maintain a small contingent in

country. Australia's support of the Malaysia-Singapore Integrated Air Defence System is one example.<sup>18</sup> Today, the FPDA continues to emphasize security cooperation through a number of exercises and training exchange programs. It is interesting to note that before 1992 Malaysia and Singapore refused to exercise together as part of the FPDA. A mutual distrust between the two nations had developed beginning with Singapore's secession from Malaysia and aggravated over the years by occasional tensions in the bilateral relationship. More recently the nations have conducted exercises together, but have been reluctant to reveal to the other their full capabilities. Thus each nation has placed limitations on the use of certain equipment, such as Singapore's restriction on its E-2C Airborne Early Warning aircraft.<sup>19</sup>

Notwithstanding these concerns, Malaysia and Singapore have benefited immeasurably from security cooperation within the FPDA. Complementing other bilateral military contacts in the region, it has facilitated important advances in the training and doctrine of the armed forces of Malaysia and Singapore. The organization has ensured strong military relations, thereby helping to reduce cross-border tensions. It also acts as a deterrent to potential aggressors in the region, and therefore remains a popular tool for defense planners in Singapore and Malaysia. In sum, the FPDA serves as an example of the viability of multilateral security cooperation despite changes in threat perceptions and sometimes divergent views among its membership.

## ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum

Like the FPDA and SEATO, threat perceptions figured into the agreement between Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand to form ASEAN in 1967. Internally and externally the growing pressure of communism alarmed these Western-aligned nations. The ineffectiveness of SEATO, the U.S.' impotency in Vietnam, and Great Britain's withdrawal of forces from the region in the 1960s contributed to this alarm and raised some doubt as to the wisdom of relying on external powers almost exclusively for regional security. Already wanting to set their own course of economic development, threat perceptions further stimulated the development of ASEAN as an intra-regional mechanism to cope with problems common among the original five members.

Since 1967, different strategic positions and threat perceptions of the members of ASEAN have caused each to consider a variety of national security priorities. In the first twenty-five years of its existence, these differences had a minimal impact on the coherency of ASEAN as a whole, for the bipolar world of the Cold War provided an overarching threat in the form of the Soviet Union. The removal of this threat and replacement with less familiar and more ambiguous challenges in the post-Cold War period has provided new opportunities for divergent perceptions to detract from security cooperation in ASEAN. However, there are certain common security problems which Marc Jason Gilbert maintains has helped ensure the continued cohesion of the organization:

- the fear of the loss of national sovereignty,
- the fear of bilateral interstate relations with untrustworthy allies, and
- the fear of international alliances that held out the promise of collective security but fomented regional competition and led to subordinate relations with neighboring great powers that could guarantee them only an inferior place in the global division of labor.<sup>20</sup>

On preliminary analysis, it would appear that a likely response to these problems is a natural growth in security cooperation within ASEAN. Given the developing trust between the nations of ASEAN and increasing regional interdependence, it also does not seem unrealistic to believe that security cooperation may become more multilateral in nature.

There are opinions on both sides of this issue, of course. In the view of some experts, sub-regional groupings such as ASEAN will be critical to continued stability in Asia, while the more diverse interests of the broader East-Asia region will prevent any type of dialogue modeled after the current arrangements in Europe.<sup>21</sup> However, the latter argument may be the case even within ASEAN, for according to Huxley, the weakness of member states and lack of common threat perception has caused two major effects in ASEAN: (1) An inability to engage in multilateral security cooperation, which has been translated into a desire for continued involvement of the U.S. military as a regional stabilizer, and (2) development of arms programs with little cooperation between the nations of ASEAN due to divergent views of the potential threat represented by China.<sup>22</sup> While the former could be seen as a "band-aid" for short-term regional stability, the latter has longer term implications which could threaten the cohesion of ASEAN. Without a

serious challenge to regional stability, long-standing bilateral tensions may inhibit significant improvements over current security cooperation measures.<sup>23</sup>

The reluctance or inability to discuss a common threat and diversity of views on security cooperation are perhaps reasons for the nations of ASEAN to pursue other less contentious talks and focus on confidence building measures. For instance, following the ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur in 1997, ASEAN, China, Japan, and South Korea conducted a separate "Summit on Peace" in the East Asia-Pacific region.<sup>24</sup> A month prior, civilian and military representatives of each of the ASEAN nations (with the notable exception of Burma) participated in an international humanitarian law conference co-sponsored by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Royal Thai Armed Forces.<sup>25</sup> The multilateralism of ASEAN has in large measure been limited to these types of confidence-building measures, so strongly advocated in the initial doctrine of ASEAN and echoed later in the minutes of formal ASEAN-sponsored meetings as well as "external" discussions such as the 1992 workshop on threat perceptions hosted by the East-West Center.<sup>26</sup> In the economic sector, much has been achieved through joint cooperatives such as the ASEAN Finance Corporation, ASEAN Industrial Projects (AIPs) and ASEAN Industrial Joint Ventures (AIJVs).<sup>27</sup> As has been seen in post-Cold War Europe, such joint ventures in the economic arena may serve as the seed for other intra-regional cooperative measures, including improved multilateral security arrangements and conflict management.

Gilbert maintains that despite ASEAN as a whole being unable to deter large-scale aggression in the region, more formal multilateral arrangements, such as a structure

similar to NATO, cannot be considered a panacea.<sup>28</sup> Arguably, ASEAN at its establishment did not face as serious a threat of external invasion as did NATO upon its formation. Instead, its more significant concern dealt with reducing the potential for future aggression by resolving regional disputes. In line with this objective, ASEAN focused on confidence building and “constructive engagement.” This focus and the resultant strength of the region as a whole was manifested through numerous bilateral relationships:

Determined to avoid the tendency of Cold War-era diplomacy to employ multilateral defense umbrellas as a means to define and separate nations rather than bring them together, ASEAN sought to build regional consensus for peace upon a foundation of trust arising from a multitude of successful bilateral arrangements. These were expected to form an inclusive security web, rather than a wall or line in the sand.<sup>29</sup>

As Dupont points out, the less structured method adopted in Asia has not hindered the region in solving some of the same complex problems as NATO has had to face, whether they be economic, political, or security challenges.<sup>30</sup> The “security web” of relations has been quite effective for ASEAN.

Much has been made of ASEAN’s ability to achieve consensus on important issues facing the region. But the fact remains that the security of ASEAN has not been dependent by any means on the development of a stringent multilateral organization or multilateral consensus. Bilateral arrangements, such as that signed between Indonesia and Australia in December 1995 and seen by some as “insurance” against a rising China,<sup>31</sup> are important in safeguarding against the uncertainties inherent in attempts to build security through consensus of threat perception. Multilateral agreements such as



the Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) have been criticized as weak, in part due to the ambiguity of the agreement resulting from the consensus approach itself, but even more so due to the lack of consensus in threat perception or ability to mount a unified effort against a common threat.<sup>32</sup>

When ZOPFAN was signed in 1971, the security of ASEAN was highly dependent on the support of external powers. It has remained so to this day, with U.S. forward based forces a strong measure of this dependence, despite ZOPFAN's declared goal of Southeast Asia as a zone "free from any form or manner of interference by outside Powers."<sup>33</sup> Consider the support of external powers involved during the period of Vietnam's war with Cambodia as one example of external powers involvement. Russia, having committed to a military alliance by formal treaty, lent its power to Vietnam's attack of Kampuchea in late 1978. Although ASEAN provided strong support to Thailand politically, militarily it was unable and unwilling to provide a credible response to the Soviet-Vietnamese threat. Thailand, perceiving the greatest threat due to its proximity to the conflict, was forced to seek assistance from the U.S. and the Chinese.<sup>34</sup>

Although understandable at the time based on the threat to Thailand, the involvement of external powers in ASEAN problems is one which has engendered significant debate among its members. This reflects the ASEAN culture of non-interference, yet also is indicative of the reality of small state security. Danny Unger offers up this observation:

One of the principal cleavages within ASEAN has long concerned the role of external powers. All countries in the region share aspirations to keep foreign powers from meddling in the region's conflicts and thereby exacerbating them.

For some, however, fears of domination by other regional states outweigh these scruples. This issue is evident with respect to Malaysia and Singapore, which continue to participate in the Five-Power Defense Arrangement along with Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. Recently, Indonesian officials have made increasingly pointed statements concerning this arrangement's anachronistic character, in particular its genesis as a pact aimed at Indonesia.<sup>35</sup>

In consideration of the relatively limited capabilities of military forces in ASEAN and differing views on security priorities, bilateral agreements with external powers are certain to remain important features in the security of Southeast Asia. In the absence of a significant threat to the region, these ties will also likely come under attack as irritants to the unity of ASEAN. However, even if ASEAN were to develop into a military alliance able to mount a credible response in the face of a significant regional threat, external involvement is likely to remain in place due to the global import which the ASEAN region has to many nations' interests.

Notwithstanding the recognition of stability garnered by U.S. forward presence, ASEAN in the post-Cold War era is resistant to accepting from external sources a more formal apparatus for conflict management. This subject was broached at the 1992 East-West Center Workshop on Threat Perceptions in Asia; the idea presented was the establishment of a "regional security council" through which the UN Security Council could influence threat response in Asia.<sup>36</sup> Reflecting ASEAN's tenet of non-interference in internal affairs, most of the workshop participants reacted negatively to such a proposal, preferring a regional organization to work through its own problems. Peacekeeping operations ongoing at the time in Cambodia were cited as one example in

which UN representation was sought through consensus of regional nations rather than imposed by external organizations.<sup>37</sup>

Oddly enough, this aversion to external influence is perhaps precisely the reason why the ASEAN Regional Forum was established in 1994. Knowing that the external powers would continue their attempts to influence regional security, ASEAN decided to take matters into its own hands by developing a forum for multilateral security dialogue centered on ASEAN; one which would serve to “intensify ASEAN’s external dialogues.”<sup>38</sup> Moreover, one of the stipulations agreed to at the first meeting of the ARF was that each participant would adhere to the “purposes and principles” of ASEAN’s Treaty of Amity and Cooperation.<sup>39</sup> In this regard, there are some who believe that the ASEAN Regional Forum is aimed specifically at China, with the goal of presenting a “non-confrontational but regional front to China.”<sup>40</sup> This would be in agreement with a common concern voiced among the ASEAN nations for counterbalancing China’s interests in the region.

This is not to say that ASEAN may expect the ARF to be a unifying element within the Asia-Pacific region. At this point it appears to be merely an opportunity to exchange views on security issues of the region, “a helpful point of diplomatic contact and dialogue.”<sup>41</sup> Michael Leifer offers the following view of its potential impact on the security of the region:

The ARF is an instrument of regional security policy, but no state would be willing to rely for its security on the Forum’s ministrations alone. The ARF should be seen as serving a one dimensional purpose only for regional states facing an uncertain security, but not necessarily an immediate external threat. To

that extent, the ARF is a complementary diplomatic activity of the same nature as ASEAN and subject to the very same intrinsic limitations.<sup>42</sup>

It would appear then that the ARF may have a limited influence on security cooperation measures, though perhaps an open dialogue with China may help alleviate that nation's concerns about security initiatives taken by ASEAN.

Irrespective of the influence of global powers on small state security and the predominance of bilateral security relations, there appears to be a need for regional multilateral cooperation even in the absence of a common threat. Multilateral response to a crisis, now a fixture on the international scene, benefits from peacetime multilateral interaction. Limited multilateral efforts rooted in confidence building measures have proven their worth as an appropriate means of security cooperation in several instances since the end of the Cold War. In addition to contributions made possible through formal alliances, the coalition partnerships of Desert Shield/Desert Storm and the peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance operations of Somalia and Bosnia were supported by more loosely structured peacetime cooperative security regimes. They are representative of the utility of such relationships across the spectrum of conflict, from full scale mobilization in combating an aggressive nation to limited military operations in other than war scenarios.

Though perhaps unable to mount a credible collective defense against a formidable threat, ASEAN may benefit from multilateral security cooperation in preparation for less threatening but more frequent missions such as disaster response and humanitarian assistance. The East-West Center 1992 Workshop concluded that despite

the lack of threats when compared to the Cold War Soviet monolith, a more significant means was needed to avert conflict in the future and hence provide for improved regional stability. More specifically, operations to counter the more benign transnational threats of piracy and drug trafficking were cited as especially conducive to increased levels of security cooperation.<sup>43</sup> Steps taken to build bilateral and multilateral responses to these low-level threats could naturally progress to more significant security ties in ASEAN.

To undertake such missions ASEAN must have a solid footing in constructive engagement of its members, which it does. One of the most significant reasons for the success of ASEAN is the level of personal interaction on the part of high level officials, which has been the case especially since the ASEAN summit of 1976 held in Bali. Rather than ministerial-level summits put on for the show of public affairs, the interaction of the heads of state of ASEAN have facilitated solidarity in reaching peaceful solutions to threatening intraregional disputes. While it is far from a perfect model of conflict management, with potentially volatile issues such as the Spratly Island claims and numerous border disputes continuing as outstanding agenda items, the personal rapport of ASEAN's senior leadership has led to substantive gains in regional cooperation.<sup>44</sup> ASEAN's recovery from the disruption of the Vietnam War and the Kampuchea crisis in the 1970s, the growth in the 1980s of recognition by and interaction with external groups such as the European Community, the ASEAN Dialogue Partners, and the United Nations, and the challenges in the 1990s of managing the admission of new members Vietnam, Burma, and eventually Cambodia all attest to the strength of personal relationships in governing ASEAN cooperation.

Due to the success of the organization, and perhaps largely influenced by this characteristic of personal interaction among ASEAN leaders, there is much discussion devoted to defining the "ASEAN Way." As Mutalib puts it this involves the ability to resolve differences and settle disputes through *musyawarah* (consultation) and *mufakat* (consensus). The characteristics of this process include adopting a nonconfrontational attitude, willingly come to an understanding of the views of others and exercise the art of compromise, avoid the friction inherent in exercising influence or coercion and be patient in reaching consensus.<sup>45</sup> According to Hoang Anh Tuan, the implications of this process for an expanded ASEAN is that each new member, regardless of their threat perceptions or other bias, must rapidly adapt to a method of dispute management which has developed over the past thirty years among the original "ASEAN-Five." This will be a challenge for Vietnam and the other new members, but not an insurmountable one; all have been observers or participants in ASEAN dialogue, and all have expressed a commitment to the ASEAN "rules of the game." For its part, ASEAN historically has been adaptive in its policies and will likely continue to be flexible in dealing with the security concerns of new members.<sup>46</sup>

There is evidence that multilateral unity in reacting to an external challenge is making progress within ASEAN. In 1997, ASEAN drafted a formal protest against China for undertaking an oil exploration project in areas of the Gulf of Tonkin which are under territorial dispute between Vietnam and China. This is in contrast from two years prior when ASEAN chose to back down from China in a dispute with the Philippines over PLA occupation of Mischief Reef in the Spratlys.<sup>47</sup> Both of these disputes, rooted in

the economic interests of each nation's claims to the South China Sea, emphasize the most significant threat facing the ASEAN region today. The fact that ASEAN has chosen to take a unified stand against China on the issue with Vietnam reflects the growing strength of the organization to deter threats through a unity of effort, which Wanandi opines to be the "strategic goal" for Southeast Asia.<sup>48</sup>

### Summary of Multilateral Threat Response

As was anticipated by the 1992 East-West Center Workshop, a number of similar low intensity threats have challenged the security of Southeast Asia in the post-Cold War period. In many respects they could be considered in terms of a "common threat" to the security and development of the region as a whole. Carlyle Thayer offers three broad categories of concerns, all of which have the potential to be resolved through dialogue or improved security cooperation within ASEAN:

- [the] impact of internal/domestic problems on regional stability and their possible spill over effect;
- territorial disputes, especially maritime issues (fishing disputes, EEZ protection, etc.); and
- transnational issues, such as environmental degradation, piracy, smuggling, illegal immigrants and boat people, and traditional security concerns arising from weapons proliferation and force modernisation.<sup>49</sup>

As will be shown in the case studies that follow, current threat perceptions and security challenges of Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam each have elements of these areas of concern.

Based on historical experiences of security organizations in Southeast Asia, multilateral threat response has primarily been dependent on three variables: (1) the

“strength” of the perceived threat, (2) the influence of an external power on the security organization, and (3) political acceptability of nations considering participation in multilateral security organizations. For SEATO, different perceptions among member nations of the significance of a communist threat contributed to disagreements over threat response in Vietnam. In addition, several nations originally offered protection under SEATO decided not to participate, choosing neutrality as an alternative. SEATO relied in large measure on the capabilities of the United States to guarantee regional security. The FPDA also had its origins in perceptions of a communist threat, but saw the involvement of the British decline due to decreased threat perceptions and changing political priorities. Support from the other nations in FPDA has fluctuated dependent on the threat and the status of relations between Malaysia and Singapore, but in general the FPDA has continued to be strongly favored by its members for its benefits to training, doctrine, and defense interoperability.

While the priorities of SEATO and the FPDA were centered on deterrence of Soviet-era communism, current threats to security in Southeast Asia have become less clearly defined. ASEAN has shifted its focus to defense against non-conventional threats and management of regional disputes through diplomacy. In turn, multilateral and bilateral military contacts have largely been confined to confidence building measures designed to support diplomatic efforts. Sensing a decline in commitment to regional security by the U.S. and other external powers, ASEAN created the ARF to expand the dialogue on regional security issues and maintain visibility on potentially threatening



actions of its neighbors, especially India and China. The ARF has also made security initiatives within ASEAN more transparent to external powers.

SEATO, the FPDA and ASEAN bilateral political-military contacts have established a precedent of limited success for security cooperation in Southeast Asia. As the nations of ASEAN and the rest of Asia become more comfortable with intra-ASEAN security initiatives, cooperative efforts against low intensity threats such as those noted above by Thayer will become a less contentious issue. Threat response will likely be a more cohesive and coordinated multilateral effort, assuming influential nations within ASEAN share similar views of security priorities. The following section of this chapter examines those security priorities. Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam will each be considered in terms of general characteristics of threat perception and response, followed by more specific analyses of the state's interactions with external powers and neighboring states in ASEAN. Each case study is concluded with a summary on the implications of state threat perceptions and international relations on potential security cooperation measures within ASEAN.

### Threat Perceptions and Response: Country Case Studies

#### Indonesia

#### Overview of Indonesian Threat Perceptions and Response

The largest member of ASEAN and next to China and India the most populous nation in Asia, Indonesia is recognized as a regional leader and strong advocate for the solidarity of ASEAN. The sheer size of this archipelagic nation and the longevity of

President Soeharto has also helped Indonesia to wield considerable influence in East Asian international affairs. These characteristics make it all the more interesting that Indonesia is largely an inwardly looking nation, concerned with the challenges of governing a people of incredibly diverse social, cultural, and economic background. Internal disturbances arising out of this diversity form the major focus of Indonesia's threat perceptions. Due largely to its archipelagic disposition and relative isolation from the tensions endemic to Northeast Asia, Indonesia has paid little attention to external threats to security.<sup>50</sup>

Though less urgent in the past, external threats have nonetheless played an important role in shaping Indonesia's response to internal challenges and in its relations with the nations of the region. Given the economic growth of Indonesia and its neighbors, the global import of such growth, and the maritime lines of communication upon which the nation sits, external threat perceptions are certain to become an even greater factor in shaping Indonesia's contributions to regional security. Indonesian strategists Wanandi and Hadisoestasro have postulated two ways in which perceptions of an external threat influence the security measures taken by the nation: (1) external support of internal rebellion and (2) potential regional conflict. The result of either perception is the diversion of resources critical to Indonesia's struggle for national development. Seeking to avoid this problem, the Soeharto regime has set forth fairly consistent policy in response to security challenges. To counter the threat of instability due to external support of internal rebellion, Indonesian leadership adopted a theme of "national resilience," emphasizing national unity in managing the immense changes

associated with the country's development. To guard against a regional conflict disrupting national development, Indonesia has made cooperation with ASEAN its foreign policy priority.<sup>51</sup>

The security challenges and strategic policies identified by Wanandi and Hadisoestasro are reflected in the defense planning of Indonesia. Based on interviews with senior defense officials and officers of the Indonesian Armed Forces (hereafter referred to by the acronym ABRI—Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia), Dupont describes five scenarios on which contingency planning is based:

1. A major conventional attack aimed at occupying all or part of Indonesia. Such an attack, which Indonesian officials concede is highly unlikely in the present security environment, would require substantial resources and power projection capabilities which are currently beyond the means of any country other than the United States.
2. A limited strike against Indonesian land or territorial waters as a result of a dispute with adjacent states over unresolved borders or contested resources.
3. External interference in Indonesia's internal affairs for political, strategic or ideological reasons.
4. A conflict between other states in Indonesia's strategic neighborhood which could "spill over" into Indonesian territory or affect, indirectly, Indonesia's security interests.
5. Non-military threats to security. Among the most commonly cited non-military issues which security planners regard as having the potential to threaten national security are pollution and piracy in the Malacca Strait, smuggling over both land and sea borders, and illegal migration.<sup>52</sup>

Of the five, the last is expected to be the most likely scenario which ABRI will face in the near future, and is representative of the growing significance of maritime challenges to Indonesian national security.<sup>53</sup> Consider the relative severity of the problem of piracy: 57 of the 136 reported incidences of piracy in Southeast Asia in 1996 occurred in Indonesian waters.<sup>54</sup> ABRI has taken some limited steps in recent years to counter

these “non-military” or “transnational” threats. For example, the Indonesian Navy’s Eastern Fleet based in Surabaya is primarily dedicated to law enforcement duties to counter piracy, smuggling, drug trafficking and other “non-military” maritime threats.<sup>55</sup> Further evidence of threat perceptions in the area of maritime security is Indonesia’s request for designation of archipelagic sea lanes, based on the 1982 United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), in order to control the sea lines of communication (SLOCs) passing through Indonesia’s 17,000 plus islands.<sup>56</sup>

The quandary for Indonesia in countering the threats hypothesized by defense planners is one of capability. Much of Indonesia’s current defense procurement program is devoted to replacing obsolete equipment rather than expanding its operational capabilities, and the defense budget (\$3.3 billion and 1.3 percent of GDP for FY 1997) remains small for the size of its territory and population.<sup>57</sup> Citing one example of implications of shortfalls in procurement, Indonesia’s Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Kushiardi, claims the Indonesian Navy would require at least 400 vessels to safeguard its maritime borders; it currently only has 120 on the rolls.<sup>58</sup>

To add to the problem, considerations of national security priorities and strategic planning do not weigh heavily into the process of defense procurement. There is very little long term planning conducted by ABRI to mesh operational goals and threat perceptions with force structure requirements. In many cases acquisitions are dependent on political and business ties of the ABRI leadership rather than on impartial analysis of objectives and shortfalls.<sup>59</sup> The interests of Minister of Research and Technology B. J. Habibie, the key architect of ABRI’s modernization program, lie mainly in the

development of “strategic industries” designed to improve the nation’s economic health.<sup>60</sup> As an example, the development of the state run PT Pal shipyard was a strong influence in Minister Habibie’s decision to purchase thirty-nine ex-East German corvettes, LSTs, and minehunters in 1993.<sup>61</sup>

ABRI modernization goals formally set forth in its 1997 Defence White Paper also hint at this emphasis on national development.<sup>62</sup> This reflects President Soeharto’s priorities under the New Order, the goal of which was “not national security for its own sake but national security for the sake of national development.”<sup>63</sup> Notwithstanding Indonesia’s recognition of external threats and the contingency planning being conducted by ABRI, this emphasis in defense procurement decisions on national development rather than a coordinated response to national security concerns detracts from the Indonesian Armed forces capability to mount a credible defense in certain scenarios. As a result, the situation in which Indonesia finds itself today is conducive to external support if a major threat is realized.

#### Indonesia and the External Powers

As may be expected from its colonial roots, Indonesia jealously guards its independence and sometimes views the world with a mixture of animosity and nervousness. During the early years following independence this translated into a fear of invasion and occupation as the primary external threat to Indonesia’s sovereignty. As time has passed and Indonesia has asserted itself in the region, these perceptions have

been tempered, now reflecting a greater concern for external powers' interference in regional and internal affairs of the nations in ASEAN.<sup>64</sup>

Indonesia has long been a proponent of regional security being a responsibility of regional nations, advocating the establishment of ASEAN as a means to execute this policy.<sup>65</sup> Indonesia's enthusiastic support of ASEAN's agreement on the Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) is commonly offered as evidence of this regional outlook. Rather than having an external power guarantee the security of ASEAN, ZOPFAN represents a commitment by Southeast Asia to self determination on issues of regional security. Despite its recognized weaknesses, ZOPFAN is seen as an extension of Indonesian national resilience; it is a way to achieve "regional resilience" and a "balanced relationship" with the external powers, especially the U.S.<sup>66</sup>

Despite Indonesia's regional outlook, it is comfortable with this balance between U.S. influence and ASEAN self-determination. Unlike other members of ASEAN, Indonesia does not consider U.S. presence in the region to be a critical factor in safeguarding the nation's security. This attitude stems from Indonesia's preoccupation with internal threat perceptions, having been successful in overcoming major insurrections in 1948 and 1965 without the aid of any Western power. At the same time, Indonesia recognizes the utility of the U.S. as a stabilizing factor for ASEAN, and the reality that the U.S., as an Asia Pacific power, will continue to maintain forward based military presence to safeguard its national interests in the region.<sup>67</sup> Indonesia's official defense policy provides an example of the nation's acceptance of U.S. military presence,

noting that the U.S. Navy's use of repair and maintenance facility in Singapore is not "disturbing stability in South-East Asia."<sup>68</sup>

Bilateral relations with the U.S. have been temperamental, although certainly in no way hostile. There has been an on-again, off-again history of exercises and exchange programs between ABRI and U.S. military forces. In recent years U.S.-Indonesia relations have been strongly dependent on U.S. reactions to human rights abuses in Indonesia or Indonesian perceptions of U.S. meddling in domestic issues. In 1997 President Soeharto suspended training offered under the U.S. Expanded International Military Education and Training (E-IMET) and cancelled the purchase of U.S. F-16, citing irritation over U.S. criticism of Indonesian elections held in May 1997.<sup>69</sup>

Of the three regional powers, only China represents a serious potential threat in the eyes of Indonesia. India, because of distance, deteriorating capability in power projection, and perceptions of its interests being constrained to South Asia, is not considered a serious threat.<sup>70</sup> Along with Singapore, Indonesia supports the engagement of India as a counterbalance to Chinese influence in the region, and for this reason strongly supported India's bid to become a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum in 1996.<sup>71</sup>

Neither does Japan evoke strong threat perceptions in Indonesia, despite it being a formidable economic rival to Southeast Asia. Like other ASEAN nations, Indonesia is historically predisposed to consternation over a possible Japanese re-arming, counting on the U.S.-Japan alliance to prevent this development. On the other hand, Indonesia has supported a limited military role for Japan in certain benign cases, such as Japan's

deployment of peacekeeping forces to Cambodia under UN auspices. One Indonesian strategist has even proposed the use of Japanese advisors in securing Southeast Asian sea lines of communications (SLOCs) should they be threatened.<sup>72</sup> This is as much an indicator of Indonesia's perceptions of the vulnerability of maritime interests as it is a lack of concern for a Japanese military threat. This is not to say that Indonesia would welcome routine Japanese patrols of the South China Sea and maritime chokepoints in Southeast Asia. Although understanding and supportive of an increased role for the Japanese Self Defense Forces, Indonesia and the rest of ASEAN would need to be consulted in any consideration of Japanese involvement militarily in Southeast Asia.<sup>73</sup>

China is a different issue. In agreement with many assessments of China as threat, Indonesian concerns are rooted in the potential for China's increased economic wealth to translate into significant boosts in military capability. Indonesia has paid close attention to Chinese maneuverings in Southeast Asia, particularly expressing concern over PLA ties with the military regime in Burma and its aggressive actions in the South China Sea.<sup>74</sup> Indonesian fears of Chinese expansionism were realized in 1993 when Beijing published a map indicating claims of an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) extending into portions of the Natuna Islands area, being developed by Indonesia for its large natural gas resources.<sup>75</sup> It is safe to say that China is strategically the most pressing threat perceived by Indonesia.

Indonesia's view of China has been largely influenced by predispositions of threat associated with Chinese support for internal rebellion. An incident which occurred in the waning days of President Sukarno's leadership is frequently cited as a significant factor



in this regard. In the evening and early morning hours of 30 September-1 October 1965, a coup was attempted by members of the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) (Indonesian Communist Party), resulting in the murder of several senior military and government officials. Known as the GESTAPU Affair, the coup attempt was defeated by units of Indonesia's Army Strategic Command (KOSTRAD), led by then Major General Soeharto.<sup>76</sup> Perceptions of Chinese involvement in GESTAPU caused a downturn in Chinese-Indonesia relations and a persistent mistrust of the PRC. Based on his interviews with Indonesian policymakers in 1980, Tilman summarizes their convictions of massive Chinese support for the coup: "GESTAPU was conceived in Beijing, the logistical support came from Beijing, and when the coup attempt failed those who could sought refuge in Beijing."<sup>77</sup> While Soeharto remains in power, memories of the GESTAPU Affair will undoubtedly continue to influence Indonesia's unease over China.

This mistrust of China, coupled with a concern over the possibility of regional conflict impacting Indonesian security interests, is reflected in Indonesia's decision to assist in management of claims in the South China Sea held by Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Despite having no claims of its own in the Spratly Islands, Indonesia, in 1990 took the lead in engaging China in annual Workshops on the South China Sea in an effort to help resolve the disputes. It also undertook a bilateral conference with China the following year to discuss Sino-Indonesian relations.<sup>78</sup> More recently, however, the Chinese have become increasingly aggressive in the Spratly Islands, frequently deploying surface ships on patrol to the area. The Chinese occupation of Mischief Reef in 1994 did not go unnoticed by Indonesia, exacerbating concerns raised

one year prior by China's expansion of EEZ interests. ABRI staged a massive exercise in the Natuna Islands in September 1996 involving 20,000 personnel, 40 aircraft, and 50 naval vessels, in what one analyst believes was a clear warning to China.<sup>79</sup> Despite claims by ABRI Chief General Feisal Tanjung that the exercise was "not a direct response to the perceived so-called threat of China,"<sup>80</sup> the influence of a perceived threat has undoubtedly contributed to Indonesia's close watch over its interests in the maritime zones.

### Indonesia and ASEAN

Starting with its independence from the Dutch in 1945, Indonesian nationalism has been a source of unease within Southeast Asia. Under President Sukarno, ties with the Soviet Union during its bid to reclaim West Irian from the Netherlands in the 1950s and President Sukarno's closer alignment with China in the 1960s contributed to perceptions of Indonesian hegemony in the region. Indonesia's failure to recognize newly independent Malaysia in 1963 and its subsequent support of guerrilla activities on the Malay peninsula have also colored the views of Indonesia's neighbors.<sup>81</sup> However, the Soeharto regime has been careful to separate itself from these antagonistic policies. Undoubtedly this is due to then General Soeharto's experiences in the conflict with Malaysia. Head of the Army Strategic Command (KOSTRAD) at the time, he expressed doubts about the utility of the conflict with Malaysia due primarily to the Army's limited success in its military campaign against Malaysia. There was also a growing belief within the military that Malaysia and other nations in Southeast Asia, rather than being

treated as threats to Indonesia's security, could better serve Indonesia as allies against communism.<sup>82</sup> Seeking to assuage Southeast Asian concerns about potential Indonesian hegemony, President Soeharto has tried to maintain a low-profile in ASEAN, shunning appearances of Indonesian dominance in the organization.<sup>83</sup>

This effort to keep a low profile has not always come easy for Indonesia. ASEAN reaction to the Vietnam-Cambodia crisis of 1978-79 illustrates this point. In December 1978 Vietnam invaded Cambodia, threatening the security of Thailand. Causing a split within ASEAN over the appropriate response to the invasion, the crisis is an example of the potential for differences in threat perception to become a stumbling block to regional security. In keeping with the "geo-political dimension" of threat perception postulated by Tilman, Thailand was justifiably concerned due to the proximity of the threat, while Indonesia was further removed from the conflict and therefore less inclined to react.<sup>84</sup> The decision of ASEAN to back China in response to the crisis was even more difficult for Indonesia to support:

Indonesia did not share Thailand's and Singapore's perception regarding the Vietnamese threat, and strongly disagreed with the policy of bleeding Vietnam white. Besides a natural sympathy for Vietnam's revolutionary experience, Indonesia viewed Vietnam as a buffer against China. The Thai-led ASEAN policy of aligning China against Vietnam over the Cambodian issue transgressed the Indonesian army's strategic regional perspectives. Instead of shielding the region from possible Chinese incursion, ASEAN's policy on Cambodia seemed to be bringing China in through the back door.<sup>85</sup>

An unprecedented strain had been exerted on the unity of the organization in which Indonesia had placed considerable faith. However, instead of pushing an Indonesian dominated viewpoint through ASEAN, Jakarta chose to maintain the unified position of

ASEAN, while separately hosting negotiations outside of ASEAN to bring about a resolution to the crisis.<sup>86</sup>

Despite a lack of publicly acknowledged external threat perceptions, Indonesia's doctrine of regional responsibility for security matters and uncertainty regarding Chinese intentions in Southeast Asia have served as catalysts for Indonesia's strong support of ASEAN. Jakarta's most recent defense white paper formally endorses a regional strategy of "defense in depth" in which ASEAN is seen as the first layer of defense outside of the domestic security of Indonesia.<sup>87</sup> The threat scenarios considered by Indonesian defense planners and identified above are indicative of this approach.

ASEAN as key to Indonesian security is also reflected in Indonesia's strategic thinking and internal defense. In their assessment of national security issues, Indonesian decision makers naturally tend to concentrate their focus on Jakarta and the surrounding region. Indonesia's geopolitical, social, economic, and cultural identity revolves around the capital and the island of Java, the most populous and wealthiest of all in the archipelago. As Dupont points out, this Java-centric mindset influences the priority of response to threat perception, with those regions in close proximity receiving more attention than those more distant.<sup>88</sup>

Based on this concern for the security of Java, in the early 1980s the ABRI adopted a doctrine of *ASEAN Kecil* (Inner ASEAN). The *ASEAN Kecil* concept maintains that an inner core of ASEAN nations—Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore—where maritime lines of communication converge and population and infrastructure is greatest, is most critical to security in ASEAN. Indonesia's *Policy of the State Defence*

*and Security* of 1997 provides evidence of this influence on ABRI strategic thinking, citing a priority of defense on “sensitive areas such as [the] South China Sea-Malacca Strait” and in the critical maritime chokepoints surrounding Java.<sup>89</sup> Concerned about threats from the “north or northwest,” the view of ABRI is that Malaysian and Singapore bases could be used by the enemy to conduct attacks on Java.<sup>90</sup> Given this view, the defense of Singapore and Kuala Lumpur conceivably becomes more important than some Indonesian cities too distant to be viable staging bases for an enemy threat against Java.

Accounting for the threat perceptions within the maritime environment of Southeast Asia, the proximity of the original members of ASEAN, and similar levels of operational capability among their armed forces, it is not surprising that ABRI has placed such emphasis on its security cooperation programs with ASEAN. Prior to the Bangkok Declaration, military exercises and exchanges between Indonesia and the original members of ASEAN were extremely limited. By 1975, exercises with Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand were occurring on an annual and sometimes more frequent basis.<sup>91</sup> ABRI continues to routinely operate with the armed forces of each of these countries.

The collective security of ASEAN is considered to be vital to Indonesia’s views of “regional resilience” as an extrapolation of its national resilience doctrine. As RADM Sunardi of Indonesia’s Defence Ministry writes, ASEAN is a model of the four critical elements of regional resilience:

- National resilience of each member state;
- Commitment of each member to the well being of the association;

- Quality of interactions amongst member states;
- Adaptive capability of the association in confronting itself with the dynamics of the strategic environment.<sup>92</sup>

The attraction of this doctrine is in its informality and flexibility. It is much less constrictive than the codicils of a formal alliance such as NATO. For Indonesia, it is the foundation for its regional security cooperation objectives.

### Implications for Security Cooperation

Strategically, Indonesia's emphasis on the security of Java and its maritime lines of communications is understandable, given the vast territory of the archipelago and limited resources available to defend it. However, expectations for Indonesian-ASEAN ties in a regional security role will require more than discussions on conflict resolution and confidence building currently emphasized within ASEAN. Consider a threat to Indonesian interests in the South China Sea, as an example. Indonesia lacks the surveillance and intelligence assets to effectively monitor many parts of this region. In addition, the Indonesian Navy and Air Force have limited capabilities to sustain a forward based military presence in the South China Sea. Given the primary focus of Indonesian leadership on internal threats, the nation is unlikely in the near term to devote the resources required to gain a significant capability in either surveillance or the near term.<sup>93</sup> To successfully defend a threat to their interests in the South China Sea, the ABRI would need to rely on interoperability with the military forces of ASEAN.

In its 1997 Defense White Paper, Indonesia has explicitly called for the “expansion of ASEAN cooperation to include a security dimension,” although it does not recommend any new specific steps outside of the noncontroversial confidence building measures currently being pursued by the ASEAN Regional Forum.<sup>94</sup> Currently, security cooperation between Indonesia and the other nations of ASEAN is conducted primarily on a bilateral basis. In the view of one representative of Indonesia’s Ministry of Defence, they are aimed at countering “low-level threats and territorial disputes,” and should be implemented in a series of stages dependent on the level of cooperation between nations:

- The first stage is to develop interaction in defense and security fields to bring about mutual understanding in the strategic views and concepts of each country in the region;
- The second stage is to promote a homogenous transparency in the region. In this stage the readiness for exchange of information should be reinforced;
- The third stage is to develop limited operational cooperation, especially in coordination to face any type of low-level threats. There is no doubt that exchange of students from various educational institutions is an important part for an orderly implementation;
- The fourth stage is aimed at developing extended operational cooperation. In this stage the established cooperation can be used to solve international disputes. Since cooperation is mature it may be used to solve matters like logistical communality, interoperability, etc.<sup>95</sup>

These stages of bilateral exercises and other forms of confidence building measures are certainly essential prerequisites to improved interoperability. In a scenario involving a significant threat in the South China Sea, however, a multilateral defense would likely be required, if only for the capability to monitor the extensive area involved. The end state for regional security may require Indonesia and the rest of ASEAN to come to agreement on more substantive measures leading to multilateral interoperability.

Such a step, which ASEAN is currently approaching with ambivalence, has been considered by Indonesia in the past. It is interesting to review some of the historical arguments regarding multilateral cooperation between Indonesian military and political leaders. In 1982 Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew proposed a program of ASEAN wide security cooperation which caused considerable debate within Indonesia. As Anwar reports, the idea enjoyed the support of General Soemitro, a prominent and powerful figure and retired commander of the Indonesian Armed Forces, but only under the following conditions:

An ASEAN military pact should be created purely in order to cultivate its members' own sense of security. It should be aimed at increasing members' self-confidence in their ability to defend the territorial integrity of the region. It should not give ASEAN a confrontative image, should not pose a threat to countries outside ASEAN, and *should not be associated with the existence of an external threat* [emphasis added]. It should not be used to overcome internal disturbances in member countries. Finally, it should be a means of creating a Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), so that ASEAN would no longer be dependent on the goodwill of the major powers.<sup>96</sup>

Senior political leaders opposed such a measure. Consider the response of former Minister of Foreign Affairs Roeslan Abdulgani:

Roeslan pointed out that the concept of national and regional resilience in ASEAN countries was primarily based on non-military strength and he believed that economic, social, cultural, and ideological resilience was sufficient for maintaining ASEAN's independence and stability. Roeslan argued that there was no real call for developing an ASEAN military alliance since there *was no real fear of an external attack against the region* [emphasis added]. Furthermore, he pointed out that an alliance must have a clear idea of the source of the threat, an idea that was clearly lacking in ASEAN.<sup>97</sup>

Roeslan's view prevailed, although the debate would later continue within the leadership of the ABRI. At about the same time in which the *ASEAN Kecil* concept was



formulated, Indonesian military leaders implemented plans for the ABRI to be the “pivot” in a system of ASEAN-wide bilateral exercises. This facilitated combined exercises between nations such as Malaysia and the Philippines, which at the time had no direct military links with each other. It was also considered a start on the path to multilateral operations. In the view of Vice-Admiral Soedjibo Rahardjo, head of ABRI’s intelligence arm in 1986, such an arrangement would be conducive to multilateral military cooperation, given a common enemy.<sup>98</sup>

The concept of *ASEAN Kecil* endorsed by ABRI could be considered as part of a logical progression in the ordering of Southeast Asia into a regional security organization. Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia, all centrally located along the critical SLOCs through Southeast Asia, share common concerns for maritime security issues such as piracy, smuggling, and unimpeded trade. In addition to their habitual military-military relationships established early in the formation of ASEAN, these three nations have been prominent in their support of such agreements as ZOPFAN and SEANFWZ and in hosting a multitude of ASEAN summits and conferences over the years. Their strong advocacy, arguably more pronounced than the other members of ASEAN, has ensured the viability and progressive strengthening of the organization. As Donald K. Emmerson writes:

[Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore have] proven themselves sufficiently central, stable, and active on regional security to resemble a kind of diplomatic kitchen for the house of ASEAN. The cooks might squabble over recipes, but there [is] less disagreement about the menu: keeping the region secure from external or internal hegemony by trying to fashion mutually supporting external and internal balances of power.<sup>99</sup>

If truly a security core for the larger ASEAN group, then perhaps the trends which these three nations have set in motion may lead to the solidification of a security organization among the nations of Southeast Asia.

If so it will involve breaking some paradigms on "what works" for Indonesia. Indonesia has done well by its program of bilateral cooperation combined with the multilateral security dialogue available through ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum. A multilateral alliance would have been an irritant to Indonesia's neighbors in Asia, while the bilateral arrangement has avoided this problem and allowed for greater flexibility in security cooperation.<sup>100</sup> Despite the added complexities of multilateral operations and their implications for international relations, however, a significant and commonly perceived threat to the nations of Southeast Asia may push Indonesia to rethink its opposition to more formal obligations of collective security in ASEAN.

## Thailand

### Overview of Thai Threat Perceptions and Response

As a "front-line state" to China, Thailand has been careful to court its neighbor to the north while maintaining an equitable relationship with its ASEAN brethren. Due to its ancient tributary relationship with China and experience as the only state in ASEAN never subjected to European colonial rule, Thailand has occupied a unique position in Southeast Asia; one of greater independence and flexibility in its foreign policy and yet cautious of portraying itself as too individualistic within an organization which thrives on

consensus. Thailand is unmistakably its own man, but as a charter member has been a team player in its support of the greater good of ASEAN.

In dealing with its threat perceptions, Thailand has historically chosen to ally itself with the power brokers influencing the region. Because of the nature of power relationships in twentieth-century Southeast Asia, this has meant significant swings in its allegiances. Since the end of World War II, the U.S. has been Thailand's dominant ally. Along with China and ASEAN, the U.S. backed Thailand in response to the Soviet-sponsored invasion of Cambodia by Vietnam, the most significant threat to Thailand in the latter half of this century.<sup>101</sup> Thailand's defense relationship with the U.S. continues to be the backbone of its security, manifested by bilateral military exercises such as COBRA GOLD, training and exchange programs, and procurement of weapons principally through U.S. sources.

In general, the threat of communism, both internally and externally, had been the major concern of Thai decision makers in the Cold War period. Communist aggression in Indochina led to Thailand's signing of the Manila Pact and entry into SEATO in 1954 and an even closer bilateral alliance with the U.S. under the Thanat-Rusk Communique of 1962.<sup>102</sup> These agreements were made in reaction to direct external threats of communism but the Thai leadership has been equally concerned with the internal manifestations of communism and its implications for external threats. Thailand's view has been that in order to effectively counter an external threat the internal stability and security of the nation must be ensured.<sup>103</sup> As a consequence, eliminating or reducing the support to communist insurgency was a focus of Thai relations with its neighbors. For

example, Thai concerns regarding the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) included fears of Chinese aid to the CPT, support provided by the Burmese Communist Party, and collaboration with Cambodia's Khmer Rouge.<sup>104</sup> In response, Thailand promoted good relations with China, Burma, and Cambodia and lobbied the respective governments to help reduce the external influences on the CPT.<sup>105</sup>

These concerns for internal stability affecting external relations have been very much influenced by militarism in Thai politics, but nonetheless have been a practical response to a very real problem in the past. Moreover, the predispositions formed by this militaristic influence continue to affect Thailand's threat perceptions today.<sup>106</sup> Like the other nations in ASEAN, the absence of a clear post-Cold War threat has caused Thailand to look more closely at its internal problems. Though the communist insurgency elements have been largely eliminated within Thailand, the perceptions of these problems continue to linger and create considerable concern over a possible resurgence influenced by insurgent and separatist movements in neighboring states such as Malaysia, Laos, and Burma.

For the Thais, national security is defined by the protection of what Muthiah Alagappa terms the "core values": the three traditional institutions of the Thai monarchy, Buddhism, and the nation; the democratic government; territorial integrity, political independence; sovereignty; and justice.<sup>107</sup> The threat perceptions of Thailand are directly related to considerations by the Thai leadership of an internal or external power infringing on these core values. Thailand's most recent defense white paper reaffirms the importance of these core values in its statement of "basic" and "specific national

objectives.”<sup>108</sup> In turn, Thailand’s threat response has been aimed at re-establishing the primacy of one or more of these core values. The threat of communism offers one example of this dynamic. With communism threatening internally the government and political independence and externally the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Thailand, Thailand reacted by joining SEATO and seeking the U.S. as ally, and later by affiliating itself with the political-economic-security framework of ASEAN and working with its neighbors to undermine external support of internal communist insurgencies. Similarly, Thailand has concentrated its diplomatic and military efforts to deter violations of territorial integrity and resolve or reduce border disputes with Laos, Burma, and Malaysia.

In the post-Cold War period, this locus of core values has placed increasing emphasis on maintaining the security of the maritime zones. In an interview in 1996, Defense Minister General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh identified the greatest threat to regional security to be “contention for sea-borne natural and living resources and the violation of the accessibility of free sea lanes of communication.”<sup>109</sup> Consistent with this concern, the Royal Thai Navy has dedicated considerable assets to “non-conventional” threats, such as patrols against piracy, smuggling, and drug trafficking. Thailand works jointly with Malaysia and Vietnam to coordinate safeguarding of their mutual interests in the waters of Southeast Asia, especially in support of fisheries protection, smuggling intervention, and counterdrug efforts. Each year the Navy conducts several bilateral exercises within ASEAN, such as SHALAY LAUT with Malaysia and SING SIAM with

Singapore, which are focused on maritime security and protection of seagoing trade routes.<sup>110</sup>

The huge economic commitment in purchasing an Offshore Patrol Helicopter Carrier (OPHC) from Spain, though it could be considered a means for Thailand to “make a statement” of its sovereignty and strength in the region, is nonetheless an indicator of the importance Thailand places on maritime security. Included among its missions are disaster relief, search and rescue, patrol of Thailand’s EEZ, and marine environmental protection,<sup>111</sup> any of which are conducive to multilateral security cooperation by their non-threatening aspects. At the same time Thailand has not forsaken a more offensive role for the OPHC; the S-70B Seahawk helicopters purchased for deployment aboard the carrier can also be configured in an antisubmarine or antisurface ship role.<sup>112</sup>

#### Thailand and the External Powers

Like Indonesia, Thailand is concerned about the implications of the “spillover effect” possible in regional confrontation. Its experience during the Vietnam-Cambodia crisis made it acutely aware of this issue, perhaps more so than any other nation in ASEAN. The experience has also contributed to Thailand’s propensity to “leave its options open,” continuing external alliances with the U.S. as a complement to its relations within ASEAN.<sup>113</sup> Dialogue within ASEAN ultimately helped to defuse tensions between Vietnam and Cambodia, but Thailand saw some limitations in the ability of

ASEAN to secure peace in the face of a regional power struggle between China and Russia.

Besides bolstering Thai apprehension toward Vietnam, the conflict in Cambodia created frustration over the minimal role which China and Russia chose to take in helping to resolve the crisis. Chinese and Russian competition for influence in Southeast Asia was symptomatic of the USSR-U.S. and USSR-PRC rivalries, in large measure contributing to China's support of Thailand and the Soviet Union's military backing of Vietnam. This effectively translated into a stalemate between these two powers over the Cambodia crisis.<sup>114</sup> In the meantime, Thailand and the remainder of ASEAN considered the problem to be an urgent threat to the security of the region, desiring a quick resolution through cooperative dialogue and compromise. There was little impetus on the part of China or the USSR to come to terms over the issue, however, for it would ultimately mean a depreciation of one's power at the expense of the other. As Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister Thanat Khoman noted during the crisis, "If no compromise or solution has yet been reached, it is probably because certain larger powers have no immediate interest in helping to reach an agreement. They may even find an advantage in prolonging the conflict."<sup>115</sup>

Notwithstanding these frustrations, the Thai leadership recognized that ASEAN and Chinese backing was a crucial deterrent to Vietnamese domination of Indochina. The Cambodia crisis was the most substantial direct threat to Thailand's sovereignty since the Japanese occupation of World War II. The solidarity of ASEAN during the crisis, despite concerns of Indonesia and Malaysia about increased Chinese influence in Southeast Asia

resulting from the Sino-Thai alliance, reinforced to Thai leaders the validity of the potential of ASEAN in a security role. In addition, memories of China's support continue to play a role in tempering Thai perceptions of China as a threat to regional security.<sup>116</sup>

This is not to say that Thailand does not consider China a potential adversary. Even in the midst of the Cambodia crisis, Thai decision makers considered China to be a long term threat.<sup>117</sup> Thailand remains wary of the uncertain role which China may fill in the future regional security equation, strongly supporting the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum as a means to engage the PRC (and other external powers) in dialogue on security issues. Perhaps to deflect any alienation of China, Thailand has also conducted bilateral discussions on security issues with the Chinese. PLA Defense Minister Chi Haotian visited with Prime Minister Chawalit Yongchaiyut in Bangkok in December 1996, during which agreements were reached to further military cooperation between the nations, "constructively engage" Burma, and maintain a commitment to peace in Cambodia without either nation involving themselves in Cambodia's internal affairs.<sup>118</sup> One highly visible result of these discussions was the first visit to Thailand in 10 years by a PLA(N) ship, occurring in March 1997.<sup>119</sup>

Like Indonesia, Thailand does not have any claims in the Spratly Islands but views the South China Sea disputes as especially threatening due to its potential to disrupt trade through the Gulf of Thailand.<sup>120</sup> Also like Indonesia, Thailand views Chinese ties with Burma with suspicion. Chinese arms sales to the SLORC regime and potential for Chinese access to the Indian Ocean using Burmese staging bases are of



particular concern.<sup>121</sup> In the latter case, China is allegedly involved in the construction of a naval base on Hainggyi Island close to the Irawaddy delta and facilities on Great Coco Island north of the Andaman Islands. Mohan Malik aptly explains the significance of these developments:

Growing demand for imported petroleum may well explain Beijing's naval interests in Burma regarding security of shipping routes through the Indian Ocean to the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea. Thus, China's naval build-up is being undertaken with a view to securing the country's oil supply routes. Given the strategic significance of the Spratly Islands for sea-lane defence, interdiction and surveillance, whoever dominates the Malacca Strait and South China Sea will determine the destiny of the whole region. There is little doubt that China, by developing a blue-water navy and naval bases in Burma, is looking to dominate both.<sup>122</sup>

Thailand's concerns over Chinese intentions are well founded. Supported by Burma, Chinese access to the Indian Ocean would be strategically decisive, allowing Chinese virtually free reign, economically and perhaps militarily, over all of South and Southeast Asia.

Internally, there is less concern about the "Fifth Column" Chinese influence commonly heard in other ASEAN nations. This has also helped to soften Thai perceptions of China as a threat and bridge relations between the two nations. This attitude is evident from an interview by Tilman of one influential Thai, who professed that "we may not always trust the China Chinese, but because of our familiarity with the Thai Chinese we feel comfortable around them."<sup>123</sup>

In the past Thailand has expressed some concern for the potential rearming of Japan, but like Indonesia is amenable to a greater role for Japan in regional security.<sup>124</sup> Thailand's more moderate views of Japan stem from their less harsh treatment by the

Japanese in World War II compared to its neighbors in Southeast Asia. As Tilman writes, the occupation of Thailand by the Japanese was "an inconvenience, and doubtless it produced many individual hardships, but it was not the traumatic experience faced by those of the ASEAN nations who joined their colonial overlords in resisting the Japanese."<sup>125</sup>

Presently there is very little evidence indicating that Thailand considers Japan a serious threat to its national security. Thailand could perhaps even consider alignment with Japan against a hegemonic China, especially if Japan-China relations became adversarial, not unlikely in this scenario. Danny Unger offers four reasons for this potential of China as threat, Japan as ally:

First, China's proximity would make it less expensive for it to threaten Thai interests in a variety of ways than for Japan to do so. Second, China's proximity results in China and Thailand competing more than do Japan and Thailand. The former pairing would take on more of the attributes of a zero-sum relationship, at least on some issues of mutual concern. Third, like the United States today, Japan increasingly will come to be viewed as a relatively complacent, status-quo-oriented power without irredentist claims. In addition, Thai policy makers will see Japan both as more familiar than China (in terms of its interests and modus operandi) and as a relatively pacifist, satisfied trading state. (This is likely to hold true even as, or if, Japan gradually develops increasing independent power projection capabilities.) Fourth, over the next several decades, China will emerge as a stronger power than Japan, both economically and militarily.<sup>126</sup>

Current Thai-Japan relations are certainly supportive of Unger's scenario. Japan has supported Thailand's economic and political interests in meetings of the Group of Seven and in the United Nations. Military relations have also been strong, with Thailand being one of the more vocal supporters in ASEAN of Japan assuming a more significant security role in the region. Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) ships have

been invited to conduct exercises with the Royal Thai Navy and have conducted port visits to Thailand in recent years.<sup>127</sup>

Cordial relations exist between India and Thailand at present. Along with Malaysia and Indonesia, Thailand once viewed the Indian Navy as a potential threat due to its substantial power projection capability using its two aircraft carriers and sizable surface and subsurface forces. India's development of military bases in the Andaman and Nicobar islands furthered these perceptions, as did New Delhi's decisions to intervene militarily in Sri Lanka between 1987 and 1990 and in the Maldives in 1988 and 1989. However, the loss of Soviet support so important to India's military capability and the subsequent decline of its naval forces have significantly reduced any concern over Indian intentions in Southeast Asia.<sup>128</sup> For its part, India has made a concerted effort to reassure ASEAN of its non-threatening intentions in Southeast Asia. Consistent with ASEAN's decision to admit India into the ASEAN Regional Forum, India's military leadership has conducted several visits to Thailand and elsewhere in Southeast Asia for purposes of bilateral discussions on security cooperation. In an unprecedented level of multilateral cooperation between India and ASEAN, the Indian Navy in February 1997 hosted ships from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Bangladesh for the second installment of what appears to be an annual exercise in the vicinity of the Andaman Islands.<sup>129</sup> The growing military-military relationship between India and ASEAN has undoubtedly served to further reduce the perception of India as a threat to Southeast Asia.

## Thailand and ASEAN

The departure of the U.S. from Vietnam in 1975 convinced Thailand that the U.S. had begun a withdrawal from the region. One outcome of this perception was that Thailand became a proponent of ASEAN assuming a greater role in security cooperation as a means of managing regional conflict. As one official of the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs writes:

The urgency to create ASEAN as a viable nonmilitary organization for satisfying the member states' national-security interests was heightened when the United States, hitherto the mainstay of Thailand's security, discontinued its military posture and acceded to a communist victory in Vietnam.<sup>130</sup>

Reacting to the increased threat seen in the communist takeover of Indochina, ASEAN the following year passed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation as a formal commitment to improved regional security cooperation.<sup>131</sup>

Twenty years after the signing of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, Thailand's focus on security in Southeast Asia remains close to home, although it has shifted from a military emphasis to an economic one.<sup>132</sup> Cooperation with Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia are the dominant consideration in Thai foreign relations, perhaps even more so than the concern for the security of Thai interests in maritime zones.<sup>133</sup> Having mended relations with Indochina in 1988, Thailand now saw its neighbors to the east as a source of security through the economic resurgence of mainland Southeast Asia. This objective is no doubt related to Thailand's consideration of the Indochina lowlands as a buffer to external threats.<sup>134</sup> Business interests have been the reason behind Thai leading the way in such measures as the creation of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) in

January 1992 as a means to enhance regional security. Similar to Indonesia's extrapolation of national resilience to regional resilience, Thailand's ideas included extending successful domestic economic programs to the regional level to strengthen Southeast Asia resistance to external threats. At present, it is unclear how successful AFTA will be in this regard since most of the ASEAN nations are in competition with each other for market shares of similar products.<sup>135</sup>

Presently, Thailand's most pressing concern in Indochina is the instability of Cambodia. The problems were exacerbated by the 1997 shake-up of the coalition government, instigated by Co-Premier Hun Sen, and the exile to Bangkok of Prince Norodom Ranariddh. The civil war has threatened to spillover into Thailand, and on several occasions stray shells from the fighting have crossed into Thai territory.<sup>136</sup> Nonetheless, Thailand has continued to support improved relations with Cambodia, with membership in ASEAN a carrot subject to a peaceful resolution of the rift between Hun Sen and Prince Ranariddh. Thailand's confidence in the future stability of Cambodia is evident in the decision to clear an estimated 100,000 mines along the Thai-Cambodia border; threat perceptions of an invasion from Cambodia, once prevalent during the Vietnam incursion of 1978-79, are unsubstantial today.<sup>137</sup>

Relations between Thailand and Laos have recently improved since the days of clashes along the Thai-Lao border in 1988.<sup>138</sup> With 1,800 kilometers of border separating them, border issues have dominated the relationship. The Thai-Lao Joint Commission was established in October 1996 to help resolve some of these issues and "set the

direction of bilateral cooperation."<sup>139</sup> Progress appears steady in these areas, with agreement secured in 1997 on the survey and demarcation of the border.<sup>140</sup>

Likewise relations with Vietnam have improved in the 1990s, with several high level exchanges of both political and military leaders in recent years an example of this rapprochement. It is somewhat ironic that Thailand, having drug ASEAN into support against the Vietnamese in 1978, makes the first move a decade later to integrate Vietnam into Thailand's dreams of economic resurgence for Southeast Asia, and later advocates strongly for Vietnam's inclusion in ASEAN. Vietnam's armed forces, once feared on mainland Southeast Asia and a reason for Thailand's defense buildup in the 1980s, is now considered by Thailand as incapable of posing a serious military threat.<sup>141</sup> Since 1992 the Thais have invited Vietnam to take part in personnel exchange programs, including participation as observers in Thailand's premier exercise with the U.S., COBRA GOLD.<sup>142</sup> In another example of improved relations, in 1997 Thailand and Vietnam settled a twenty-five-year dispute over waters in the Gulf of Thailand and have agreed to set up joint patrols of the area.<sup>143</sup>

To the west, besides the strategic threat represented by Burma's ties with China, Thailand is concerned with more ambiguous problems such as Burmese counterinsurgency battles infringing on Thai territory and the destabilizing effects of drug trafficking. (In 1997 one Thai official even went so far as to question Burma's admission into ASEAN, citing government and military authorities involvement in drug production and trade.<sup>144</sup>) The drug problem is related to the counterinsurgency problem, since several of the insurgent groups in Burma finance their efforts through drug trade.

Most threatening to Thailand has been Burma's battle against Karen rebels in the vicinity of the Thai-Burmese border. In recent months the Thai military has been put on alert and troop reinforcements sent in to maintain security along the border in reaction to attacks directed by Burma's State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) against Karen strongholds. (The SLORC was reorganized and renamed the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in November 1997.) For their part, the rebels have conducted several attacks against refugee camps in Thailand and in January 1997 shot at a Thai reconnaissance plane flying over the area.<sup>145</sup> Refugee movement from these areas are also a burden, with as many as 1,000 Thai and 20,000 Karen civilians being displaced in one day of fighting in early 1997.<sup>146</sup>

Despite the drug trafficking and insurgency problems in Burma, Thailand has generally adopted an accommodating stance towards the Rangoon regime, arguing against international isolation. Thailand took the lead in advocating Burma's acceptance to ASEAN in 1997, having first proposed Burma for observer status at the 1994 ASEAN Regional Forum. Notwithstanding the problems introduced by the SLORC-Karen battles, Burma and Thailand bilateral diplomatic relations have gradually improved, most notably reaching agreement over several longstanding border disputes and establishing a "Friendship Bridge" over the Moei River at Maw Sot in May 1997.<sup>147</sup> Thailand's positive relationship with Burma likely has as much to do with countering Chinese regional influence as with embracing Burma as the newest member of ASEAN.

To the south, Thailand's most significant challenge has been an ongoing Muslim separatist movement within the border provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satun,

dating back to Thailand's annexation of the Kingdom of Pattani in 1785.<sup>148</sup> In more recent times, cross border support of the separatists by Malaysia has been a contributor to occasional disruptions in Thai-Malay relations.<sup>149</sup> Associated with the separatist movement are Islamic terrorist factions, of which both governments have accused the other of supporting.<sup>150</sup> While a consideration in threat predisposition between the two countries, cross border dialogue and Thailand's deployment of troops to the region has helped reduce this problem to being only a minor irritant to Thailand's security interests.<sup>151</sup> Also of limited concern are problems related to the development of maritime resources in the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea. Thailand's fishing fleet is the largest in Southeast Asia and Thai vessels have been involved in numerous disputes with Malaysia as well as Vietnam and Cambodia over fishing rights.<sup>152</sup> None of these problems appear to be significant considerations in Thai threat perceptions, nor do they appear to detract from security cooperation between each of the states involved. If anything, ASEAN dialogue has helped reduce the likelihood of these problems growing into more significant regional destabilizers.<sup>153</sup>

Thailand has been less reticent than other ASEAN nations about proposing multilateral military operations within Southeast Asia. Inclusion of ASEAN in multilateral exercises was endorsed by Thailand as early as 1975, during preparations for that year's Sea Garuda naval exercises with Indonesia. Indonesia was not receptive to such an arrangement, preferring to stick with a bilateral program and wishing to avoid being perceived as taking a confrontational stance toward nations outside of ASEAN.<sup>154</sup> Thailand has continued to pursue multilateral security cooperation, albeit with the U.S. as



a third partner; an example is the annual trilateral air force exercise COPE TIGER, most recently conducted in November 1997.<sup>155</sup>

#### Implications for Security Cooperation

In analyzing Thai threat perceptions and implications for security cooperation, it is helpful to review the process by which policy is made in response to a perceived threat. Thailand's policy making is most significantly influenced by the armed forces of Thailand, the Thai Central Intelligence Agency, and the Thai National Security Council.<sup>156</sup> Essentially these organizations make up the Thai elite in national security policy formulation, which, according to one Thai official, seldom involves the opinions of the general public. The policy-making method of the elite is characterized as "an intuitive approach as opposed to a rational, systematic analysis of the issues" with the effect of simplifying complex problems. Threat perceptions are basically separated into two categories, either external or internal. As a result responses to threat perceptions also tend to be oversimplified solutions. The general public, having not participated in the policy formulation process, also tends not to question the elite on these simplified solutions, and thus policies put forth are generally well supported, especially if the threat is well-defined and the national security of the nation is at stake.<sup>157</sup>

In the case of a well-defined and significant external threat, such as communism in Indochina, the Thai response was a commitment to SEATO. Twenty years later, Thailand was successful in galvanizing support among the ASEAN members in response to Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia, albeit diplomatic and political rather than military

support. Given a similar scenario in the future, it is not unrealistic that Thailand may take the next step and push for a threat response which includes a collective multilateral security role for ASEAN. The crux of the argument is obviously dependent on reciprocal relationships being established with the members of ASEAN. Among the ASEAN states, Thailand has been more closely aligned to China than any other since the formation of ASEAN. With China currently showing the greatest potential for hegemony in Southeast Asia, ASEAN's response to Thailand's call for multilateral security may hinge on their perceptions of Sino-Thai relations.

## Vietnam

### Overview of Vietnamese Threat Perceptions and Response

Notwithstanding Vietnam's new status as a member of ASEAN, it is a country which remains unique in Southeast Asia, committed to maintaining its authoritarian rule and communist ideology. Having lost the financial and military support of the Soviet Union, however, it is now more than ever anxious to correct its economic health, maintain sovereignty against an external threat, and improve its regional standing as a viable member of ASEAN. Once considered the pariah state of Southeast Asia, Vietnam in the post-Cold War era has recognized the importance of friendly relations with its neighbors as a contributor to the economic development of this impoverished nation. This attitude is pragmatic, for Vietnam is currently in no position, militarily, economically, or otherwise, to threaten any of its neighbors. Instead, Vietnam's

vulnerability makes it more susceptible to the influence of ASEAN and the external powers.

The threat perceptions of Vietnam are derived partially from the historical perceptions of the Communist Party elite, whose views have remained basically unchanged despite the changes in Asia since the end of the Cold War. William S. Turley explains the predilections of the party elite as follows:

For this elite, the central geostrategic priority for decades was controlling the mountain interior in order to withstand attack from Great Powers enjoying easy access to Vietnam's long coastline, as well as Laos and Cambodia. Unable to defend the coast, the communists concluded that they could win national independence and unity only if they excluded foreign influence other than their own from Laos and Cambodia. The doctrine of "security interdependence" among the three Indochinese states flowed from this conclusion and was a basic plank of Vietnamese strategy throughout Hanoi's intervention in Cambodia during the 1980s; a residue of this strategy survives in Vietnam's relations with Laos.<sup>158</sup>

These perceptions continue to surface in Vietnam's most prominent current security concerns, namely its territorial sovereignty disputes with China and instability in Cambodia, and in its new and uncertain relations with ASEAN and the U.S.

Despite these concerns, militarily Vietnam no longer perceives the same threat as it once had during the height of the Cambodia crisis. This is evident by its reduction in military force structure since the end of its war with Cambodia, having reduced its active troop strength by over one-half since 1987. There has also been a dramatic drop in equipment readiness and arms purchases during this same period; defense expenditures have fallen from over \$3.1 billion to \$800 million.<sup>159</sup>

A predominant cause of Vietnam's arms reductions has of course been the cutoff of military aid from the Soviet Union rather than a consideration of a greatly reduced threat. Nonetheless the Vietnamese military is a shell of the power it once held at the conclusion of the Vietnam War, when it was equal in capability to all of the ASEAN states combined.<sup>160</sup> In 1986 Hanoi instituted a defense reform program known as *doi moi* which set in motion the cutbacks; the loss of Soviet aid only accelerated this initiative.<sup>161</sup> Presently, Vietnam is undergoing a limited force modernization program designed to maintain territorial security; in this regard, Defense Minister General Doan Khue called for special emphasis on development of naval forces to safeguard claims in the South China Sea.<sup>162</sup> Force modernization efforts will also help revitalize Vietnam's defense industry, an important opportunity for the nation's economic development. One example is the indigenous production beginning in 1996 of Soviet style missile patrol boats designed for offshore patrol of Vietnam's claims.<sup>163</sup>

Vietnam's emphasis on force modernization is understandable given its current state of weak defense capability compared to much of Asia. Because of this weakness, Vietnam places considerable emphasis on its ties to ASEAN as a means of coping with its perceived threats. At a forum commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of ASEAN, Deputy Foreign Minister Vu Khoan was especially hopeful, commenting that cooperation among the members of ASEAN would "gradually reduce [regional] disputes, and even make them disappear."<sup>164</sup> For Vietnam, this attitude may be more than just celebratory rhetoric. The Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) regards military-security ties as an important extension of Vietnam's foreign policy and threat response. The

following goals of "Military Foreign Relations" with ASEAN and other nations are illustrative of the CPV's policies (as well as its paranoia over the influence of Western values in Asia):

- to contribute to consolidating peace and developing relations of friendship and cooperation with the armies and people of other countries on the basis of maintaining our independence and self-rule, national traits, and the principle of national independence being closely linked to socialism;
- to readily uncover, stop, and push back any threat of armed conflict and war;
- to directly contribute to building the army, strengthening national defense, maintaining
- security, and building our country's combined strength;
- and to create new positions and strength for the sake of defeating the adversary forces' "peaceful evolution" plots and tricks and "democracy" and "human rights" masks, hence their hope to interfere in our country's internal affairs.<sup>165</sup>

Perhaps more than any other nation in ASEAN, Vietnam is a firm believer in regional security cooperation as a viable and necessary threat response.

Like Indonesia and Thailand, Vietnam faces a threat from the typical problems associated with coastal defense and maritime territorial integrity. In addition to battling China over infringement of Vietnam's EEZ and other claims, Vietnam has intensified its efforts in recent months to combat piracy, drug trafficking, and smuggling. As an example, in October 1997 Hanoi promulgated a comprehensive campaign of national mobilization targeted against smugglers, including the use police, military forces, government offices, and civilian organizations.<sup>166</sup> True to the Communist Party elite's concern for the vulnerability of its long coastline, it appears that nearly all of Vietnam's current threat perceptions are related to the South China Sea. Most significantly this includes a conflict of interests with China.

## Vietnam and the External Powers

Overshadowing Vietnam's objectives for economic development and improved foreign relations is its longstanding ambivalence towards China. Though sharing ancient cultural ties and the communist ideology with China, Vietnam has had little incentive in recent times to trust the Chinese. China, as Chang Pao-Min describes, continues to see itself as "big brother" to the region, and has had difficulty accepting the ambitions of Southeast Asia and Vietnam in particular.<sup>167</sup> After providing aid to the Vietcong during the Vietnam War, China's relations with a reunified Vietnam soured due to perceptions of Vietnamese hegemony in Indochina and Vietnam's alliance with the Soviet Union. In retaliation for the invasion of Cambodia, and to convey a message of protest to the Soviet Union for sponsoring Vietnamese aggression, China attacked Vietnam in 1979. Vietnam's relations with its ever more powerful neighbor to the north improved in the 1980s, with full normalization of relations achieved in 1991. However, land and sea border disputes existing prior to normalization have continued to be a source of irritation between China and Vietnam. Adding to this problem is the fact that Vietnam can no longer count on the support of its Russian benefactors and thus is unable to match the military potential of China. No other country has as much capability to influence Vietnam's development as does China.

The most significant example of ongoing tensions between Vietnam and China is their territorial disputes in the South China Sea. The dispute began in 1974 when China seized the island of Hoang Sa in the Paracels, guarded at the time by South Vietnamese forces. Its most serious turn of events occurred in 1988 when the People's Liberation

Army (Navy) (PLA(N)) seized seven other islands in the South China Sea and in the process sank three Vietnamese supply ships, killing seventy-two people.<sup>168</sup> (Interestingly, in 1958 the prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Pham Van Dong, officially recognized all of China's historical claims in the South China Sea. It was not until after reunification that Vietnam protested the issue, eliciting the condemnation of Beijing.<sup>169</sup>) China has maintained pressure on Vietnam over the issue, including signing a pact in 1992 with Crestone Oil Corporation to explore for oil and natural gas in areas which Vietnam claims and passing a law designating virtually all of the South China Sea as part of its territorial waters. The Crestone deal was a marked change from a promise made by the Chinese in 1991 to pursue joint development of resources in the region.<sup>170</sup>

Beginning in 1992 Vietnam and China have attempted to resolve the problem with minimal success. Prime Minister Li Peng visited Vietnam in November 1992 to discuss the territorial disputes. This was followed in March 1993 by a visit to Beijing by Vietnam's Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyen Dy Nien. Although China pledged to refrain from exercising regional hegemony over Vietnam, neither visit yielded any progress toward resolving the maritime claims.<sup>171</sup> The following year tensions flared again as Vietnamese patrol vessels exchanged gunfire with Chinese fishing vessels, wounding two Vietnamese sailors. Vietnam next appealed to assistance from ASEAN, but China rejected a multilateral dialogue claiming the issue was a bilateral problem between Vietnam and China only. Vietnam agreed to bilateral discussions during a visit by President Jiang Zemin in November 1994, and a plan for working level and ministerial discussions on the land and maritime disputes was formulated.<sup>172</sup> Since that time

considerable progress has been made toward a peaceful settlement of the disputes, but there have been setbacks as well. For instance, dialogue was temporarily halted in April 1996 following Vietnam's hiring of a U.S. firm to conduct oil exploration in one of the areas disputed by China. A similar circumstance arose in March 1997 when China commenced exploratory oil drilling in an area of the continental shelf claimed by Vietnam.<sup>173</sup>

In the midst of the conflict over maritime claims, however, there is some evidence of a developing trust between the two adversaries. In February 1996 China and Vietnam opened rail service across their borders, an indicator of the progress made in discussions over land border disputes. Later in 1996, military contacts were opened up as the PLA Chief of Staff visited Hanoi to discuss regional security and to "promote military cooperation in line with broader government and Communist Party accords."<sup>174</sup> As a result of separate discussions on land border issues, China and Vietnam started landmine clearing operations in 1997 along the border.<sup>175</sup> (Interestingly, neither China nor Vietnam participated in the contentious discussions in 1997 over the Oslo Landmine Ban Treaty.)<sup>176</sup>

Vietnam's perceptions of the U.S., obviously negatively influenced by the experience of the Vietnam War, have been tempered by Vietnam's desire to derive the economic and security benefits associated with ties to the U.S. However, U.S. rapprochement with China in 1972 coupled with public outcry over its defeat in Vietnam helped to ensure that the development of friendlier Vietnamese-U.S. relations would take a back seat to Sino-U.S. ties. In the aftermath of the war, Vietnam as a vulnerable small



state had no other choice than to accept an alliance with the Soviet Union against China, for there was no hope at the time of normalizing relations with the U.S.<sup>177</sup> In the 1980s, U.S. demands for full accounting of missing servicemen from the Vietnam conflict and for the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia continued to limit progress in U.S.-Vietnamese relations.

The first official contact between the two governments since the fall of Saigon occurred in 1991, when the U.S. was permitted to open an office in Hanoi to aid in the recovery of missing in action (MIA) personnel.<sup>178</sup> The formal settlement of the Cambodia conflict later that year and gradual improvement in the response of Vietnam to the full accounting issue helped set in motion a return to normalized relations. No longer viewing the U.S. as a threat, Vietnam instead pursued a policy of engagement as a means to counter Chinese influence in Southeast Asia.<sup>179</sup> Today, Vietnam and the U.S. are rapidly expanding their economic ties and share interests in multilateral security dialogue through the ASEAN Regional Forum, although there is far less interest in the U.S. than in Vietnam over such measures.<sup>180</sup> The U.S., like other nations with extensive interests in China, is limited in the support it can provide Vietnam. There is little incentive for upsetting the regional security balance by improving relations with a small state at the expense of one with the power potential of China.<sup>181</sup>

Japan was once considered a major threat to the security of Vietnam's communist regime, due to Japanese basing and support of U.S. forces during the Vietnam war and its strategic position astride major supply lines from the Soviet Union.<sup>182</sup> Currently there is little evidence that Vietnam still considers Japan a threat to its national security. Here

again Vietnam's ideas are pragmatic, for it desires Japan's assistance in overcoming its economic problems. As Michael Leifer writes, "Vietnam's interest in Japan would seem to be solely as a material partner that can contribute to economic development and in that way help to underpin the country's independence."<sup>183</sup>

Japan gained favor in Vietnam's eyes by its success at brokering peace in Cambodia. Hanoi also sought Tokyo's assistance in 1990 in attempts to reach a diplomatic breakthrough toward normalized relations with the U.S., ironic considering U.S.-Japan security cooperation during the Vietnam War.<sup>184</sup> For its part Japan publicly supported Vietnam during its bid to become a member of ASEAN, receiving the endorsement of Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama during his first visit to Vietnam in 1994.<sup>185</sup> Japan has more recently offered Vietnam closer defense ties. An example is provided in Minister of State for National Defense Akio Kyuma's visit to Vietnam in January 1998, during which he proposed a visit by a Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) ship, an invitation to post a defense attach— in Tokyo, and an offer to host Vietnamese students at Japan's prestigious Defense Academy.<sup>186</sup>

There is nothing to indicate that Vietnam perceives India to be a threat. Indeed, India has been forthcoming with military aid for Vietnam, and viewed in the long term as a potential balance to Chinese influence in the region.<sup>187</sup>

#### Vietnam and ASEAN

Until Thailand's economic overtures toward Vietnam in 1988, ASEAN was not highly regarded in Hanoi. In the view of one expert on the subject, Vietnam perceived

ASEAN to be “an insidious vehicle for the prosecution of American interests,” and saw little utility in its objective of regional cooperation.<sup>188</sup> ASEAN’s support of Thailand over the Cambodia issue obviously did little to enhance this image. Hanoi could not ignore the economic progress of ASEAN’s members in comparison to Vietnam’s lethargy, however, and eventually came to view ASEAN in more positive terms. Once Thailand opened the door to a more accommodating stance, a gradual improvement in Vietnam-ASEAN relations occurred, including a number of ministerial level visits between Vietnam and each of the ASEAN nations in 1992. These discussions gave way to formal acceptance of Vietnam’s membership in ASEAN in 1995.<sup>189</sup>

The economic progress associated with membership in ASEAN is not all that appealed to Vietnam. Vietnam has sought regional security against a threatening China as a complement to its national goal of economic prosperity. Though it recognized that ASEAN was not in the business of providing a security umbrella, Vietnam favored membership in ASEAN for the opportunity it presented to discuss regional security issues. This perception was influenced by ASEAN’s 1992 Declaration on the South China Sea, which called for peaceful resolution of the disputes between claimants, a move which was met with approval in Hanoi and caused some consternation in Beijing.<sup>190</sup> Moreover, Vietnam has been an active proponent of and participant in the security dialogue of the ASEAN Regional Forum, even before becoming a member of ASEAN itself.<sup>191</sup>

Memories of Vietnam’s Cold War goal of a united Indochina has contributed to an uneasy peace between Vietnam and Cambodia. This unease could perhaps cause

instability within an ASEAN which will certainly include Cambodia in the future. Michael Leifer offers the view that "Cambodia has been prized from Vietnam's grasp, and a deep tension based on cultural differences and historical experience is expected to shape an uncertain future relationship."<sup>192</sup> Vietnam's threat perceptions remained at a high level even after the peace accords were signed, inflamed by a resurgence of the activities of the Khmer Rouge following the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia. Khmer forces took part in a series of attacks against Vietnamese fishermen living along the Tonle Sap in 1993, causing a mass exodus of some 20,000 Vietnamese from Cambodia. Accusations by both sides of incursions along the border have also been a source of tensions.<sup>193</sup> Should the scenario develop in which a faction similar to the Khmer Rouge renews attacks against the Vietnamese, such a crisis would be a severe test of ASEAN unity.

Vietnam and Thailand have improved their relationship in recent years, though it would not have been surprising to see the opposite occur. The ten-year faceoff which took place between Vietnam and Thailand over Cambodia attests to the strength of this rivalry. Considering William S. Turley's explanation of the geostrategic perceptions of the Vietnam Communist Party elite provided earlier, it is conceivable that Thailand's aspirations for economic resurgence in Indochina may be viewed as threatening to Vietnam. Likewise, improved relations between Bangkok and Vientiane could create some unease in Hanoi over Thailand's intentions, considering the strategic importance of Laos to Vietnam. Despite these potentialities, the only recent concern which appears to have been of any significance to Vietnam has been the maritime disputes in the Gulf of

Thailand, resolved through bilateral dialogue in 1997. Further cooperation is likely given their mutual ties to ASEAN and Vietnam's non-threatening focus on internal development.

Laos and Vietnam continue to maintain the strong ties which were developed during the Vietnam War, when North Vietnamese forces collaborated with the Lao People's Army.<sup>194</sup> Vietnam and Laos are also signatories to a bilateral Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, a pact agreed to in part as a counter to perceptions of potential Chinese expansionism, and in 1997 they signed an agreement on further military cooperation and assistance.<sup>195</sup> Hence, while China dominates Vietnam's threat perceptions to the north and in the maritime zones, Vietnam is fairly comfortable with the security of its western flank. Aside from the problem of instability in Cambodia, Vietnam's perceptions of its mainland neighbors do not appear to be a source of friction for future ASEAN relations and security cooperation.

#### Implications for Security Cooperation

Vietnamese threat perceptions, dominated by the potential of Chinese hegemony, would appear to support Vietnam's commitment to security cooperation within ASEAN. At the same time, Vietnam must take care to avoid inciting Chinese aggression by adopting a threatening posture in its defense policies. This may be a moot point in the near term, for due to economic considerations Vietnam will be hard pressed to boost its military capability to a level which would seriously concern Beijing. Nor will Vietnam

be able to contribute to the level of security cooperation currently enjoyed by its more wealthy ASEAN neighbors.

Perhaps even more problematic is the pressure placed on ASEAN unity should growing discord between China and Vietnam amplify fears in Southeast Asia over long-term Chinese intentions. Vietnam could be the hinge on which swings ASEAN's commitment to regional security. As Ramses Amer opines, "tensions in Sino-Vietnamese relations puts the other ASEAN members in a dilemma since ASEAN solidarity implies that they should give support to Vietnam while at the same time they do not want to jeopardize their overall relationship with China."<sup>196</sup> The multilateral conflict management approach which ASEAN currently employs seems likely to fall on deaf ears in China. The precedent has already been set, as shown by China's insistence in 1994 on bilateral negotiations to resolve the disputes in the South China Sea.

Arguably, ASEAN's reluctance to create a more formal multilateral cooperative security structure has a greater impact on Vietnam than the other members of ASEAN. Vietnam is a weak, front-line state to China; it would not be surprising that Vietnamese threat perceptions lead it to seek a new security agreement outside of ASEAN, as it has done with Russia in the past. In this regard Vietnam would be pursuing a course of action not unlike that taken by Indonesia with Australia or Thailand with the U.S. One consideration in such an event should be the potential impact on the unity of ASEAN. But even more importantly, how would China react to the strengthening of Vietnam through a security alliance with an external power—would it be seen as a purely defensive action or as a means to exercise regional hegemony and contain China? In

1979, China's reaction to the Soviet-Vietnam pact was quite understandably the latter. In the multipolar world of the future, a stronger China determined to exercise its regional influence may once again react with a heavy hand against Vietnam, thereby detracting from any semblance of regional stability.

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<sup>169</sup> Michael Leifer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Coping with Vulnerability," in *East Asia in Transition: Toward a New Regional Order*, ed. Robert S. Ross (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1995), 274.

<sup>170</sup> Nayan Chanda, "Vietnam in Post-Cold War Asia: A Cautious Hand at the Wheel," in *China, India, Japan, and the Security of Southeast Asia*, ed. Chandran Jeshurun (Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), 243.

<sup>171</sup> Leifer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy," 274-275.

<sup>172</sup> Turley, 190.

<sup>173</sup> Ramses Amer, "Territorial Disputes Between China and Vietnam," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 19, no. 1 (June 1997): 99, 102.

<sup>174</sup> "PLA Chief of Staff in Vietnam," *Asian Defence Journal*, October 1996, 76.

<sup>175</sup> See "IN BRIEF--China Clears Landmines," *Janes Defence Weekly* 29, no. 2 (14 January 1998): 5; and "IN BRIEF--Vietnam," *Janes Defence Weekly* 27, no. 16 (23 April 1997): 16.

<sup>176</sup> "Clinton Opts Out of Oslo Landmine Ban Treaty," *Janes Defence Weekly* 28, No. 12 (24 September 1997): 3.

<sup>177</sup> Leifer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy," 276.

<sup>178</sup> Leifer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy," 277.

<sup>179</sup> Turley, 181.

<sup>180</sup> Leifer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy," 280.

<sup>181</sup> Richard K. Betts, "Vietnam's Strategic Predicament," *Survival* 37 (Autumn 1995): 70.

<sup>182</sup> Turley, 180.

<sup>183</sup> Leifer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy," 281.

<sup>184</sup> Turley, 180.

<sup>185</sup> Hoang Anh Tuan, "Vietnam's Membership in ASEAN: Economic, Political and Security Implications," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 16, no. 3 (June 1996): 271.

<sup>186</sup> "Japan Woos Vietnamese," *Janes Defence Weekly* 29, no. 4 (28 January 1998): 12.

<sup>187</sup> Turley, 206.

<sup>188</sup> Leifer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy," 283.

<sup>189</sup> Leifer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy," 284-285.

<sup>190</sup> Leifer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy," 285.

<sup>191</sup> Leifer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy," 285.

<sup>192</sup> Leifer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy," 286.

<sup>193</sup> See Chanda, 248-249; "Cambodia Accuses Vietnam of 'Invasion'," *Asian Defence Journal*, March 1996, 81; and "Vietnam Irked by Cambodian PM's Accusations on Border," *Asian Defence Journal*, September 1996, 77.

<sup>194</sup> Turley, 206-207.

<sup>195</sup> See Robert Karniol, "Vietnam, Laos Renew Links in Military Deal," *Janes Defence Weekly* 27, no. 8 (26 February 1997): 13; and "IN BRIEF--Vietnamese Visit Laos," *Janes Defence Weekly* 28, no. 19 (12 November 1997): 25.

<sup>196</sup> Amer, 107-108.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

This paper began with the hypothesis that divergent views among the nations of Southeast Asia may impede security cooperation within ASEAN, thereby interjecting a deleterious and destabilizing effect upon regional international relations. It is true that the post-Cold War environment in Asia has introduced additional uncertainty to the mechanics of regional security, both in the near and long term. Each nation of ASEAN will react differently to this uncertainty, generating from it their own unique perceptions of threat and threat response. However, the evidence presented also points to several similarities in the security concerns and defense priorities of the Southeast Asian nations, similarities which will prove fortuitous to enhanced security cooperation within ASEAN.

Despite ASEAN's past avoidance of an overt commitment to a regional security alliance, common threat perceptions and similar security priorities of key nations in ASEAN will make formal security ties politically more acceptable and valuable to the protection of member states interests. Much of the diplomatic dialogue of the various ASEAN conferences and meetings has already set the stage for a more cohesive and substantive regional security organization. Moreover, security cooperation mechanisms that are currently in place, including bilateral cooperation within ASEAN, the ASEAN Regional Forum, and the Five Power Defence Arrangement, help promote an atmosphere of trust and confidence and a movement toward resolution of differences which could otherwise unhinge regional stability.

Case studies of Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam were chosen for this research because of their dominant influence within ASEAN and their notable differences in historical approaches to security and international relations. Despite each having a unique history, form of government, socio-cultural makeup, and political-military establishment, these three nations share in common four major security challenges which seem sure to influence regional threat response in the foreseeable future. They include: (1) an increased threat to security in the maritime zones from such activities as piracy, smuggling, drug trafficking, violations of critical SLOCs, and competition for sea-based resources; (2) the threat of an external force influencing or supporting internal unrest or instability (this could include a force associated with a foreign power or one associated with an environmental threat, such as a natural disaster); (3) the “spillover effect” of a regional dispute festering into open conflict and impinging on the sovereignty and stability of one or more of the ASEAN states; and (4) an uncertain threat presented by China’s growing wealth and expanding military power.

Bilateral and multilateral security cooperation has been and continues to be an important threat response to tensions and instability associated with the first three categories of threat. Threat response in the case of the fourth category is less clear. ASEAN, being an organization of small states, can ill afford to create unnecessary hostility in its relations with China by encouraging a strategy of containment or isolation involving a unified cooperative security effort which excludes China. By the same token, ASEAN must prepare itself should China in the long term develop a more menacing stance toward security and defense interests in Southeast Asia. In this case it may be

prudent that ASEAN lays the groundwork for an alliance structure through gradual improvements in bilateral and especially multilateral security cooperation. As Walt points out, “a defensive alliance to oppose a potential threat will protect you if the state in question is in fact aggressive. Such an alliance will be superfluous—but probably not dangerous—if the state in question turns out to be benign.”<sup>1</sup> This argument may provide little comfort to ASEAN, given its preference for non-threatening and conciliatory actions. The formulation of an appropriate threat response would be heavily influenced by the uncertainty of China’s reaction to an alliance or other form of increased security cooperation.

Amitav Acharya’s nomenclature of *security regime*, presented in Chapter Three, appears to be an accurate portrayal of ASEAN’s current status of threat response, and as such suggests that the pre-requisites for an alliance are already in place. Confidence building measures and other mechanisms to promote transparency in defense issues are especially important first steps in ASEAN due to the expansion of the organization and inclusion of nations with differing interests. However, military-military contacts not only help to encourage mutual trust and confidence. Bilateral and even multilateral cooperation may prove essential to a program of threat response for less controversial, but no less significant, threats. The Five Power Defense Arrangement and the “spider web” of bilateral military exchanges have established a pattern of contacts within ASEAN which should facilitate cooperation in threat response.

For example, security of the maritime zones may be an area where coordinated efforts within ASEAN would help secure critical SLOCs and reduce the threat of

smuggling, piracy, and other threatening activity on the regional seas. Due to overlapping EEZs, the expanse of the area involved, and the limited capabilities of the individual nations, a multilateral approach may lend efficiencies to countering challenges to maritime security. In this regard, a regional "coast guard" or "naval contingency force" might be a viable concept--a pool of vessels contributed by each of the nations and dedicated to maintaining security in the maritime "hot spots" of the region. This concept has been introduced in other regions in the world with some success. Several island-states in the Caribbean have experimented with multilateral security to combat threats such as drug trafficking and other criminal elements operating in the maritime zones. The ships making up NATO's Standing Naval Forces Atlantic (SNFL) and Standing Naval Forces Mediterranean (SNFM) are examples of a more structured multilateral naval task force, albeit one based on a formal alliance and capable of responding to a wider variety of maritime contingencies than those currently threatening ASEAN.

Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) operations may be another area where a structured organization based on improved security cooperation may serve the greater good of ASEAN. Each of the militaries of Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, and the Philippines are at least partially responsible for domestic HA/DR missions, much as the U.S. Armed Forces is tasked to respond to similar domestic and overseas contingencies. Given a preference for finding a regional solution to regional problems, it is not unreasonable to expect ASEAN to take the lead in a regional disaster response scenario involving multilateral forces. On a bilateral basis, Malaysia and Indonesia have recently agreed on plans to conduct joint disaster relief operations.<sup>2</sup> A

formal HA/DR organization operating under an ASEAN umbrella could coordinate pre-planned responses among the military forces and other elements involved in HA/DR. Regional cooperation would also benefit from actual operations or exercises and other military exchanges associated with regional response in a HA/DR scenario.

Taking into account the limited military capabilities of the ASEAN nations, threat perceptions also help explain the usefulness of the ASEAN Regional Forum. Lacking the means to mount a credible military option against a significant threat from an external power, ASEAN has used the dialogue of the Regional Forum to maximize regional transparency and facilitate an exchange of views between external powers with interests in Southeast Asia. Of the external powers, China and India concern ASEAN the most. In addition to the threat potential of a strengthened People's Liberation Army and uncertainty over Chinese intentions in the South China Sea, ASEAN is also concerned about a potential Sino-Indian conflict spilling over into Southeast Asia. Buffers such as Tibet and the Himalayan plateau have tempered tense relations between these two historical rivals. However, China's expanding interests, as shown in its negotiations with Burma over access to the Indian Ocean, makes contact between Indian and Chinese forces more likely in the future. For instance, a Chinese naval threat in the Indian Ocean would cause India to expand its own naval capabilities, thereby increasing the potential for conflict and spillover effects on Southeast Asia. Through the dialogue of the Regional Forum, ASEAN can observe developments in the Sino-Indian relationship while it deters conflict between the two.



Given, then, that ASEAN has set in place the diplomatic dialogue and military contacts which are prerequisites to a security alliance, and given the existence of certain common defense concerns, ASEAN is positioned to play a more prominent role in assuring the security of Southeast Asia. As a first step, a beneficial proposal would be the establishment of a multilateral maritime organization tasked with responding to non-state sponsored threats such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. This would improve the capability of ASEAN in threat response without offending neighboring states or depreciating international relations between the nations of ASEAN and others in Asia. For example, multilateral search and rescue operations on the regional seas require the same command and control and interoperability considerations as multilateral operations against a state-sponsored threat. Establishing common language and communications, ensuring sensor interoperability, and cooperating in the resolution of targeting priorities are all tasks and issues which are equally important to the recovery of individuals lost at sea as they are to combating a belligerent naval force. While performing a public service and avoiding the politically sensitive designation as a regional security alliance, a multilateral maritime HA/DR response force can accomplish its mission while maintaining readiness to defend against less benign state threats.

In summary, current threat perceptions within ASEAN support a progression toward improved security cooperation rather than acting as a divisive element within the organization. Multilateral security cooperation, grounded in the success of bilateral relations and ASEAN dialogue, may be a source of efficiency and strength in combating non-conventional threats to the security of the region. To take advantage of such an

arrangement, however, ASEAN would need to ensure that its intentions are transparent to China, which otherwise may feel threatened by a unified security organization on its southern flank. The ASEAN Regional Forum offers one avenue for maintaining a depth of understanding on security issues between Southeast Asia and China as well as gaining enhancements to regional cooperative security efforts by the direct involvement of all the external powers.

ASEAN is unlikely to carry these improvements in security cooperation to the extreme of an alliance, especially lacking a distinct and significant military threat to the stability and prosperity of the region. Instead, ASEAN will benefit from a framework which permits flexibility in threat response--from conflict prevention to mutual support against non-conventional threats. However, the formation of a military alliance within ASEAN should not be dismissed as an impossibility. As ASEAN comes to resemble more closely Acharya's definition of a security community, regional stability will be enriched even as the groundwork is laid for a more substantial multilateral mechanism of threat response. With an informal structure in place, a unifying perception of a significant external threat will draw the nations of ASEAN closer to agreement on the potentialities of a formal security alliance.

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 179.

<sup>2</sup> "Relief for Malaysia, Indonesia," *Janes Defence Weekly* 29, no. 1 (7 January 1998): 14.

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