

**A SURVEY OF MILITARY COOPERATION AMONG THE ASEAN STATES:  
Bilateralism or Alliance?**

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## Introduction

Political and security relations among the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have seldom been free from contentious bilateral problems. Yet one of the most important features of the intra-ASEAN strategic environment in recent years has been a rapid expansion of bilateral defence and security ties between ASEAN members. Evolving from simple intelligence exchanges on border insurgencies, such ties have now come to feature, among other things, joint operations against insurgents on common borders, regular contacts and intelligence exchanges between high-level military and security officials, joint contingency planning for mutual assistance against external threats, exchanges of senior level officers for training, provision of field training facilities, joint maritime surveillance and patrols, cooperative arms transfers, and a range of military exercises to develop common operating procedures and simulate joint action against common threats.

Indeed, such bilateral security and defence ties have evolved to a point where they now affect the fundamental objectives and role of ASEAN as a regional group. Against this backdrop, the purpose of this paper is to undertake three tasks relating to the nature and implications of bilateral defence and security cooperation within ASEAN. The first is to analyse the evolution of ASEAN states' attitudes towards security cooperation with a view to explaining why they have so far preferred bilateralism over alliance. The second is to provide an overview of the nature, scope and patterns of existing bilateral defence and security ties within ASEAN. The third is to analyse the constraints on, and prospects for, ASEAN military cooperation in the light of some of the recent developments in the regional political and security milieu of Southeast Asia and Asia-Pacific.

Two major developments have rendered the issue of intra-ASEAN military cooperation increasingly important to any serious evaluation of the current and future direction of the regional grouping. The first, as mentioned earlier, is the sheer proliferation of bilateral military links among the member states. With the exception of Malaysia and the Philippines (which are still locked in a dispute over the latter's claim to Sabah), all the other ASEAN states have developed some form of bilateral military ties with one another. Indeed, military links underscore the changing context of some of the most difficult political relationships within ASEAN. Last year saw the initiation of the first ever bilateral army exercises between Singapore and Malaysia and Singapore and Indonesia, which, coupled with Indonesia's readiness to offer air force and army training facilities to Singapore, are indicative of the transformation of Singapore's delicate security position *vis-à-vis* its Malay neighbours. These ties, along with intensifying cooperation between Malaysia and Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, Philippines and Indonesia, Brunei and Singapore, Singapore and Thailand, and Thailand and Indonesia, suggest the emergence of what Indonesia's armed forces commander, General Try Sutrisno, has aptly referred to as a 'defence spider web' in ASEAN.<sup>1</sup> Judging from their scope and regularity, bilateral security and defence interaction between its member states is no longer peripheral to ASEAN's image and identity as a regional grouping; indeed, as Donald Weatherbee has contended, such ties can no longer be simply dismissed 'as not [being] functionally part of the ASEAN political community.'<sup>2</sup>

The second, and perhaps a more remarkable trend in intra-ASEAN security relations in recent years is the willingness of ASEAN leaders to 'think the unthinkable': a multilateral ASEAN security framework. At least judging by publicly aired views, the notion of an ASEAN security framework (as opposed to a military pact) is no longer the taboo subject it was not so long ago. The foreign minister of Malaysia, Abu Hassan Omar, has gone as far as to suggest the creation of an 'ASEAN Defence Community' which would 'take the ASEAN states to new heights of political and military cooperation.'<sup>3</sup> Singapore has expressed the hope, in the words of its top military officer, Winston Choo, that 'firm and strong bilateral ties will provide the

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<sup>1</sup> *Straits Times* (Weekly Overseas Edition), 9 December 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Donald Weatherbee, 'ASEAN Regionalism: The Salient Dimension', in Karl Jackson and M. Hadi Soesatro, eds., *ASEAN Security and Economic Development*, Research Papers and Policy Studies, No.11 (Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1984), p. 266.

<sup>3</sup> *Straits Times*, 5 May 1989; *The Sunday Times* (Singapore), 14 May 1989.

foundation for multilateral cooperation.<sup>4</sup> In August 1989, the former foreign minister of Indonesia, Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, made a similar call for an ASEAN military arrangement<sup>5</sup>. Even the Philippines, which has always been the odd man out in terms of intra-ASEAN security relations, is taking the view, as articulated by Defence Secretary Fidel Ramos, that 'Defence cooperation is a must in ASEAN.'<sup>6</sup> Although many of such suggestions to strengthen ASEAN security relations remain ill-defined, the very fact that such views are being voiced in public is no small breakthrough. It represents a major shift from the past when any mention of military cooperation by one member was sure to prompt firm disavowals from others. This time the message from Messrs Mochtar, Ramos and Abu Hassan have found few dissenters from the ranks of senior politicians and officials in ASEAN states.

The question of whether a military/security arrangement binding the ASEAN states, if it is to take place, should be constructed within or outside the formal framework of ASEAN itself remains an open and thorny issue. But the issue itself has received little systematic treatment in the literature on Southeast Asian regional security. This is largely due to two factors: a general unwillingness among policymakers in the ASEAN states to release information on military matters in the name of national security, and second, the political sensitivity surrounding the specific subject of intra-ASEAN military links. As a result, debates on ASEAN security and defence cooperation have been marred by a paucity of reliable information. This paper, based on extensive primary research, is intended to fill the information gap and facilitate efforts by scholars towards more conceptual generalizations on the subject.

## **Evolution of Bilateralism**

The political and security role of ASEAN has evolved through three major challenges. The first was the US withdrawal from Indochina and the communist takeover of South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. These developments provided the impetus to the first ASEAN summit at Bali, which in turn gave ASEAN's latent security objectives their most serious public expression. The second challenge, the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in December 1978, gave a more substantive meaning to political and security cooperation, one of its salient dimensions being pledges of support to Thailand made by its ASEAN partners in the event of aggression against ASEAN's 'frontline' state. Although less important than the previous two, the increasing Soviet strategic links with Vietnam, including its presence in the South China Sea and Cam Ranh Bay, provided the backdrop to a third potential turning point in the evolution of ASEAN's security concerns. This development prompted calls for new levels of security cooperation, especially the advocacy by Singapore's Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, of multilateral military exercises among the ASEAN states.

Each of the three challenges has led to a review of ASEAN's political character and prompted ideas and notions, both general and specific, to step up security cooperation within ASEAN. Each has constituted a challenge to the framework of bilateralism which had been the mode of intra-ASEAN security and military cooperation since (in some cases prior to) the formation of the regional grouping. Therefore, an analysis of their impact on the ASEAN states' security concerns is an appropriate starting point for identifying the considerations which have kept intra-ASEAN security cooperation bilateral to this date.

Prior to the Bali Summit, ASEAN's vision of regional order in Southeast Asia was influenced by an 'inward-looking' concept of security, a concept which recognized the primacy of domestic development and stability as the key to regional peace and security, and stressed the role of ASEAN as a vehicle for economic cooperation and development which would eliminate the

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<sup>4</sup> Lt General Winston Choo quoted in *Straits Times*, 23 March 1989.

<sup>5</sup> *Indonesian Observer*, 10 August 1989.

<sup>6</sup> *The Sunday Times* (Singapore), 26 November 1989.

sources of popular discontent. In the literature on international relations, the origin of alliances is usually attributed to commonly perceived external military threats by its membership. In the case of the ASEAN states, the security concerns of their leadership converged not on any threat of external aggression, but on the problems of domestic insurgency and subversion. ASEAN leaders recognized the futility of countering such threats through a military alliance. If there was an 'ASEAN view of security,' colouring the attitude of its members towards security cooperation, then it was best described in terms of the concept of national resilience promoted by Indonesia's New Order leadership. 'Resilience' denoted an 'inward looking concept of security, based on the proposition that national security lies not in military alliances or under the military umbrella of any great power, but in self-reliance deriving from domestic factors such as economic and social development, political stability and a sense of nationalism.'<sup>7</sup>

The rejection of an alliance option by the ASEAN states was also shaped by their avowed commitment to promote regional autonomy from great power competition and intervention. The main step taken in this regard, the declaration of a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) in 1977, was aimed at rendering the external security linkages of the individual ASEAN members less provocative to adversaries like Vietnam and China. ZOPFAN also underscored the primacy of ASEAN's role as a forum for inter-member conflict-prevention and resolution. In this context a military alliance, even if restricted to the members of the grouping alone (that is, not involving any western powers as was the case with SEATO), was deemed to be subversive of ASEAN's fundamental aims and objectives. For one thing, it would have invited comparisons with the discredited great power security guarantees of the cold war era, represented by the increasingly defunct SEATO. Given the security links between individual ASEAN states (except Indonesia) and Western powers, a military arrangement among the former would provoke accusations of the 'SEATOization' of ASEAN, thereby undermining the credibility of ZOPFAN. This consideration was especially important in view of Vietnam's increasingly shrill accusations that 'ASEAN will become another SEATO and Japan and the US may use ASEAN as an organisation to expand their influence in Southeast Asia'<sup>8</sup> It also explained the opposition of Indonesia, which prided itself as the only genuine non-aligned country in ASEAN, to any ASEAN military pact which smacked of dependence on Western security guarantees. As Adam Malik put it, 'Pacts are of no value and don't really add strength to a region.'<sup>9</sup> Carlos Romulo, the foreign minister of the Philippines agreed with this view: 'We did not phase out SEATO in order to set up another one'<sup>10</sup>

Although there was agreement among the member states in the formative years of ASEAN on the undesirability of a military pact, military cooperation was not completely ruled out as a future option. Tunku Abdul Rahman took a gradualist view of ASEAN cooperation, arguing that the initial thrust of ASEAN should be on 'economic and cultural matters' which were likely to prove less controversial and more manageable. If these initiatives proved successful, according to Tunku, then 'efforts could be made towards establishing a more far reaching organisation which would extend to political as well as security fields.'<sup>11</sup> Lee Kuan Yew agreed with this view: the initial focus of ASEAN, according to Lee, should be mutual benefit in the field of economic cooperation. This could later develop into other areas, including security and defence.<sup>12</sup> On the eve of the Bali summit, Lee contended that:

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<sup>7</sup> David Irvine, 'Making Haste Slowly: ASEAN from 1975,' in Alison Broinowski, *Understanding ASEAN* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 40.

<sup>8</sup> Cited in *Straits Times*, 12 February 1976.

<sup>9</sup> *Straits Times*, 22 August 1974.

<sup>10</sup> *Straits Times*, 22 December 1975.

<sup>11</sup> Cited in Bilveer Singh, 'An Appraisal of ASEAN Land Forces Cooperation,' Paper presented to the Defence Asia '89 Conference on 'Towards Greater Military and Security Cooperation: Issues and Prospects,' Singapore, 22-25 May, 1989, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> *Straits Times*, 19 November 1975.

First, you must have economic cooperation, then you go on to political and diplomatic coordination of policies, then to intelligence coordination and sharing, which is already existing, then to other fields beyond that.<sup>13</sup>

While rejecting the need for a military alliance, ASEAN states were quietly forging bilateral links to cope with the threat of subversion. Bilateral cooperation against border insurgencies that had developed between Malaysia and Indonesia and Malaysia and Thailand were considered to be acceptable models for security cooperation which would be sufficient to deal with the threat at hand. Furthermore, bilateralism was preferable to a formal alliance in view of the distinctive security concerns of the ASEAN states. Ghazali Shafie, the foreign minister of Malaysia, provided a cogent rationale for bilateralism in an article written for the London *Times* of 22 November 1970:

projects under ASEAN (and other regional bodies) are generally limited in scope and necessarily restricted to the lowest common denominator which is acceptable to all member countries...The limitation of regional cooperation within a formal framework should not prevent countries of the region from trying to forge the closest possible links on a bilateral basis with one another. It may be, for example, that country X would be willing to establish such links on specific subjects and would be prepared to engage in consultations including exchange of information, etc, with country Y which she might not consider either appropriate or necessary to have with some other third country on a multilateral basis. Such bilateral contacts on any subject and at whatever level which may be mutually acceptable should be pursued as far as possible. In this way, an important criss-crossing network of bilateral links will be established between and among the countries of Southeast Asia...In pursuance of this policy, Malaysia has...entered into close bilateral economic/cultural and security/military arrangements with a number of countries in the region. Malaysia's joint border operations with Thailand in the Thai/Malaysian boundary and with Indonesia on the Sarawak/Kalimantan border of East Malaysia as well as cooperation with Singapore in the context of the Five Power Defence Arrangement, are cases in point in the field of security and defence.<sup>14</sup>

The first major challenge to bilateralism came on the eve of the Bali summit. In the lead up to Bali, the threat of insurgency and subversion had pushed the ASEAN members towards regular exchanges of intelligence, both on a bilateral and, possibly multilateral basis (as is evident from Lee's comments above). But in the course of preparations towards the first ASEAN summit, there were indications that sections within the Indonesian leadership were willing to move beyond bilateralism. An Indonesian study paper circulated prior to the summit was believed to have suggested the formation of a 'joint council' for defence cooperation and the holding joint military exercises among the ASEAN states.<sup>15</sup> However, existing sensitivities regarding a military role for ASEAN once again proved decisive. Deliberations over security issues at the pre-summit meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers in Pattaya, Thailand crystallized, as Carlos Romulo put it, the 'general view...that security considerations should not be institutionalised on an ASEAN basis.' At the Pattaya meeting 'complete agreement was reached on the desirability of continued [bilateral cooperation] some of which ante-date the association.'<sup>16</sup> The Declaration of ASEAN Concord issued at Bali gave formal expression to this position by calling for the 'continuation of cooperation on a non-ASEAN basis between member states in security matters in accordance with their mutual needs and interests.' Summing up the position reached at Bali regarding security cooperation, the Malaysian prime minister, Hussein Onn, stated:

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<sup>13</sup> Cited in Bernard K. Gordon, 'Asian Perspectives on Security: the ASEAN Region', *Asian Forum: A Quarterly Journal of Asian Affairs*, Vol.8, No.4 (Autumn 1976), p. 69.

<sup>14</sup> M. Ghazalie Shafie, *Malaysia: International Relations* (Kuala Lumpur: Creative Enterprises, 1982), pp.161-62.

<sup>15</sup> Frank Frost, 'The Origins and Evolution of ASEAN,' *World Review* Vol 19, No. 3 (August 1980), p.10; Tim Huxley, 'The ASEAN States' Defence Policies, 1975-81: Military Response to Indochina?', Working Paper No.88 (Canberra: Australian National University, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1986), p.52. See also *Straits Times*, 10 February 1976.  
An indication of Indonesia's interest in greater ASEAN military cooperation was the composition of the Indonesian delegation to the pre-summit meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers at Pattaya. The Indonesian delegation included at least four senior military and intelligence officers. Also important was the timing of a strong statement by Indonesian foreign minister Adam Malik on the Chinese threat to the region. Just prior to the Pattaya meeting, Malik criticised the complacency that he sensed in the attitude of his ASEAN partners, especially Thailand, towards China. His statement was seen as an attempt to put defence and security at the top of the Bali summit agenda. *Straits Times*, 22 December 1975; 7 February 1976; 10 February 1976; and 12 February 1976.

<sup>16</sup> *Straits Times*, 12 February 1976.

It is obvious that ASEAN member states do not wish to change the character of ASEAN as a socio-economic organisation into a security alliance as this would only create misunderstanding in the region and undermine the positive achievements of ASEAN in promoting peace and stability through socio-economic and related fields...[The Bali summit] reiterated the nature of ASEAN as a non-ideological, non-military and non-antagonistic grouping.<sup>17</sup>

In the aftermath of the Bali summit, ASEAN policy-makers continued to reject the idea of multilateral security and defence cooperation. At the annual ASEAN foreign ministers' conference in Singapore in July 1977, the representatives from Malaysia and Indonesia issued a joint statement proclaiming that the main threat to the region was the possibility of increased subversive activities 'which could be handled on a national and bilateral basis.'<sup>18</sup> The Thai foreign minister declared that military alliances were 'obsolete' and stressed that ASEAN had 'nothing to do with military cooperation.'<sup>19</sup> This position was reaffirmed at the Kuala Lumpur summit where the leaders were believed to have consulted closely on the threat posed by subversive activities, but rejected any change to ASEAN's position on, and preference for, bilateralism.<sup>20</sup>

Although the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia pushed ASEAN into the diplomatic limelight as a result of its successful campaign to mobilize international public opinion against the Vietnamese action, its main security concern was expressed not so much in terms of an advocacy of a military alliance to deal with the new situation, but in terms of deliberations over possible contingency assistance to Thailand in the event of a spill-over of the conflict within Cambodia. Like the subversion issue before, coming to terms with Thailand's 'frontline' status became the focal point of ASEAN's dilemma concerning security collaboration. Indonesia, which had previously denied that it would be obliged to aid Thailand in the event of aggression,<sup>21</sup> now asserted that it would provide aid to any ASEAN nation facing such a prospect. Singapore and Malaysia came up with similar pledges of help to Thailand against a Vietnamese attack. Although none of the ASEAN partners provided specifics regarding the kind of aid envisaged, provision of military aid was assumed to be included. Indonesia's Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, General Panggabean, stated that Indonesia's assistance could take the form of economic as well as military aid. 'If they [the threatened nation], are short of ammunition, we can give them ammunition.'<sup>22</sup> Although it was not clear to what extent Panggabean's statement reflected the official Indonesian position, (a similar comment by him in late 1970 that Indonesia would provide military assistance to its ASEAN neighbours against attack had been dismissed by the then Foreign Minister, Adam Malik)<sup>23</sup> they fuelled speculation concerning a major shift in Indonesia's thinking on ASEAN security cooperation. Malaysia was less forthcoming insofar as direct military aid was concerned. Home Minister Ghazalie Shafie stated that 'Our contribution will be in the form of helping the Thais building up their resilience or by sending goods they are short of.'<sup>24</sup> This indicated that Malaysia envisaged provision of logistics support, rather than troop assistance, as the major form of aid to Thailand in the event of a Vietnamese attack. Singapore's position was more or less

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<sup>17</sup> *New Straits Times*, 11 January 1978.

<sup>18</sup> *Straits Times*, 6 July 1977.

<sup>19</sup> *Straits Times*, 6 July 1977.

<sup>20</sup> *Manila Journal*, 21-27 August 1977.

<sup>21</sup> *Straits Times*, 1 August 1977.

<sup>22</sup> David Jenkins, 'Panggabean's False Alarm,' *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 8 June 1979, p. 24.

<sup>23</sup> Arnafin Jorgensen-Dahl, *Regional Organization and Order in Southeast Asia* (London, Macmillan, 1982), p. 115. Panggabean's comments assumed significance in view of unsubstantiated press reports circulating in the region which claimed movement of 'secret military air traffic' between Jakarta and Bangkok carrying 'military equipment as well as personnel.' These reports proved to be unfounded. Jenkins, op. cit. p. 24.

<sup>24</sup> *New Straits Times*, 21 November 1979.

similar, although the Republic, with its advanced defence production capability, was in a much better position than Malaysia to provide logistics support as well as armaments to its threatened neighbour.<sup>25</sup>

While ASEAN leaders generally hinted that any contingency aid to Thailand could be provided on a bilateral, rather than multilateral, basis, it was evident that the Vietnamese action had prompted ASEAN policy-making circles to rethink their position on collective security.<sup>26</sup> President Marcos appeared to be more receptive to the idea of ASEAN security cooperation, which he thought was necessary as a measure 'to stem the tide of insurgency.'<sup>27</sup> Adam Malik, the former foreign minister of Indonesia who had been on record as opposing a military role for ASEAN while in power, now proposed that ASEAN should hold a military exercise of 10,000 troops on the Thai-Cambodian border to demonstrate its unity to Vietnam.<sup>28</sup> Thailand, while taking a cautious and ambivalent view towards the need for an ASEAN alliance (because the 'time is not [ripe] yet'), nonetheless supported the idea of joint ASEAN military exercises as a response to the new security situation. In June 1979, Prime Minister Kriangsak Chomanan declared that, 'if the ASEAN governments desire to hold joint manoeuvres, why can't we do it? But we have to wait for the proper time.'<sup>29</sup> At the same time, he expressed readiness to participate in such exercises: 'however, if anyone would like to have joint exercises, we are ready. Manoeuvres can be held in Thailand or if they are held elsewhere, we can send forces there.'<sup>30</sup>

But translating the pledges made by Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore to provide contingency support to Thailand into a framework for ASEAN-wide security cooperation against external threats proved to be elusive. Any temptation to form an ASEAN military arrangement to provide contingency support to Thailand against Vietnam needed to be tempered by the prevailing pessimism concerning ASEAN's collective ability to stand up to an all-out Vietnamese attack. As Lee Kuan Yew warned: 'there is no combination of forces in Southeast Asia that can stop the Vietnamese on the mainland of Asia.'<sup>31</sup> More importantly, the differing perspectives within ASEAN on Sino-Vietnamese rivalry, telescoped by the Cambodia crisis, proved to be a major barrier to greater intra-ASEAN political and security cooperation. This aspect reflected lack of agreement over the identity of a common external threat which might have served as the basis of multilateral security collaboration. Thailand's policy of seeking China's support against Vietnam served to exacerbate these differences. While the Thai position was based on the calculation that Chinese pressure on the Vietnamese border reduced the threat to Thailand, the Chinese pledges of assistance to Thailand were not conducive to the forging of an ASEAN security consensus. Malaysia and Indonesia expressed misgivings about the Thai position, based on their long-standing perception that it was China, rather than the Soviet Union or Vietnam, that posed the most serious long-term threat to regional security and stability. Their recognition of

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25 This was confirmed by General Saiyud Kerdphol, the former Supreme Commander of Royal Thai Armed Forces, in a personal interview with the author. According to General Saiyud, both Malaysia and Singapore were informally involved, along with the US, in a plan to provide contingency assistance to Thailand in the event of a major escalation of the Cambodia conflict spilling over into Thailand. This plan, worked out by General Saiyud himself and dubbed 'Joint Logistics Plan' (JLP), envisaged provision of armaments, including 'common items' such as ammunition and 105mm and 155mm guns, by Singapore and Malaysia from the latter's own stocks. According to General Saiyud, steps were taken to 'identify and mark' such items for emergency shipment. The JLP was a 'classified' plan worked out at the 'highest level' of the governments of the countries involved. It was to be activated in the event of a major threat to Thailand, not minor skirmishes on the border, but rather if Thailand faced the prospect of an open attack by Vietnam backed by the Soviet Union, resulting in seizure of Thai territory. Personal Interview, Bangkok, 26 June 1989 and 28 July 1989.

26 *Straits Times*, 27 June 1979, and 7 March 1979.

27 *Straits Times*, 4 March 1980.

28 *Star*, 9 May 1984.

29 *Bangkok World*, 9 June 1979.

30 *ibid.*

31 Cited in Rodolfo C. Garcia, 'Military Cooperation in ASEAN,' *The Pointer* (April-June 1987), p. 9.

Vietnam's potential as a 'countervailing force against China,<sup>132</sup> meant eschewing a military role for ASEAN which would have provoked and further alienated Vietnam at a time when both Malaysia and Indonesia continued to harbour hopes of an eventual rapprochement with Hanoi. Neither did Thailand wish the formation of a multilateral security pact within ASEAN which could have facilitated prompt assistance to it in time of need. The logistical (especially lack of air transport capability) and operational (lack of practice in joint operations with Thai forces) barriers to such an arrangement were enormous and recognized in Thai contingency planning. For the Thais, seeking assistance from the US (under the auspices of the Manila Pact and the Rusk-Thant agreement) was a much more credible policy against the Vietnamese threat than relying on its ASEAN partners. In fact, it was highly doubtful that the ASEAN states would have ventured to come to Bangkok's aid in the event of a major Vietnamese offensive without some sort of US security guarantee against possible retaliation by Hanoi.

ASEAN's rejection of a military pact has been maintained despite concerns not only over domestic insurgency or intra-regional conflict, but also security threats perceived from external powers. This was most evident from its response to the emergence of a strong Soviet-Vietnamese security partnership and a Soviet naval presence in the region in the early 1980s. The Soviet move was alarming to ASEAN leaders who regarded the existing 'balance of power' between the superpowers in the region as a key factor in ensuring regional stability. Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew provided the clearest expression of this concern. At a press conference in Jakarta on 9 November 1982, he advocated an expansion of existing bilateral military exercises, such as those between Singapore and Indonesia:

At a later stage the exercises may become trilateral and later quadrilateral. It's a matter which will have to evolve naturally. We feel the next stage - the trilateral exercises - is simple. The ideal would be multilateral exercises encompassing all the [ASEAN] members. But at least quadrilateral, so that there is no misunderstanding as to the perception of the threats.<sup>33</sup>

Lee's suggestion was important not because it contained a new idea concerning ASEAN defence cooperation, but because it once again tested the position of the ASEAN states on one of its more sensitive issues. In this respect, the response from the two key ASEAN nations, Thailand and Indonesia, was particularly noteworthy. Thailand, ASEAN's so-called frontline state which stood to lose most if the regional balance of power shifted in favour of Vietnam and the Soviet Union, ironically came up with the bluntest and most categorical rejection of Lee's idea. Noting that the Singapore leader was venting his concern 'about the expansion of Soviet influence in the region,' Thai foreign minister Siddhi Savetsila, stated: 'We in ASEAN don't want to be seen as a military pact...and even though regional security relates to all of us, we have never agreed to have multilateral military exercises.'<sup>34</sup> Sections within the Thai media saw Lee's proposal as deliberate 'kite flying' which might 'provide ideal grist for Hanoi's propaganda machine.'<sup>35</sup> The initial Indonesian response to Lee's suggestion was more cautious, with State Secretary Sudharmono saying that it 'should be considered.'<sup>36</sup> However, a few days later Vice President Adam Malik was openly sceptical, reiterating the familiar Indonesian view that existing bilateral linkages among ASEAN states were sufficient to deal with the emerging security threats and that any multilateral exercises, which would be 'similar to ASEAN opening a new front,' would provoke the 'other side.'<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Carolina Hernandez, 'Regional Security in ASEAN: A Philippine Perspective,' Paper Presented to the Asiatic Research Centre Conference on 'East Asian Security: Perceptions and Realities,' Seoul, Korea University, 25-26 May 1984, p. 12.

<sup>33</sup> Cited in Michael Richardson, 'ASEAN Extends Its Military Ties,' *Pacific Defence Reporter* (November 1982), p. 55.

<sup>34</sup> *Bangkok Post*, 11 September 1982.

<sup>35</sup> *Nation*, 13 September 1982.

<sup>36</sup> *Straits Times*, 14 September 1982.

<sup>37</sup> *New Straits Times*, 17 September 1982.

To sum up, bilateralism has endured as the principal mode of security collaboration within ASEAN (with the exception of intelligence exchanges) despite perceived challenges to regional security arising at three different 'levels': domestic insurgency and subversion in the early and mid-1970s, intra-regional conflict following the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, and extra-regional threats perceived from the Soviet presence in the South China Sea in the early 1980s. A number of factors have contributed to this, including: the preoccupation of ASEAN states with domestic stability; their fear of provoking Vietnam (and its communist allies) and the attendant dangers of being embroiled in superpower rivalry; the futility of an alliance in view of the military weakness of the ASEAN states; and the flexibility and perceived advantages of bilateral cooperation over alliance. But perhaps the most important conclusion is that while the ASEAN states have consistently and unequivocally rejected the idea of a formal military alliance to institutionalize and broaden bilateral security cooperation, their position on multilateral cooperation within an informal and possibly non-ASEAN framework has been much less rejectionist. The idea of joint exercises in particular found favour within sections of the policy-making elite of ASEAN states from time to time. It is against this backdrop that one may examine the key areas of bilateral defence and security cooperation which have evolved within ASEAN since its inception. While a detailed description of each form of cooperation is beyond the scope of this paper, the following sections will highlight four major forms of cooperation: border security arrangements, intelligence sharing, joint military exercises and training, and, most importantly, the implications of intra-ASEAN arms transfers and equipment standardization for the prospect of an ASEAN defence industry.

### **Border Region Cooperation**

Border region cooperation is the foundation of bilateral security arrangements between ASEAN states. Agreements between Indonesia and the Philippines to check illegal activities on their maritime border and Thailand and Malaysia to stamp out insurgents operating along their common land border predate the formation of ASEAN. The Bangkok agreement (not to be confused with the Bangkok Declaration on the formation of ASEAN) proclaiming an end to the Indonesia-Malaysia Confrontation paved the way for cooperation between the two countries geared to suppress the communist insurgency on their common (Sarawak-Kalimantan) border. The significance of these agreements go beyond countering common threats to the domestic stability of ASEAN members posed by communist insurgency and other illegal activities. Given that the spillover effect of insurgencies across national boundaries often created the potential for friction between neighbouring ASEAN states (as in the case of Thailand and Malaysia during the late 1970s and early 1980s as well as between Indonesia and Malaysia over Sukarno's support for Sarawak communists during the Confrontation), bilateral border security arrangements are also an important indicator of the process of conflict-management *between* ASEAN states.

Of the four bilateral border security agreements among the ASEAN states, that between Malaysia and the Philippines (signed in 1977) has made little headway, pending a mutually satisfactory solution to the Sabah dispute.<sup>38</sup> In contrast, cooperation between Indonesia and the Philippines (the two signed a Border Crossing Agreement in May 1961, which was followed by a Joint Border Patrol Agreement in 1975) has been more active and effective.<sup>39</sup> Border cooperation between the two countries covers a broader range of security threats. The 1975 agreement identified these as smuggling, illegal fishing and immigration, piracy and drug smuggling.<sup>40</sup> While the anti-insurgency aspects of this agreement have been downplayed, the general objective is to increase law enforcement against any activity threatening the security of either country.<sup>41</sup> Joint border patrols have been carried out since 1961. The two sides currently organize annual coordinated patrols (CORPATPHILINDO) in the waterway between southern Mindanao and northern Sulawesi involving patrol craft and maritime reconnaissance aircraft.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Asian Security, 1981* (Tokyo: Research Institute for Peace and Security, 1980), p. 120.

<sup>39</sup> *Straits Times*, 26 May 1977.

<sup>40</sup> *Straits Times*, 26 May 1977.

<sup>41</sup> *Straits Times*, 14 July 1977.

<sup>42</sup> Personal interview with the Philippine Defence Attache, Jakarta, 10 August 1989.

But it is the bilateral agreements between Thailand and Malaysia and Malaysia and Indonesia which have produced the most active and far reaching border security cooperation in ASEAN, and hence deserve special attention here. In conceptual and operational terms, the two agreements are similar, although their record in contributing to the suppression of insurgency has been different. The Thai-Malaysian agreement is the oldest bilateral border security arrangement in ASEAN, governed by a series of agreements dating back to 1949, with the agreement currently in force signed in 1977.<sup>43</sup> The basic framework for Indonesia-Malaysia border cooperation was the May 1966 Bangkok Agreement, in which joint operations against border region communist activity 'was agreed upon without any formal agreement being signed.'<sup>44</sup> This understanding was followed by an exchange of letters in March 1967. In 1972, the two countries signed a Border Security Agreement, which was revised and expanded in 1984.<sup>45</sup>

The two border security agreements are designed to cope with a broad range of security threats and illegal activities, although communist insurgency is the principal target. Thai-Malaysian cooperation is geared principally against the remnants of the Communist Party of Malay (CPM) which retreated into Thai territory following the successful British counter-insurgency campaign in Malay. But it has also provided the basis for a wider security understanding between the two sides especially in the wake of the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. It has been suggested that Malaysia's campaign against the CPM operating in the Thai-Malaysian border area provided the Thais some relief at a time when Bangkok had to devote attention and resources to the threat on its northern flank.<sup>46</sup> Border cooperation between Indonesia and Malaysia has encompassed even wider security implications. It initially focused on communist insurgents on the land border between the Kalimantan state of Indonesia and the Sarawak state of Malaysia. Under the 1984 agreement, the scope of cooperation was extended to include the maritime border in the Strait of Malacca while the 'common enemy' was redefined and broadened to include smugglers, drug traffickers and counterfeiters.<sup>47</sup> The scope of cooperation covers cross border traffic, smuggling and defence cooperation, the latter including anti-insurgency operations as well as exercises and contingency planning against 'external' threats.

In sharp contrast to the unwillingness of ASEAN countries to create any multilateral fora to promote security cooperation within ASEAN, (such as rejection of the idea of an ASEAN interior or defence ministers meeting) bilateral border security arrangements between Malaysia and Thailand and Malaysia and Indonesia are remarkably institutionalized. In the case of Thai-Malaysian cooperation, the 1959 agreement created two committees, one to coordinate policy, the second to oversee joint operations against insurgents. These two were forerunners of the General Border Committee (GBC) and the Regional Border Committee (RBC) respectively. The main responsibility of the GBC, headed initially by the interior ministers of the two countries (later defence ministers) is to make general policy decisions on measures to counter and eliminate insurgents on the Thai-Malaysian border. The RBC, co-chaired by the Commander of the Thai Fourth Army and the Malaysian Corps

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<sup>43</sup> These agreements are: Thai-Malaysia Police Frontier Agreement (1949); Agreement on Border Operations Against Communist Terrorists Between the Government of Thailand and the Government of the Federation of Malay (1959); Agreement Between the Government of Thailand and the Government of Malaysia on Border Cooperation (1965) and Agreement Between the Government of Thailand and the Government of Malaysia on Border Cooperation (1970); and Agreement Between the Government of Malaysia and the Government of Thailand on Border Cooperation (1977). Source: Roslan Kuntom, 'Bilateral Border Security Cooperation Between Malaysia and Thailand,' Paper presented to the First Annual Thailand-Malaysia Colloquium, Bangkok, 2-3 September, 1987, pp. 2-3.

<sup>44</sup> Tunku Abdul Rahman, 'Indonesian Peace Mission,' *Star*, 15 August 1983.

<sup>45</sup> 'Malaysia/Indonesia Security Arrangements,' *Foreign Affairs Malaysia*, Vol.5, No.2 (June 1972); Soedjati Djiwandono, 'Regional Security Cooperation: An ASEAN Perspective,' in *Pacific Regional Security: The 1985 Pacific Symposium* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1988), p. 534; *New Straits Times*, 29 November 1985.

<sup>46</sup> The former Foreign and Home Affairs Minister of Malaysia, Mohammed Ghazalie Shafie, claimed that the border agreement between Malaysia and Thailand provided the political basis for Malaysia to provide assistance to Thailand in the event of a Vietnamese attack. Personal Interview, Kuala Lumpur, 18 August 1989.

<sup>47</sup> *New Straits Times*, 29 November 1985.

Commander, is responsible for devising specific methods and tactics to fight the insurgents, to coordinate intelligence collection and sharing, and supervise combined operations between Malaysian and Thai forces. Malaysia-Indonesia border cooperation is similarly supervised by a joint border committee created under the 1972 agreement. The task of the committee is to 'confer on appropriate measures to be adopted with a view to eliminating the communist threat along the common border of...[the] two countries and also other matters pertaining to security in...border regions.'<sup>48</sup> The committee is headed by the Commander of the Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI) on the Indonesian side and the defence minister on the Malaysian side. At the operational level, planning, intelligence-sharing and joint operations within the framework of Thai-Malaysian border cooperation are overseen by a Regional Border Committee Office (RBCO) located in Songkhla, headed by a Thai military officer. Military cooperation under the auspices of the Indonesia-Malaysian border committee is the responsibility of a Staff Planning Committee jointly headed by senior military officials from both sides. In 1987, the mechanism for joint military activities under the Indonesia-Malaysia border committee was further streamlined with the creation of a new committee, Coordinated Operations Central Committee (COCC).<sup>49</sup>

The scope of both the Thai-Malaysian and Malaysia-Indonesia border security arrangements includes a variety of operational as well as non-operational measures of which the most important ones include intelligence-sharing, joint exercises, and joint operations. The original Thai-Malaysian agreement of 1949 provided for exchange of intelligence on an informal basis, while the 1965 agreement led to the creation of a 'Combined Intelligence Headquarters' in Songkhla 'to follow the movement of and exchange news' on insurgents.<sup>50</sup> Both the Thai-Malaysia and Indonesia-Malaysia border arrangements permit reciprocal posting of field intelligence teams in each other's territory. Exchange of tactical intelligence on the strength and movement of insurgents as well as exchange of information and experience on how to deal with insurgencies remain a key aspect of cooperation to date.

In both arrangements, bilateral military exercises were initiated as part of the campaign against insurgents within the framework of border cooperation. The range and frequency of exercises between Indonesia and Malaysia have been much more extensive than that between Malaysia and Thailand. The Malaysia-Indonesia border committee organized annual army exercises of the *Kekar Malindo* series. (It should be noted that the objective of these exercises has not been limited to counter-insurgency alone. In recent years, the purpose of the *Kekar Malindo* exercises has shifted towards training in 'conventional warfare and defence tactics'.<sup>51</sup>) The Thai-Malaysia Regional Border Committee launched two exercises: the *Sea Ex-Thamal* series of naval exercises beginning in 1979, and the *Air Thamal* series of annual air exercises from 1982 whose objective was 'to mount tactical air operations in support of ground troops operating against communist terrorists along the border area'.<sup>52</sup> The *Air Thamal* exercises have since been staged alternately from Butterworth in Malaysia and Haddyai in Thailand.

Insofar as joint operations against insurgents were concerned, the terms of the 1977 Thai-Malaysian agreement specified three types of operations: unilateral, coordinated, and combined. Unilateral operations were to be carried out independently by the security forces of each side on their respective borders, but both sides were granted the right of 'hot pursuit' subject to prior approval by the other side for the distance and duration of the border crossing. In the case of coordinated operations,

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<sup>48</sup> Text of 'Security Arrangements Between the Government of Malaysia and Indonesia,' *Foreign Affairs Malaysia* (June 1972).

<sup>49</sup> *New Straits Times*, 8 December 1987.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Col. Viratna Malaivangse, 'The Thai-Malaysian Border Cooperation Plays a Vital Role,' *Nation*, 31 May 1982.

<sup>51</sup> *New Straits Times*, 7 August 1986.

<sup>52</sup> Cited in J.N. Mak, 'ASEAN Air Cooperation: An Appraisal,' Paper presented to the Defence Asia '89 Conference on 'Towards Greater ASEAN Military and Security Cooperation: Issues and Prospects,' Singapore, 22-25 March 1989, p. 7.

security forces of both sides would operate within their own side of the border, with their movement, including any border crossings in hot pursuit, coordinated by two Combined Task Force Headquarters (under the agreement, each side was to create such a headquarters). Combined operations were to be planned jointly by the Combined Task Force Headquarters of both sides or higher agencies. In these operations, security forces from both sides would be deployed on either the Malaysian or Thai side of the border from the very start of operations.<sup>53</sup> The Thai-Malaysia border concept of joint operations served as a model for the Indonesia-Malaysia arrangement, with joint operations in the case of the latter divided into unilateral, coordinated and combined types.<sup>54</sup>

But the record of Thai-Malaysian cooperation differs markedly from that of Malaysia-Indonesia cooperation both in terms of effectiveness in checking the insurgency and avoidance of suspicions and misgivings regarding the sincerity of either side in helping one another. During the 1970s and early 1980s, Thai-Malaysian border cooperation was plagued by two major political difficulties. The first was Thai sensitivities towards the right of 'hot pursuit' granted to Malaysian security forces under the border agreement and the presence of Malaysian field police units in Thai territory (Betong). The 1959 agreement allowing border crossing by Malaysian troops into Thai territory in pursuit of CPM guerillas sparked off protest in Thailand on the grounds that it compromised Thai sovereignty. A new agreement signed in 1965 had to be revised in order to reflect Thai sensitivities, which sought specification that the right of hot pursuit would be given to Malaysian 'police field forces' rather than Malaysian 'soldiers.' This conflicted with Malaysia's intention, in the wake of the Kuala Lumpur race riots in 1969, to pursue an aggressive campaign against the CPM's activities in southern Thailand. With the advent of an elected parliament, however, the Thai government grew ever more sensitive towards the presence of Malaysian security forces in Betong. When the CPM sought to exploit the situation by organizing demonstrations in Betong in May-June 1976 demanding the expulsion of Malaysian Field Police Units stationed there (numbering some 410 personnel), the government of Seni Promaj asked for the withdrawal of Malaysian units.<sup>55</sup>

The October 1976 coup in Thailand which brought the staunchly anti-communist regime of Prime Minister Thanin Kraivichien to power gave a new lease of life to border security cooperation. It led to the signing of a new agreement to replace the 1970 accord, which in turn paved the way for the first ever combined operations between the two sides against CPM insurgents. These operations, launched in January 1977, and code named *Daoyi Musnah* (Big Star), followed by *Cahaya Bena* (Sacred Light), produced a number of results: including the confirmation of the strength of the CPM (between 3,000-3,500), a better understanding of its tactics and plans, and the destruction of CPM sanctuaries, temporary disruptions of its logistics and operational infrastructure as well as recruiting exercises.<sup>56</sup> In the wake of these operations, Malaysian security and intelligence units, their strength probably reduced, resumed their position inside Thai territory. Combined and coordinated operations continued into the late 1970s, and Malaysian troops assumed a greater burden of these operations as Thailand confronted the threat on its border with Cambodia following the Vietnamese invasion.

While the political crisis over the presence inside Thai territory of Malaysian units was diffused, open and bitter complaints by the Thai fourth army commander, General Harn Lenanond, in 1982-83 regarding alleged Malaysian support for the Muslim separatists in southern Thailand, was much more damaging to Thai-Malaysian security relations. Outspoken General Harn gave open expression to Thailand's long-standing suspicions that Malaysia was secretly aiding and abetting its southern separatists. Harn demanded that Malaysia should not only cease such support, but assist Thailand in its campaign against

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<sup>53</sup> Text of the 'Agreement Between the Government of Malaysia and the Government of Thailand on Border Cooperation,' *Asian Defence Journal*, (January 1977).

<sup>54</sup> Personal interview with Malaysian military official, Kuala Lumpur, 22 August 1989.

<sup>55</sup> Surin Pitsuan, *Issues Affecting Border Security Between Malaysia and Indonesia*, Monograph Series No. 4 (Research Centre, Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University), pp. 10-17.

<sup>56</sup> 'Operation Cooperation: The Malaysian/Thai Joint Border Operations,' *Asian Defence Journal* (October 1977), p.21.

the southern 'bandits' within the framework of their border agreement. Harn also wanted right of hot pursuit against the separatists. Malaysia responded to these charges by insisting that the latter was strictly an internal matter of Thailand and lay beyond the scope of the border agreement. It also alleged on the part of Thailand a 'live and let live' attitude towards the CPM. In 1982, General Saiyud Kerdphol acknowledged that:

there [is]...mutual suspicion or distrust [between Malaysia and Thailand] which we must eliminate...The Malaysians suspect Thais of not being engaged in a real campaign of suppression against the communists along the common border. We Thais suspect the Malaysians of supporting the separatists so that they would help in combatting the communist terrorists. Such suspicions can only be useful to the common enemy.<sup>57</sup>

On the Malaysian side, Home Minister Musa Hitam expressed deep frustration over the record of border cooperation at the opening ceremony of the 27th meeting of the GBC. Contending that the two sides were 'not achieving as much as [they] should have' in their joint effort to combat the communist threat, Musa pointed out that the communist strength had actually increased to 1,843 from the 'original 600 or so members who took refuge in southern Thailand between 1953 and 1960'.<sup>58</sup> This necessitated a review of the existing arrangements, since:

After all, 20 to 25 years [of border cooperation] is a fairly long time in the context of eliminating a few thousand forces. Under the circumstances, it is my view that the border committee should take serious cognizance of this and make appropriate assessment as to whether it has truly been successful or otherwise.<sup>59</sup>

The strains in Thai-Malaysia border cooperation were reflected in the fact that no combined or coordinated operations were carried out during the 1980-84 period.<sup>60</sup> While Harn's successor as commander of the Thai Fourth Army, General Wanchai Chitchamnong, managed to revive coordinated operations (in which Thai troops would carry out an offensive on their side of the border while Malaysian troops would be deployed on their side of the border to trap the insurgents fleeing the Thai offensive)<sup>61</sup> by toning down the demand for Malaysian help against the southern Muslim separatists, combined operations were not resumed. As the Malaysian Inspector General of Police put it in 1986, 'The current policy is that we manage the problem on our side and they [the Thais] manage the problem on their side, but we still cooperate.'<sup>62</sup>

Overall, the Thai-Malaysian joint operations can not be said to have been very effective in suppressing the CPM. Although the CPM suffered a serious decline of strength and morale in the early 1980s, with its membership reduced to about 1,000 by

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<sup>57</sup> Text of an interview published in *Bangkok Post*, 21 March 1982. Reproduced in *ISIS Bulletin* (Institute for Security and International Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok), Vol.1, No.1 (July 1982), pp.12-13.

<sup>58</sup> 'Bickering over the Border,' *Asiaweek*, 17 September 1982, p. 18.

<sup>59</sup> *New Straits Times*, 27 August 1982.

<sup>60</sup> *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 23 May 1985, p. 53.

<sup>61</sup> A major example of such operations is the *Taksin 8704* operation by Thai forces carried out in May 1987. This was one of the largest operations against the CPM in recent years. Thailand deployed parts of the 5th division of its Fourth Army to carry out the offensive, while Malaysia used about 500 troops to seal off the border to trap insurgents fleeing the Thai offensive. At the annual GBC meeting in Haddayi following the operations, the two sides issued a statement expressing satisfaction with the 'continuous, coordinated and unilateral operations by the security forces of the two countries, which resulted in six communist insurgents killed, 21 guerrilla camps and four farms overrun, and 84 booby traps discovered.' *Bangkok World*, 12 May 1987; *Nation*, 19 October 1987. In February 1986, on the eve of *Taksin 8601* operations by Thai security forces, the Malaysian and Thai commanders agreed to combined operations involving border crossing if and when the two sides found a terrain suitable for such operations subject to prior mutual notification and approval. However, The Thai army commander General Chavalit appeared to rule out combined cross border operations including right of hot pursuit during a visit to Malaysia in October 1986. *Nation Review*, 12 February 1986; *Bangkok World*, 7 October 1986.

<sup>62</sup> *The Star*, 27 April 1986.

1987,<sup>63</sup> this decline can not be attributed to joint operations by Thailand and Malaysia.<sup>64</sup> To be sure, the operations, as the Chief of the Malaysian Army, General Mohammed Salleh, claimed, 'put a lot of pressure on the terrorists, forcing them to be on the move constantly,'<sup>65</sup> but the more important causes for the decline of the CPM had to do with the loss of material support from China (for which both Malaysia and Thailand can take some credit) as well as the effectiveness of the amnesty programme carried out by Thailand since 1980. The tripartite agreement between Malaysia, Thailand and CPM leader Chin Peng which led to the disbandment of the CPM in December 1989, is apt to be regarded by Thai authorities as a vindication of their approach, which had been endorsed by Malaysia after some initial differences over the repatriation and resettlement of the surrendered communists. The exit of the CPM leaves the future direction of Thai-Malaysian border cooperation unclear, although both sides are likely to cooperate on the socio-economic development of the border areas as well as maintain intelligence coordination to guard against any revival of the communist insurgency.

While the record of Thai-Malaysian cooperation is illustrative of the sensitivities and suspicions that affect bilateral security cooperation in ASEAN, the record of Indonesia-Malaysia cooperation reflects how the imperative for security collaboration has helped ASEAN members to overcome these sensitivities and strengthened the norms of conflict-management in ASEAN. The fact that a common concern against border insurgency was a factor in the desire of both sides to put an end to Sukarno's Confrontation was evident from the swiftness with which the two sides moved to organize joint operations against the remnants of the North Kalimantan Communist Party. Following the signing of a border agreement in 1972, the two sides launched their first combined operation, code named *Seri Aman*, in 1974. It led to the surrender of 500 NKCP members led by a high-ranking leader. The operation was believed to have been effective in damaging the political organization and military structure of the insurgents, in breaking the communication links between the 1st Bureau of the NKCP in the first division and the 2nd bureau in the third division of Sarawak. The strength of the communists fell to 170 active elements after the operation. The next major joint operation was *Operation Kemudi* in early 1982, produced 39 guerrilla casualties, 15 captures and 49 surrenders; it was claimed to have reduced the strength of the NKCP to 96 active guerrillas.<sup>66</sup>

Indeed, the Indonesia-Malaysia joint operations were part of a successful counterinsurgency policy which saw a drastic decline in the strength of the insurgents. Malaysian intelligence sources estimated in 1979 that the number of insurgents in Sarawak's Rajang Security Command had fallen to 96, while those in Sarawak's first and second divisions had fallen to 22.<sup>67</sup> On the Indonesian side, Defence Minister General Mohammed Jusuf claimed in 1982 that Kalimantan had been 'cleared' of communist guerillas belonging to North Kalimantan People's Army (Paraku) and Sarawak People's Guerilla Forces (PGRS), although a number of rebels still remained on the Malaysian side of the Kalimantan-Sarawak border.<sup>68</sup> Four years later, an even more optimistic picture of the communist threat was given by both sides. According to Malaysian Defence Minister, Ahmed Badawi, the strength of the insurgents on the Indonesia-Malaysia border had fallen to less than 100 from an estimated 1500 in 1974.<sup>69</sup> According to Badawi, the strength of the communists had been 'so reduced that they are no longer a serious threat.'<sup>70</sup> Indonesia's armed forces commander General Benny Murdani proclaimed Indonesia's border areas to be 'clean,' with

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<sup>63</sup> *Straits Times*, 10 February 1988.

<sup>64</sup> Even the publicly-stated official estimates of CPM casualties resulting from joint operations (including coordinated operations), are not impressive. For example, the *Taksin* 8601 operations in 1986 led, according to the Commander of the Thai 4th Army, to 35 casualties for the insurgents, with 33 surrenders and discovery of 35 camps and vegetable plots. *Bangkok Post*, 2 October 1986. The number is small when compared to the estimated strength of the CPM, which was over 1000.

<sup>65</sup> *Straits Times*, 26 April 1985.

<sup>66</sup> *New Straits Times*, 14 November 1983.

<sup>67</sup> *New Straits Times*, 13 April 1979.

<sup>68</sup> *New Straits Times*, 22 November 1982.

<sup>69</sup> *New Straits Times*, 2 October 1986.

<sup>70</sup> *Indonesia Times*, 1 October 1986.

the last remnants of the insurgents inside Indonesian territory caught in early 1986.<sup>71</sup> Recent official estimates from Malaysia put the number of NKCP insurgents on the border area at 42.<sup>72</sup>

The smooth functioning of border cooperation between Indonesia and Malaysia is reflected in the fact that the failure of the border committee to convene for three years during 1980-82, reportedly due to domestic preoccupations of Defence Minister Jusuf, was hardly noticed. During this time, the various subcommittees of the border committee as well as the Staff Planning Committee went on with their work without interruption.<sup>73</sup> An even more important indication is that the border committee, satisfied with the progress of cooperation against the communist threat, has adopted a wider perspective on security cooperation, especially possible threats from the South China Sea, including communist infiltration. It has proved to be an useful forum for discussion on defence issues covering internal as well as external threats. This shift was clearly indicated at the 13th meeting of the border committee in 1984 which reviewed the 1972 security agreement. Apart from expanding the scope of the agreement, the two sides discussed measures to step up air and naval exercises, joint purchase of defence equipment and supplies and the sharing of servicing and support facilities for the navies and air forces of the two countries.<sup>74</sup> The 14th meeting of the border committee held in Kuching in November 1985 was even more significant in 'externalising' the border committee's security orientation. During that meeting, the Malaysian defence minister and the Indonesian armed forces commander discussed, according to press reports later confirmed by Musa Hitam, 'contingency plans that could be put into effect should conflicts in the region escalate to pose a threat to the security of the two countries.' The meeting led to understanding on greater cooperation to monitor sea traffic in the Straits of Malacca and finalized an agreement permitting Malaysia to use Indonesia's Natuna island for military purposes, including joint exercises with Indonesia.<sup>75</sup>

## Intelligence-Sharing

One of the more crucial forms of security cooperation among the ASEAN states is intelligence-sharing and exchange. These exchanges take place both at a bilateral as well as *multilateral* level and involve both military as well as national intelligence agencies. The intelligence branches of ASEAN armed forces often communicate and cooperate with each other directly, or as part of combined national delegations including members from the national intelligence bodies. Furthermore, intelligence sharing covers both tactical matters (such as cooperation against border insurgencies) and strategic and policy issues including overall threat assessments.

Within ASEAN a number of bilateral intelligence-sharing arrangements emerged during the late 1960s and 1970s as a result of the worsening situation in Indochina and the rising threat of communist subversion. A significant aspect of these arrangements was the fact that some of them involved countries which were not part of formal bilateral border security agreements such as those between Malaysia and Thailand or Malaysia and Indonesia. Thus intelligence arrangements provided an alternative form of security collaboration against the threat of insurgency and subversion within ASEAN.

As seen earlier, intelligence-sharing between Malaysia and Thailand as well as Malaysia and Indonesia grew out of their border security arrangements. In these cases, as well as in the case of bilateral ties between Singapore and Indonesia, contacts and exchange of information between intelligence agencies have often proved to be the crucial first step towards more comprehensive forms of defence and security cooperation. (Intelligence agencies played an instrumental role during the negotiations between Malaysia and Indonesia to end their confrontation.) Though not having a formal security agreement,

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<sup>71</sup> *Straits Times*, 29 November 1986.

<sup>72</sup> *Straits Times*, 18 September 1988.

<sup>73</sup> *New Straits Times*, 11 November 1983.

<sup>74</sup> *Business Times (Kuala Lumpur)*, 4 December 1984.

<sup>75</sup> *New Straits Times*, 29 November 1985; *Star*, 29 November 1985.

Indonesia and Singapore had begun regular intelligence exchanges soon after the end of the Confrontation, a fact indicated in comments by Lee Kuan Yew during his visit to Jakarta in 1982.<sup>76</sup> A more notable instance of bilateral intelligence cooperation involved Malaysia and Singapore, whose intelligence links survived the strains caused by the latter's separation from Malaysia. In December 1976, during Lee Kuan Yew's trip to Malaysia, the two leaders were believed to have reviewed what one press report described as 'cooperative security arrangements between their two countries against communist infiltration and subversion, including the exchange of intelligence on movements of communists between Malaysia and Singapore.'<sup>77</sup> This was confirmed by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohammed, in remarks made in December 1981:

Never have we [Malaysia and Singapore] even once failed to cooperate in matters relating to the threat of subversion against our society. The security apparatuses of our two societies continue to cooperate against any subversive and criminal elements that could affect our stability even when political leaders were openly squabbling.<sup>78</sup>

Developments in Indochina leading to the Bali Summit widened and strengthened intra-ASEAN intelligence cooperation. Thailand and the Philippines reached an understanding on intelligence-exchanges during Thai Prime Minister Thanin's visit to Manila in December 1976, when he and Marcos 'agreed to continue to cooperate in combatting internal insurgency and subversion through consultations and exchanges of intelligence and views.'<sup>79</sup> Around this time, Singapore and the Philippines also reached an accord providing for intelligence exchanges and holding of consultations on problems of insurgency.<sup>80</sup> In 1978, Thai Prime Minister Kriangsak confirmed exchange of 'military information' between Bangkok and Jakarta.<sup>81</sup>

Although ASEAN countries still refuse to publicly acknowledge any multilateral intelligence exchanges, there are indications that such practices had developed around the time of the Bali summit. As cited earlier, Lee Kuan Yew's comments in 1976 on the need for functional incrementalism in ASEAN cooperation, which acknowledged 'intelligence coordination and cooperation, which is *already existing*' (emphasis added), is one such indication. A clearer hint was given by President Marcos in December 1976 in the wake of his agreement with the Thai Prime Minister concerning intelligence and information exchanges. As Marcos put it:

Of course, there has been an agreement for an exchange of information, of views and intelligence among the countries in Southeast Asia *for the past four years*. So it [the Thai-Philippine agreement on intelligence-sharing] merely reiterates this understanding. (emphasis added)<sup>82</sup>

What Marcos was referring to could be the practice of secret annual meetings of intelligence agencies of all the ASEAN countries, which grew out of bilateral dealings already commonplace.<sup>83</sup> While the origins of these meetings remain obscure, the practice has continued, with ASEAN countries taking turns in hosting these meetings and coordinating the agenda. Delegations to these meeting are drawn from the military and the national intelligence agencies of the member states. The meetings are informal, and topics for discussion range from sharing of information and experience relating to insurgencies

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<sup>76</sup> Richardson, 'ASEAN Extends Its Military Ties,' op. cit, p. 55.

<sup>77</sup> *Straits Times*, 6 December 1976.

<sup>78</sup> *New Straits Times* 8 December 1981.

<sup>79</sup> *Straits Times*, 23 December 1976.

<sup>80</sup> *New Nation*, 16 February 1977.

<sup>81</sup> *Straits Times*, 23 September 1978.

<sup>82</sup> *Straits Times*, 23 December 1976.

<sup>83</sup> A report in a Malaysian paper appearing at the time of the Bali summit, claimed that 'the intelligence chiefs of ASEAN countries already meet annually outside the framework of ASEAN.' Noordin Sopiee, 'The Challenge of the Bali Summit,' *New Straits Times*, 20 February 1976.

to developments in the wider region, including external threats to regional security. To be sure, the continued dependence of the ASEAN states on friendly Western intelligence agencies, reflecting the lack of adequate indigenous intelligence-gathering resources, is a major limitation of ASEAN intelligence cooperation. Furthermore, there is little cooperation in the field of electronic intelligence and surveillance, despite the fact that the E-2C *Hawkeye* Airborne Early Warning aircraft acquired by Singapore offers considerable opportunities in this area. But the significance of existing intelligence cooperation should not be downplayed. Intelligence sharing is the only known form of multilateral security cooperation among the ASEAN states and it provides a precedent for multilateral meetings of ASEAN defence officials (which has been resisted so far) as well as the gradual extension of bilateral security ties into trilateral and multilateral arrangements.

## **Joint Exercises and Training**

### *Bilateral Exercises*

As seen earlier, the first bilateral military exercises within ASEAN were undertaken as part of the border region counterinsurgency cooperation between Malaysia and Thailand and Malaysia and Indonesia. Since then bilateral exercises have proliferated, and are being conducted with much greater regularity and frequency. According to one estimate, the number of such exercises per year has increased from three in 1972 to 15 in 1986 (this does not include exercises conducted under the Five Power Defence Arrangements.)<sup>84</sup> Bilateral exercises in ASEAN now involve all three main branches of the armed forces as well as paramilitary units.

A list of bilateral exercises between ASEAN member states, presented in Appendix 1, points to three interesting features. The first, and most obvious conclusion is that naval and air exercises are much more common than land exercises. This is perhaps explained by the fact that air and maritime exercises are somewhat less vulnerable to political sensitivities and suspicions in intra-ASEAN bilateral relations than land exercises. Lingering suspicions and mutual threat perceptions between ASEAN countries have in the past accounted for their reluctance to allow each others' land forces in their territory, (fears that such exercises could be used for 'territorial familiarisation' still persist). In addition, there were concerns, as illustrated in the case of Thai-Malaysian joint border operations against the CPM, that the presence of foreign troops might become a provocative issue in the domestic politics of the host nation and lend itself to exploitation by the latter's insurgent/opposition groups. In contrast, air and naval exercises can be conducted offshore and are much less visible. Malaysia and Indonesia were the major exception to this reluctance to engage in land exercises, Apart from the *Kekar Malindo* series organized by the Border Committee, the two countries also participated in *Tatar Malindo* and *Kirpura Malindo* army exercises. Recent developments also point to a breaking down of the political barriers to land exercises involving the rest of ASEAN states. The *Semangat Bersatu* army exercise between Singapore and Malaysia held in May 1989 and the *Safkar Indopura* Command Post exercises between army units of Indonesia and Singapore held in December 1989, provide the most significant indication of this trend.

The greater number of air and maritime exercises also reflects the gradual switch by the armed forces of the key ASEAN military powers, especially Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, from counter-insurgency to conventional warfare doctrines and capabilities. This shift not only reflects the decline of communist insurgencies in these countries, but also a variety of other factors such as the erosion of great power security guarantees, and the emergence of new security challenges relating to the regional maritime environment.<sup>85</sup> Given that the transition to conventional force postures have been marked by a visible emphasis on the acquisition of air and naval capabilities, the latter in turn have provided greater opportunity and scope for

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<sup>84</sup> This estimate is taken from Kazunori Tamaki, 'ASEAN Shokoku no Anzenhoshokoryoku' *Kokusai Mondai*, (February 1988), p. 63. I am grateful to Dr Suelo Sudo of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies for providing me with a translation of the source.

<sup>85</sup> For a detailed explanation and analysis of these trends see: Amitav Acharya, 'Arms Proliferations Issues in ASEAN: Towards a 'Conventional' Defence Posture?', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (December 1988), pp. 242-68.

bilateral training and exercises involving these services, thereby providing a way around the difficulties involved in land exercises. Thus, the greater conventional warfare mission of the armed forces of the major ASEAN powers is indicated in the institution of new naval and air exercises, as well as the reorientation of existing exercises such as the *Sea Ex-Thamal* (which gave way to *Thalay* exercises organized outside the framework of border cooperation) and the *Air Thamal* series (which is likely to be replaced with air defence manoeuvres) between Malaysia and Thailand.

The second important conclusion from the list is the position of Indonesia as the 'lynch-pin' of the interlocking web of bilateral exercises in ASEAN. Indonesia has not only been the first to encourage and participate in bilateral exercises in ASEAN, (the first bilateral exercise between ASEAN members, a naval exercise between Malaysia and Indonesia, took place in May 1972) it has also developed the most comprehensive and extensive schedule of exercises with its ASEAN neighbours. An interesting illustration of this has been provided by a Japanese source, which estimated that out of the 45 bilateral ASEAN exercises it recorded between May 1972 and the end of 1980, Indonesia participated 38 times, followed by Malaysia (26), Thailand (nine), Singapore (seven) and the Philippines (six).<sup>86</sup> Indonesia's bilateral exercise programme with Malaysia is the most comprehensive one in ASEAN. Apart from separate air, naval and ground exercises (as well as police and search and rescue exercises), Indonesia and Malaysia conducted the first bilateral exercises in ASEAN involving all three branches of the armed forces in 1982 (exercise *Darsasa Malindo*). Donald Weatherbee has contended that the 'strong core' of intra-ASEAN bilateral exercises is to be found 'in the *de facto* Malaysian-Indonesian security alliance.'<sup>87</sup> This observation accords well with an official estimate provided by the Malaysian military attache in Jakarta in 1984, which revealed that between 1972 and 1984 (May) Malaysia and Indonesia had conducted 32 joint exercises, including 12 *Elang Malindo* air exercises, 12 *Malindo Jaya* naval exercises and eight *Kekar Malindo* army exercises.<sup>88</sup> The extent of military cooperation is further underscored by comments by General Benny Murdani of Indonesia, who described his country's security ties with Malaysia as the closest and the best bilateral security relationship within ASEAN.<sup>89</sup>

The concept of an ASEAN security 'core' would seem to require redefinition and broadening if one takes into account the third, and perhaps most important, conclusion to emerge from the above list of intra-ASEAN bilateral military exercises. This concerns the fact that several of the recently instituted bilateral exercises in ASEAN, including the two most recent army exercises, involve Singapore, indicating a greater acceptance of the Republic in intra-ASEAN security relations, especially by its two Malay neighbours. This trend assumes significance in view of increasing speculation in media and academic circles that a likely direction for ASEAN military ties might be the consolidation of an emerging triangular security relationship between Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Although this may seem a bit far-fetched to sceptics still adhering to the image of Singapore as a 'Chinese island in a sea of Malays,' it is not entirely unfounded. Indeed, the leaders of Singapore, while cognizant of the problems inherent in a trilateral defence arrangement,<sup>90</sup> nonetheless hold the view that trilateralism may be a useful way to expand the existing security ties within ASEAN. In the words of Foreign Minister Wong Kan Seng:

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<sup>86</sup> *Asian Security 1981* (Tokyo: Research Institute for Peace and Security, 1980), p. 121.

<sup>87</sup> Donald Weatherbee, 'ASEAN Security Cooperation and the South China Sea,' Table Paper for the Pacific Forum Symposium 'National Threat Perceptions in East Asia/Pacific,' Waikoloa, Hawaii, February 6-8, 1982, p. 6.

<sup>88</sup> *New Straits Times*, 9 May 1984.

<sup>89</sup> *Straits Times*, 19 July 1986.

<sup>90</sup> The idea of a trilateral arrangement between Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore gained some credibility when the *Straits Times* of Singapore revealed in March 1989 that the chiefs of staff of the armed forces of the three countries had 'secretly' met in Bali in 1988, allegedly at the initiative of General Benny Murdani of Indonesia. In April 1984, Singapore's deputy Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, while confirming that such a meeting had taken place, played down its significance. According to Goh, while Singapore supported 'informal bilateral and multilateral meetings' among ASEAN military officials, the intention was not to form a trilateral defence pact within ASEAN, as this could lead to 'unnecessary suspicions and misunderstandings' among those left out of such an arrangement. Rather, 'A stronger foundation for multilateral defence cooperation lies in good bilateral relations and a better understanding of one another's security perspectives,' Goh stated in a written reply to a parliamentary question. *Straits Times*, 24 March 1989; *Sunday Times*, 9 April 1989.

As our defence forces evolve and political relationships mature, it becomes possible to explore new ways for regional states to contribute to regional security in response to the changing strategic equation among the major powers. Living cheek by jowl with each other, the security of Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia is indivisible. Thailand's security affects us as well. ASEAN is not a security organisation. But there could be more bilateral exercises which over the long term could be expanded to become overlapping trilateral exercises.<sup>91</sup>

But the concept of a 'triangular' defence arrangement is not feasible for a number of reasons. As will be discussed later, bilateral suspicions and political problems between Malaysia and Singapore remain a key factor, as is Malaysia's concern that growing defence links between Singapore and Indonesia could be at the expense of Malaysia-Indonesia security relations. But while ASEAN-wide or trilateral military exercises are unlikely to materialize in the near future, the proliferation of bilateral exercises testifies to an increasing recognition of their usefulness by the ASEAN countries. Bilateral exercises are deemed to have a deterrent value, whether or not they are conducted in relation to the notion of a common threat.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, such exercises, which frequently aim at developing common operating procedures, modes of command and control, tactics and inter-operability between the armed forces of the participating states, could facilitate mutual help, including joint operations against a common security threat. Bilateral air exercises among the ASEAN countries provide a good indication of such an objective. It has been suggested that the launching of *Elang Thainesia* exercises between Indonesia and Thailand and the *Elang Indopura* air exercises between Singapore and Indonesia, as well as the more recent exercises of the *Air Thamal* series between Thailand and Malaysia (as evident in the dispatch of six RMAF F-5E aircraft to northern Thailand during the 1987 exercises), reflected common concerns of the participants about the possibility of a spillover of the Indochina conflict into Thailand. This view is supported by the fact that in the event of such a contingency, provision of air support would have been generally preferable to deployment of ground forces by the ASEAN neighbours to assist Thailand, and that the ASEAN states shared a serious concern regarding the deployment of long-range Soviet aircraft in Vietnam.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, as seen earlier, the agreement between Malaysia and Indonesia to use the Natuna island as a base for joint exercises has been officially explained as a measure to meet maritime threats from the South China Sea, especially that hypothetically posed by the escalating naval competition between Vietnam and China. The *Malindo Jaya* naval exercises between Indonesia and Malaysia also appear to have a similar purpose.

Another crucial, though relatively understated, factor behind the increasing number of bilateral exercises concerns their contribution as confidence-building measures in intra-ASEAN relations. Fears regarding any compromise of national security caused by 'territorial familiarisation' have gradually given way to recognition that bilateral ties could help eliminate lingering mutual suspicions. As Singapore's Chief of General Staff, Lt General Winston Choo, pointed out, bilateral exercises could be a valuable means to 'build links with our neighbours, overcome suspicions and promote cooperation.'<sup>94</sup> Though especially relevant to Singapore's case, this observation can be applied to other ASEAN states as well. Finally, bilateral exercises have a small, though not insignificant, effect on training and operation budgets of the participating states. Malaysia's Deputy Defence Minister, Abang Abu Bakar, argued that Malaysia could reduce the cost of introducing sophisticated weapons by performing the training exercise with one or two other ASEAN countries.<sup>95</sup> A former senior Indonesian military officer claimed that air exercises with another country could result in savings of up to 50 percent over unilateral exercises. Thus bilateral exercises enable the armed forces of the participating countries to gain valuable training while reducing operating costs.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Text of Speech by Wong Kan Seng to Singapore Press Club, 15 November 1988, p. 8.

<sup>92</sup> Personal interview with General Saiyud Kerdphol, Former Supreme Commander of the Thai Armed Forces, Bangkok, 26 June 1989.

<sup>93</sup> Tim Huxley, *Indochina as a Security Concern of the ASEAN States, 1975-81*, Ph.D. Thesis, Canberra, Australian National University, 1986, p. 385.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with the *Asian Defence Journal*, No. 3 (1989), p. 46.

<sup>95</sup> 'A New Call for Unity' *Asiaweek*, 22 October 1982, p. 25.

<sup>96</sup> Personal Interview, Jakarta, 4 August 1989.

## Training

The functional and practical benefits of bilateral exercises are complemented by growing intra-ASEAN bilateral security cooperation in the area of military training. This involves two types of activity. The first is the willingness of ASEAN countries to make available their field training facilities to each other for training and exercise purposes. The second is to allow and encourage participation of students from other ASEAN countries in the military education and officer training programmes at the national military institutions of some ASEAN countries.

If bilateral exercises among the ASEAN countries are Indonesia-centric, cooperation on field training facilities is Singapore-centric. Singapore maintains two army camps in Thailand for training purposes,<sup>97</sup> Its army training camps in Brunei have been described by Lee Kuan Yew as the 'most valuable single facility [for the SAF] which will be difficult to duplicate elsewhere.'<sup>98</sup> Singapore also maintains a detachment of fighter aircraft at Clark air base in the Philippines.<sup>99</sup> Such arrangements are not only vital to Singapore's defence capability and preparedness, given the lack of training space in the small island state, they also serve a vital political function; like bilateral exercises they help the Republic to 'remove strangeness, promote openness and trust and build linkages' in its relations with ASEAN neighbours.<sup>100</sup> In this respect the opening of a 10,850 hectare joint air weapons testing range in Siabu in Sumatra in March 1989, jointly developed by Indonesia and Singapore, is a major breakthrough, as was Indonesia's simultaneous offer to make available military training facilities to Singapore 'almost anywhere' within its territory. (According to press reports, a 40,000 hectare site at Batu Raja, south of Sumatra has already been identified as a training ground for troops from Singapore.)<sup>101</sup> The Batu Raja facility is available to other ASEAN countries. Other ASEAN countries have also developed military ties through provision of training facilities. The Thai Air Force uses the Crow Valley range in the Philippines for air weapon testing purposes,<sup>102</sup> while Bangkok has offered military training facilities to Brunei.<sup>103</sup>

A similar purpose underlies the increasingly common practice among the ASEAN countries of mutual participation in each other's officer education and training programmes. The most important form of such interaction involves the service command and staff colleges used to train middle and senior level officers. Indonesia, for example, makes available all three of its command staff colleges (Army Command and Staff College in Bandung; Navy Command and Staff College in Jakarta; and Air Force Command and Staff College in Lembang), as well the as Special Forces Training Centre (Batu Djajar) and the School for Police Chiefs (equivalent of service command and staff colleges, located in Lembang) to officers from other ASEAN countries. In addition, its National Defence Institute has periodically conducted special courses for high level ASEAN military and civilian officials on issues such as national and regional resilience. Singapore's highest level formal military education programme, the SAF's six month-long Command and Staff course, regularly includes participants from other ASEAN countries.<sup>104</sup> The Philippines, which has until now remained somewhat peripheral to the process of bilateral military cooperation in ASEAN, is surprisingly active in military education exchanges with its ASEAN neighbours. According to Defence Secretary Fidel Ramos, up to November 1989, 72 Philippine officers had been sent for training in other ASEAN

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<sup>97</sup> *Bangkok Post*, 17 July 1983; *New Straits Times*, 18 July 1983.

<sup>98</sup> *Straits Times*, 22 August 1986.

<sup>99</sup> Denis Warner, 'Point, Counterpoint in South China Sea,' *Pacific Defence Reporter*, (August 1984), p. 54.

<sup>100</sup> Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Goh Chok Tong cited in *Straits Times*, 5 December 1988.

<sup>101</sup> 'Promoting Bilateral Cooperation Between Singapore and Indonesia,' *Pioneer*, No.138 (April 1989), pp. 2-3; *Straits Times*, 24 March 1989.

<sup>102</sup> Warner, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>103</sup> *Star*, 30 August 1984.

<sup>104</sup> *Straits Times*, 23 July 1988.

schools, while the Philippine Command and General Staff College had trained 172 officers from Southeast Asia and Pacific, including ASEAN.<sup>105</sup> Thailand and Malaysia similarly have developed close and regular exchange ties with other ASEAN states, including training at their command and staff colleges. In 1983 (during Mahathir's visit to Brunei), Malaysia offered Brunei 'fullest cooperation in providing training in administration, military, police, education' and other areas.<sup>106</sup> Brunei's security ties with Singapore cover 'exchanges of visits in matters relating to defence technology, personnel and logistics management.'<sup>107</sup> Apart from exchanges at command and staff level, ASEAN armed forces have developed ties in the area of tactical training: Thailand sends its troops to Singapore for commando training; Malaysian troops have trained at the Indonesian special forces training school at Batu Djajar; and Malaysia's Jungle and Combat Warfare school in Johore has accepted trainees from other ASEAN states, including officers from Singapore.<sup>108</sup>

Despite increasing interaction and familiarization through bilateral exercises and training, the armed forces of the ASEAN states are nowhere near achieving meaningful integration. Differences in doctrine and language remain a serious barrier to further cooperation, limiting the benefits that could be derived from joint exercises and undermining the possibility of mutual support in contingencies. As a Philippines military official points out:

The armies of ASEAN do not have a set of standard doctrine necessary in conducting conventional war. By and large, the orientation of ASEAN armies, with the exception of Singapore and perhaps to a lesser degree Thailand, is small unit operations owing to counter-insurgency scenario occurring in most ASEAN states. Standard doctrine is a must in order to ensure effective joint and combined arms operations. Although bilateral or even trilateral exercises are conducted among some ASEAN states, including joint exercises with external powers, the level of proficiency of force employment is rather low. This is further hampered by variances in training and in logistics systems among the ASEAN states.<sup>109</sup>

### An ASEAN Arms Industry?

An ASEAN security arrangement wedded to the long-term goal of regional self-reliance must include some degree of cooperation in the field of procurement and production of arms. Thus, while ASEAN states have been wary of multilateral security cooperation in other areas such as military exercises, they have been much more receptive to the idea of joint efforts in arms procurement and production. Indonesia has been an early advocate of ASEAN cooperation on defence industrialization which it viewed to be an essential response to the strategic situation arising from the US withdrawal from Indochina.<sup>110</sup> In 1978, General Maradan Panggabean, Indonesia's Coordinating Minister for Security and General Policies, suggested the establishment of an ASEAN arms factory along the lines of ASEAN Industrial Projects.<sup>111</sup> The Foreign Minister of Malaysia has suggested that joint arms production might be an ideal starting point for an 'ASEAN Defence Community.'<sup>112</sup> The Prime Minister of Thailand, General Chatichai, has suggested that cooperation in arms production which could be transferred and traded within the grouping could contribute to the self-reliance of ASEAN states and increase their bargaining power *vis-à-vis* other suppliers.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> *The Sunday Times (Singapore)*, 26 November 1989.

<sup>106</sup> *Straits Times*, 30 March 1983.

<sup>107</sup> '10 Years of Training in Brunei,' *Pointer*, No. 124 (February 1988).

<sup>108</sup> J.N.Mak, *Directions for Greater Defence Cooperation* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Strategic and International Studies, 1986), p.13.

<sup>109</sup> Garcia, op cit, pp. 9-10.

<sup>110</sup> As early as in 1973, following a 'strategic assessment' paper prepared by the Defence Ministry, Indonesia secretly approached Singapore, Thailand and Burma to explore the possibility of securing their cooperation in its defence industry. Personal interview with senior defence official, Jakarta, 11 August 1989.

<sup>111</sup> *New Straits Times*, 6 July 1978.

<sup>112</sup> *Straits Times*, 6 May 1989.

<sup>113</sup> *Straits Times*, 21 April 1989.

With the exception of Singapore and Indonesia, defence industrialization in ASEAN is still in its infancy,<sup>114</sup> but the potential for greater intra-ASEAN cooperation in weapons acquisition is not negligible. The concept of an ASEAN defence industry involves a number of related areas of cooperation, including joint purchases, production, transfer of defence-related technology, cooperation in maintenance and servicing of defence equipment and standardization of weapons. Understanding and cooperation in some of these areas has already been developed on a bilateral basis, although the record is far from impressive. Insofar as intra-ASEAN arms sales are concerned, it is noteworthy that for the two leading ASEAN arms producers, Singapore and Indonesia, exports to other ASEAN states constitute the bulk of their total defence equipment exports (56 percent for Indonesia, 57 percent for Singapore).<sup>115</sup> Indonesia has made a strong bid, with some success, to supply the products of its light aircraft industry to other ASEAN countries. It has sold NB-105 helicopters to Malaysia and AS-332 *Super Puma* multipurpose helicopters to Malaysia and Brunei (one each) with possibility of selling more units to the former.<sup>116</sup> Malaysia has reportedly ordered C-212 *Aviocar* transport aircraft from Indonesia, and, according to Indonesia's Minister for Technology, B.J.J. Habibie, has already explored the possibility of purchasing four 35-seater CN 235 aircraft and Bell helicopters.<sup>117</sup> Thailand has already purchased NBO-105 helicopters and C-212 transport aircraft from Indonesia,<sup>118</sup> and Thai Prime Minister Chatichai, during a visit to Indonesia in December 1988, stated that Thailand was seriously considering the possibility of buying more Indonesia planes and helicopters.<sup>119</sup> In January 1986, Indonesia lent two locally manufactured CASA-212 turboprop transport planes to the Philippines to be used for counter-insurgency operations, although it remains to be seen whether this gesture could Prompt Manila to purchase Indonesian aircraft, as has been indicated by Defence Secretary Fidel Ramos on the eve of a trip to Thailand and Indonesia in May 1989 (which included visits to their defence-related industries).<sup>120</sup>

While Indonesia's exports within ASEAN consist almost entirely of aircraft, Singapore has found a market within ASEAN for its naval patrol boats and Fast Attack Craft (FAC). Singapore has sold Bataan- and Abra-class patrol craft to the Philippines and Periwa-class, and a variety of other (18m, 25m and 14.5m) patrol craft to Brunei. It has also exported FPB-45 FAC to Thailand, while Brunei purchased Waspada-class FACs from Singapore. Singapore's other exports to Thailand include *Gabriel* SSMS, and according to one report some 30,000 SAR 80 assault rifles.<sup>121</sup>

But the breakthroughs in intra-ASEAN arms exports secured by the two leading ASEAN manufactures have not led to mutual cooperation on arms production. Joint production or mutual technological assistance and collaboration for arms production among ASEAN members remains much more limited than intra-ASEAN arms transfers. There are some minor exceptions. Singapore helped Malaysia to develop its assault rifles and was involved in a 'small way' in the refurbishment of Malaysian

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<sup>114</sup> Although ASEAN states are said to have developed 90 defence production programmes producing 916 weapon systems, these constitute less than 2 percent of total Third World arms production. Production is yet to go beyond light aircraft and small ships. For an overview of defence production in ASEAN, see: Thomas Ohlson, 'The ASEAN Countries: Low-Cost Latecomers,' in Michael Brzoska and Thomas Ohlson, eds., *Arms Production in the Third World* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1986), pp.55-77; Yoshinori Nishizaki, 'A Brief Survey of Arms Production in ASEAN,' *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol.10, No.3 (December 1988), pp. 269-293; Bilveer Singh, 'ASEAN's Arms Industries: Potential and Limits,' *Comparative Strategy*, Vol.8, No.2 (1989), pp. 249-64.

<sup>115</sup> Nishizaki, op. cit. p. 282.

<sup>116</sup> Personal interview with Indonesian official involved in defence production, Jakarta 11 August 1989; *The Star*, 1 April 1989.

<sup>117</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 8 April 1986.

<sup>118</sup> Michael Richardson, 'Defending Southeast Asia,' *Pacific Defence Reporter*, (February 1985), p. 5.

<sup>119</sup> *Bangkok Post*, 22 October 1988.

<sup>120</sup> *Jakarta Post*, 14 January 1986; *Business Times* (Kuala Lumpur), 13 May 1989.

<sup>121</sup> 'Defence and Economics in ASEAN Nations,' Special Supplement *Military Technology*, Vol 9, Issue 12 (1985), p.100.

A-4 *Skyhawks*.<sup>122</sup> A more promising example of bilateral cooperation has involved Singapore and Thailand. In January 1988, the Thai cabinet approved a plan to co-produce with Singapore a range of small arms including 40mm rocket-propelled grenade launchers and 40mm grenades and 105mm shells. Arms and ammunition produced from this joint venture will be available for export.<sup>123</sup> Whether this could become a model for bilateral ventures involving other ASEAN countries remains to be seen. In 1983, the Deputy Defence Minister of Malaysia, Abang Abu Bakar, raised the possibility that Malaysia could 'move into' joint production with Singapore in the fields of aeronautics and small arms. As a first step, Malaysia expressed an interest in manufacturing the SAR-80 assault rifle made in Singapore.<sup>124</sup> But Singapore has remained cool to the idea, allegedly due to commercial considerations.<sup>125</sup>

Greater intra-ASEAN arms transfers and joint production are both a requirement and consequence of standardization of equipment. In 1982, then Supreme Commander of Royal Thai Armed Forces, General Saiyud Kerdphol, urged ASEAN nations to increase standardization through joint procurement from abroad as well as joint production within ASEAN.<sup>126</sup> Apart from being an essential prerequisite for inter-operability and mutual contingency assistance, opting for similar equipment reinforces the rationale for joint production, and offers opportunity for savings in external procurement of weapons. In 1984, Abang Abu Bakar, strongly advocated joint procurement of weapons by ASEAN countries, claiming that 'such purchases will enable us to save millions of dollars as prices will be lower than when purchases are made on an individual basis.'<sup>127</sup> More recently, Defence Secretary Fidel Ramos of the Philippines has indicated that Manila would look into ASEAN suppliers for its equipment needs not only to reduce its dependence on the US, but also 'because there is a possibility of common sourcing which might be beneficial to the Philippines with regard to the production of defence supplies and materials.'<sup>128</sup>

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, some standardization of weapon systems occurred among ASEAN countries. All ASEAN states except Brunei acquired F-5 fighter and C-130 transport aircraft, while three (Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia) acquired A-4 attack aircraft. More recently, the F-16 has entered service in the air forces of Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand. The latter three and Malaysia introduced different versions of the *Sidewinder* air-to-air missile, while the *Rapier* surface-to-air missile entered the inventories of Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei. In terms of naval weapons, the *Exocet* anti-ship missile was purchased by Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand (and later Singapore). Commonality was also evident in ground forces equipment, with the V-150 *Commando* armoured personnel carriers acquired by Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, while Brunei, Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia introduced *Scorpion* light tanks to their inventory.

But the apparent standardization, evident mostly in relation to equipment acquired from the US, (the availability of US FMS credits being a major factor influencing their acquisition, especially that of aircraft) was not, as one Malaysia defence analyst has argued, the result of any conscious policy or design, even on a bilateral basis.<sup>129</sup> In 1984, Malaysia and Indonesia reportedly agreed to set up a joint consultative committee to look into the possibility of purchasing aircraft, spare parts, and other military items,<sup>130</sup> but little progress has been made. Similarly, the idea of an ASEAN 'war reserve contingency pool'

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<sup>122</sup> *New Straits Times*, 18 April 1983.

<sup>123</sup> *Bangkok Post*, 27 January 1988.

<sup>124</sup> *Bangkok Post*, 25 February 1983.

<sup>125</sup> Mak, 'Directions for Greater Defence Cooperation,' op.cit., p. 22.

<sup>126</sup> *Straits Times*, 6 November 1982.

<sup>127</sup> *The Star*, 17 July 1984.

<sup>128</sup> *Business Times* (Kuala Lumpur), 13 May 1989.

<sup>129</sup> Mak, *Directions for Greater Defence Cooperation*, op. cit., p.17; Mak, 'ASEAN Air Cooperation,' op.cit, pp.3-4.

<sup>130</sup> *Star*, 17 July 1984.

proposed by General Saiyud Kerdphol of Thailand,<sup>131</sup> which would require greater standardization of munitions than is the case so far, has not materialized, although Thailand has since proceeded to form its own such pool with US involvement and aid. The lack of desire to devise a systematic scheme of standardization is further underscored by the fact that no real attempt has been made to take advantage of whatever standardization has occurred by accident. Opportunities for joint procurement from external suppliers, which might have resulted in significant cost savings, have been ignored. For example, some analysts have pointed out that a joint procurement drive might have obtained better terms in the purchase of a multi-role fighter aircraft by Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia, which in the end led to the first three separately acquiring the F-16A/B from the US and Malaysia going for the Panavia *Tornado* from Britain.<sup>132</sup>

Standardization creates opportunities for development of joint repair and maintenance facilities, which could also promote intra-ASEAN collaboration on the transfer of defence related technology and arms production. There are already a few examples of such technological cooperation in the field of maintenance and repair, mostly involving Indonesia and Malaysia. The Malaysian Airline System (MAS) secured a contract to repair and overhaul B-737 and F-27 components for the Indonesian Air Force, and the Malaysian Company, Syarikat Airod, overhauled Indonesian C-130 *Hercules* aircraft in Subang. Malaysia, in return, sent its *Albatross* aircraft for overhaul in Surabaya. MAS has a similar arrangement for the maintenance of Thai Airways' B-737s.<sup>133</sup> Thailand and Malaysia have discussed the possibility of Thai naval vessels using the RMN ship repair facilities at Lumut.<sup>134</sup> However, attempts to take advantage of existing commonalities in inventory, such as joint maintenance facilities for *Exocet* missiles, (which is supposedly under consideration between Malaysia and Indonesia) and F-16 aircraft (an idea mooted by General Benny Murdani in 1986) have not borne any fruit.<sup>135</sup>

Indeed ASEAN officials take a realistic a view of the prospects for joint procurement, production and standardization. As conceded by Abang Abu Bakar himself, 'Each [ASEAN] government has its own procurement rules and decision-making processes...[which] can cause major difficulties' with regard to standardization as well as joint procurement.<sup>136</sup> In the context of the Malaysian-Indonesian standardization/procurement objective, General Benny Murdani pointed to two barriers that might apply to other ASEAN cases as well. According to Murdani, the plan had limited feasibility because of (1) budgetary constraints on the part of Indonesia, whose defence spending is lower compared to that of Malaysia, and (2) the different strategic 'needs' of the two armed forces.<sup>137</sup> This points to two of the most important barriers to greater ASEAN cooperation on joint weapons procurement: the differences in military spending levels, and differences in geography, doctrine and overall military strategy (contrast, for example, Singapore's emphasis on forward defence with Indonesia's emphasis on 'depth'; Thailand's preoccupation with land based threats from north with Malaysia's increasing concern with maritime security; and the Philippines's turn toward counterinsurgency with the rest of ASEAN states' increasing orientation towards conventional warfare.)<sup>138</sup>

In the specific context of joint arms production, the problems centre around the fact that ASEAN producers are far from being self-reliant in defence-related technologies. As such, their interest in entering into joint ventures with external producers far exceeds their involvement in creating an ASEAN industry. Furthermore, old 'psychological barriers' which inhibit political

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<sup>131</sup> Personal Interview, Bangkok, 26 June 1989.

<sup>132</sup> Robert Karniol, 'ASEAN's Need For Greater Defence Cooperation,' *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 10 November 1988, p. 1495.

<sup>133</sup> *New Straits Times*, 15 August 1985; 8 November 1986.

<sup>134</sup> *Bangkok Post*, 14 July 1987.

<sup>135</sup> *New Straits Times*, 5 November 1984; *Star*, 11 August 1986.

<sup>136</sup> *New Straits Times*, 16 April 1983.

<sup>137</sup> *Straits Times*, 17 July 1987.

<sup>138</sup> Bilveer Singh, 'ASEAN's Arms Industries,' op.cit., p.260.

cooperation among ASEAN states, and 'national chauvinism,' also affect the prospect for greater cooperation in defence production.<sup>139</sup> It has been suggested that fear of a leading role for Singapore in any ASEAN arms manufacturing scheme, which would give the island republic undue leverage over its dependent neighbours, might explain the low level of intra-ASEAN cooperation in defence production.<sup>140</sup> But this view ignores the fact that in the past both Malaysia and Indonesia have actively solicited Singapore's help in building their defence manufacturing capabilities. Indeed Singapore itself is hardly a proponent of an ASEAN arms industry which it might conceivably dominate. Perhaps the most outright dismissal of the notion of an ASEAN arms industry along the lines of ASEAN Industrial Projects has come from Singapore, the country which has to play an instrumental role in any such project. As Singapore's Trade and Industry Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, pointed out in an interview with the Indonesia defence magazine *TSM*, each ASEAN country had its own approach to strategic industry and priorities were different in relations to key areas such as military engineering, artillery and weapons system. Given that in the development of national defence industries in ASEAN the priorities are determined 'not [by considerations of] economics, but security,' it is difficult to foresee an ASEAN arms industry because of the differing security needs and interest among the members.<sup>141</sup>

### Prospects for the Future

Where do the ASEAN states go from here? As the foregoing discussion indicates, bilateral security ties have come a long way and provide a solid foundation for trilateral and multilateral cooperation. Already, multilateralism is evident in the field of intelligence and security information exchanges. And ASEAN policy-makers are no longer shying away from a public advocacy of greater military cooperation within the regional grouping. But do the existing forms of bilateral military cooperation constitute a sufficient basis for moving ASEAN towards an alliance? What are the constraints on and prospects for greater defence and security cooperation in ASEAN? The technical and operational barriers to greater intra-ASEAN security cooperation have been outlined in the preceding sections. Yet, it seems plausible to argue that these operational barriers, including the lack of standardization of equipment and differences in doctrines and language, though important, are not insurmountable. The armed forces of the ASEAN states can bridge the doctrinal gap and achieve greater standardization through existing bilateral frameworks in a relatively short period of time, should their leaders muster the political will for greater cooperation.

The most important barriers to greater intra-ASEAN security cooperation, then, are decidedly political. ASEAN leaders continue to stress the advantages of keeping their defence links bilateral, and there seems to be a consensus against a military pact. As General Sutrisno argued, 'A pact is a contract and we don't want that.'<sup>142</sup> On another occasion, he argued that 'Without a military pact...[the ASEAN states] can in fact cooperate flexibly' in the security field.<sup>143</sup> For ASEAN states, the need to preserve ASEAN's 'non-military, non-provocative' complexion continue to outweigh the possible benefits of a military pact. As General Fidel Ramos warned,

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<sup>139</sup> Zakaria Haji Ahmed, 'Asean Countries Should Jointly Produce Weapons,' *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 20 February 1986, pp. 26-27.

<sup>140</sup> In this context, the conclusions of a CIA study leaked by columnist Jack Anderson is interesting. The study contended that Singapore's defence industry, 'if developed far enough could give Singapore leverage with neighbouring states by making them dependent on Singapore for needed spare parts and ammunition.' For a reference to this study see: Ho Kwon Ping and Cheah Cheng Hye, 'Five Fingers on the Trigger,' *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 24 October 1980, p. 37.

<sup>141</sup> *Straits Times*, 5 May 1988.

<sup>142</sup> *Straits Times* (Weekly Overseas Edition), 9 December 1989.

<sup>143</sup> Cited in *Asian Defence Journal*, No. 5 (1985), p. 113.

[an ASEAN defence pact] ...could provoke an arms race, intensify ideology-based polarisation and conflicts within South-east Asia, encourage the big powers to initiate preemptive counteraction and prevent ASEAN from pursuing with undiluted vigour and freedom of action its vision of full regional stability and economic self-sufficiency.<sup>144</sup>

The prospects for an ASEAN military pact appears even more unlikely in view of developments that are bound to force the ASEAN states to take a hard look at the priorities and objectives of their collective regional agenda. In a period of rising expectations at home and protectionism abroad, the issue of regional economic cooperation assumes greater significance than before. External economic pressures, such as European and North American integration, the potential of China and Eastern Europe to divert Western investment from the ASEAN region, and the possibility that ASEAN regionalism could be overshadowed by the recent moves to form an OECD-type forum for the wider Asia-Pacific region, are challenges that require urgent collective attention from ASEAN states. Emphasis on military matters could divert attention as well as resources from economic goals. Lack of concrete results in the field of economic cooperation strains ASEAN's credibility, given the fact that the association stressed this objective at the time of its origin. The Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohammed, issued a timely reminder of ASEAN's priorities which echoes the perspective of many policy-makers and intellectuals in the region:

So far ASEAN has proved effective in the political field. It has not been so successful in economic cooperation. Yet now it has to face new economic challenges resulting from the modernisations of the Five Kingdoms (China, Japan, US, USSR, and EEC) and their stress on the economic betterment of their people...Closer regional economic cooperation within ASEAN is now imperative.<sup>145</sup>

Furthermore, there is the question whether any change to ASEAN's image and priorities might undermine its achievements in the political field to date. This is an especially important consideration given that ASEAN's much heralded unity over the Cambodia conflict has been significantly strained since the advent of the Chatichai administration in Thailand. If ASEAN overcomes its barely-concealed differences over the Thai initiatives towards Indochina, it might still find it difficult to keep political cooperation alive in the absence of an unifying security threat. As Foreign Minister Wong Kan Seng of Singapore warned, 'The continued relevance of the organisation, post Cambodia, can not be taken for granted.'<sup>146</sup>

In addition, the prospect of a reformed Vietnam in the post-Cambodia phase raises the thorny issue of its cooption into the ASEAN fold, a move that, if seriously undertaken and brought to fruition, might fundamentally alter the character of ASEAN as a regional grouping, and remove the possibility of it adopting any military-security arrangement. ASEAN remains committed, at least in theory, to a framework of regional order encompassing the entire region of Southeast Asia. But if the past is any guide, the question of relations with Vietnam is likely to prove highly divisive for ASEAN. It would also absorb a good deal of ASEAN's diplomatic attention and energy. In this context, one may wonder whether ASEAN could make a better contribution to regional security by working seriously towards Vietnam's eventual integration into a revised and broadened framework for regional order rather than by forming a subregional military alliance which might infinitely complicate the process of rapproachment with Hanoi.

ASEAN's political challenge extends not only to the wider regional issues of Cambodia and Vietnam, but also to problems between its member states. Although ASEAN has made a major stride in creating an atmosphere of peace and stability in relations among its members, it may be too early to pronounce it as a 'security community,' a state of affairs in which its members can develop 'dependable expectations of peaceful change' and rule out the possibility of resort to force as a means of problem-solving in intra-ASEAN relations.<sup>147</sup> Although the suspicions and rivalries at the time of ASEAN's formation, such

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<sup>144</sup> *The Sunday Times* (Singapore), 26 November 1989.

<sup>145</sup> Text of address at the Ninth Singapore Lecture, *Straits Times*, 16 December 1988.

<sup>146</sup> *Straits Times*, 24 March 1989.

<sup>147</sup> The concept of 'security community' as used here is derived from Karl Deutsch, et al., *Political Community in the North Atlantic Area* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957).

as those over the demarcation of land borders, perceptions of Singapore's identity and role by its Malay neighbours, and the Philippine-Malaysia conflict over Sabah, have been considerably muted, new disputes over sovereignty and economic control have arisen in the maritime sphere. These disputes threaten ASEAN's solidarity and challenge its record of conflict-management. ASEAN confronts the task of developing an appropriate framework for regional order which could bring its ZOPFAN concept to fruition and in which intra-ASEAN conflicts, including the potential maritime conflicts, can be peacefully settled. Unresolved bilateral disputes such as the Sabah issue are not only a barrier to greater military cooperation within ASEAN, but resolving them should remain the fundamental priority of ASEAN before it seriously entertains any move towards a military arrangement. In other words, the achievement of a genuine 'security community' assumes priority over that of a 'defence community' in ASEAN's current and prospective political agenda.

Of the major intra-ASEAN disputes that remain, the one between Malaysia and the Philippines over Sabah provides a good example of both the possibilities and limits of intra-ASEAN conflict-management. Although the 'ASEAN spirit' led former President Marcos to publicly drop the claim at the time of the Kuala Lumpur summit in 1977, the final resolution of the dispute has proven to be elusive. Attempts by the Aquino government to secure the necessary legal basis for dropping the claim has been thwarted by the Philippine Senate. Philippine National Security Advisor, Rafael Iletto, has warned that failure to resolve the Sabah issue could lead to renewed Malaysian aid to the MNLF separatist guerrillas in the Mindanao region of the Philippines, thereby further complicating the prospect for any meaningful bilateral security cooperation between Manila and Kuala Lumpur.<sup>148</sup> A host of other intra-ASEAN disputes have emerged, many of these in the maritime sphere. A recent listing of these maritime boundary disputes by an official of the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Coordinating Centre is revealing. According to his list, of the 15 maritime boundaries in the South China Sea (excluding the Gulf of Thailand), 12 are in dispute, two have been agreed (one partially) and one resolved through a joint exploitation agreement. Of particular interest is the fact that six of these boundary disputes are between ASEAN countries, with Malaysia having disputes with every other ASEAN country.<sup>149</sup> In April 1988, the arrest by the Malaysian Navy of 49 Philippino fishermen who allegedly intruded into Malaysian waters caused considerable tension in bilateral relations. Several rounds of talks since then have not resolved the issue.<sup>150</sup> Following the incident, the Philippines deployed additional ships and troops in the area bordering Malaysia, although Defence Secretary Fidel Ramos said that a 'military approach was uncalled for *at this time*' (emphasis added)<sup>151</sup> Both Malaysia and the Philippines have stationed troops on the Spratlys atolls to support their claim on these islands, which have also been claimed by Vietnam, Taiwan and China. The dispute between Malaysia and Singapore over the Horsburgh Lighthouse or Pedra Branca is also important; Singapore recently singled it out among the Republic's unresolved territorial problems with its ASEAN neighbours.<sup>152</sup>

Another case of bilateral tension in ASEAN is within the so-called 'sub-ASEAN triangle' involving Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. A case in point is Malaysia's objection to Singapore's offer of military facilities to the US in 1989. It was partly coloured by the lingering suspicions concerning the Republic's military posture *vis-à-vis* Malaysia. Ahmad Badawi, a former Malaysian Defence Minister, reminded Malaysians that Singapore continued to perceive Malaysia 'as a threat to [its] existence,' and in this context, 'the [Singapore] offer...[might be] directed as a deterrence directed against us.'<sup>153</sup> To the extent that mutual suspicions and tension between Malaysia and Singapore, recently acknowledged by the Chief of Malaysian

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<sup>148</sup> *Straits Times*, 18 May 1989.

<sup>149</sup> Commodore Ahmad Ramli Nor, 'ASEAN Maritime Cooperation,' paper presented to the Defence Asia '89 Conference on 'Towards Greater ASEAN Military and Security Cooperation: Issues and Prospects,' Singapore, 22-25 March, pp.2-6.

<sup>150</sup> *The Sunday Times*, (Singapore), 21 May 1989.

<sup>151</sup> *Straits Times*, 15 September 1988.

<sup>152</sup> *Straits Times* (Weekly Overseas Edition), 24 February 1990.

<sup>153</sup> *Straits Times* (Weekly Overseas Edition), 2 September 1989.

Armed Forces,<sup>154</sup> reflect deep-rooted historical and ethnic factors, they are not amenable to quick-fix solutions. A number of recent incidents reflect how racial and ethnic factors continue to thwart efforts by their leadership to improve political and military relations. The most serious manifestation of this was the visit by Israeli President Chaim Herzog to Singapore in 1986, which invoked widespread protest in Malaysia. Malaysian leaders accused Singapore of being 'oblivious to the sensitivities and feelings of the Muslim communities in the region' and stressed the damage caused by the visit to ASEAN solidarity in general and Singapore-Malaysian relations in particular.<sup>155</sup> In perhaps the most revealing comment on the Herzog visit, acting Foreign Minister (later Defence Minister) Tengku Rithauddeen likened Singapore's position in ASEAN to that of 'a wolf in sheep's clothing.'<sup>156</sup> Another source of strain in bilateral relations was a remark made by Singapore's Second Defence Minister in February 1986 underscoring the policy of not assigning sensitive positions in the Singapore Air Force to officers of Malay ethnic background. This was construed by the Malaysian Foreign Minister as a hint that 'Singapore could be regarding Malaysia as an enemy' and sparked off a major public outcry in Malaysia which has yet to fade away.<sup>157</sup>

Another factor complicating security relations within the 'triangle' is the uneasiness felt by Malaysia over the growing bilateral military links between Singapore and Indonesia. There is already a feeling in Malaysia that the growing security ties between Indonesia and Singapore could be at the expense of Malaysian-Indonesia relations.<sup>158</sup> Even some Indonesian officials feel that Singapore's interest in developing close security ties with Indonesia could partly be due to its strategy of using the latter as a counterweight to Malaysian pressure.<sup>159</sup> Although Indonesia has moved to dismiss Kuala Lumpur's fears, other factors have strained the hitherto close political understanding and security relationship between the two countries. In early 1990, a public outcry in Indonesia over Malaysia's execution of an Indonesian national convicted of drug-trafficking prompted Defence Minister Benny Murdani to warn that the 'special relationship' between the two countries 'can not be taken for granted.'<sup>160</sup> The significant improvement in Singapore's ties with Indonesia as Indonesia's ties with Malaysia come under some strain is an ASEAN irony and it creates new uncertainty over the future of their bilateral and trilateral military links.

A viable ASEAN military arrangement presupposes a capability within the grouping to provide assistance to members in time of need. Presently, no ASEAN state, Indonesia included, can be said to have that ability. The armed forces of ASEAN states are still geared to national, rather than regional self-help, and even then are not deemed adequate against major external threats. As such, while various ASEAN countries had made public declarations of their intent to provide contingency help to

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<sup>154</sup> *Straits Times*, 10 November 1989.

<sup>155</sup> Comment by Education Minister Anwar Ibrahim, *New Straits Times*, 21 November 1986.

<sup>156</sup> *Straits Times*, 27 November 1986.

<sup>157</sup> *New Straits Times*, 25 March 1987.

<sup>158</sup> *Straits Times* (Weekly Overseas Edition), 17 February 1990.

<sup>159</sup> 'Blood and Money,' *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 1 March 1990, p.9.

<sup>160</sup> *Straits Times* (Weekly Overseas Edition), 27 January 1990.

fellow ASEAN states,<sup>161</sup> such intra-ASEAN security commitments are hardly credible. The limitations of an ASEAN deterrent have been stressed by the Chief of Staff of Malaysian Defence Forces

In terms of deterrence value, it is very doubtful if an ASEAN alliance would really deter any would be aggressor for the fact that the combined military power of ASEAN is not even able to match the Vietnamese military might (just to quote an example). To achieve deterrence ASEAN will have to form an alliance with one of the superpowers. Doing this would mean attracting competition from the other superpower apart from violating the ZOPFAN concept.<sup>162</sup>

In reality no ASEAN country sees intra-ASEAN security cooperation as a substitute for its strategic partnership with external powers. This is evident from the continuing value placed on the US military presence in the region by all the ASEAN countries, whether publicly or privately - notwithstanding the recent controversy over Singapore's offer of military facilities to the US. In fact, Indonesia's attempt to diffuse the situation arising out of Malaysian protests against Singapore's offer, and the Malaysian leadership's, (as opposed to certain sections within its grassroots polity) eventual willingness to accommodate Singapore's position, are indications that both of the key champions of the ZOPFAN ideal regard the US regional presence to be a key factor in ASEAN's security. The continuing relevance, in fact limited reinvigoration, of the Five Power Defence Arrangements, further testifies to the strong external component of the security options of the ASEAN states.

But the constraints on an ASEAN military alliance do not preclude the development of closer and more diversified forms of bilateral military-security cooperation among its members. The current fluidity of the external strategic environment of the ASEAN states is likely to enhance bilateral military links within ASEAN. Of the major developments in regional security, the uncertainty over the US presence in the Philippines looms as a major concern of ASEAN policy makers. Sections within the ASEAN elite already fear that the loss of these bases would not only constrain the US ability to respond to a regional contingency, but also create a potential 'vacuum' which might be filled by powers considered either hostile by some ASEAN states (such as the Soviet Union and China, although the perception of Moscow as a 'hostile' power has changed in recent years) or politically unacceptable to them as a security partner (such as Japan). The possibility of a 'security gap' in the South China Sea resulting from the US withdrawal, and more generally the threats from the maritime environment in Southeast Asia,

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<sup>161</sup> Although ASEAN members are wary of assuming reciprocal obligations to assist each other within the framework of a formal alliance, several have made informal offers to provide contingency assistance to neighbours facing a major security threat. Such commitments have gone beyond the pledges of assistance made to the frontline state, Thailand, by its ASEAN partners in the immediate aftermath of the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. Adam Malik, the foreign minister of Indonesia, once asserted that: 'If Singapore or Malaysia is attacked and they ask Indonesia for help, we certainly can not remain idle as we are morally bound to help them.' Cited in Dick Wilson, *The Neutralization of Southeast Asia* (New York: Praeger, 1975), p. 157. Later, in November 1983, Benny Murdani stated that Indonesia would help Malaysia in the event of an attack on the latter because 'If Malaysia is attacked, Indonesia would also feel the pinch' (*New Straits Times*, 16 November 1983.) In 1981, Lee Kuan Yew declared that 'Singapore's armed forces should be prepared to augment Malaysia's armed forces to meet any threat of external aggression' (*Straits Times*, 19 December 1981). The pledge was restated by deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, who stated that Malaysia and Singapore would help each other if either country was attacked (*New Straits Times*, 9 September 1988).

Malaysia's Home Affairs Minister, Mohammed Ghazalie Shafie, stated in 1979 that 'Any threat to either of us [Malaysia or Indonesia] will be regarded as a threat to both our countries. We will jointly act to fight these threats to the very end.' (Cited in Ho Kwon Ping and Cheah Cheng Hye, 'Five Fingers on the Trigger,' *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 24 October 1980, p. 34.) In the wake of the 1984 border agreement between Malaysia and Indonesia, the Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister, Musa Hitam, revealed that Indonesia-Malaysia defence cooperation included 'a contingency plan [that would be put into effect] in case something happens.' *Star*, 29 November 1985.

<sup>162</sup> Text of address by General Hashim Mohammed Ali at a Seminar organized by the Integrated Air Defence System in Singapore, 29 November 1989, 'Regional Defence from the Military Perspective,' *ISIS Focus* No. 58 (January 1990), p.41.

provide a backdrop to the need for greater defence and security cooperation voiced by some ASEAN leaders and analysts.<sup>163</sup> Various ASEAN leaders, most notably Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, have expressed a sense of unease and apprehension over the growing military, especially naval, prowess and profile of India, China and Japan, three powers which can be expected to significantly increase their role in regional security.<sup>164</sup> India's growing naval prowess, Japan's expanding Maritime Self-Defence Forces, and the dangers of a confrontation in the South China Sea involving Chinese, Vietnamese and ASEAN forces are bound to figure prominently in ASEAN's perspective on regional security. Thus, just as land based border insurgencies provided the initial catalyst for the emergence of security arrangements among the ASEAN states, problems in the maritime sphere could well prove to be the impetus for an ASEAN security framework of the future, incorporating, but going beyond, the existing bilateral arrangements.

But the emergence of a major external threat serious enough to press the ASEAN states into a defence pact is extremely unlikely. Even though individual ASEAN states are worried about what roles China, India and Japan might play in the region, their perceptions are not likely to converge. While ASEAN's political unity over the Cambodia conflict has always suffered from differing perceptions of the Vietnamese threat (and Soviet, because of its alliance with Vietnam) the emerging strategic divergence within ASEAN is likely to revolve more around the role of China. Intra-ASEAN differences over the perception of China has been highlighted over the Sino-Thai strategic relationship driven by Thai acceptance of Chinese security guarantees against Vietnam. Chinese arms sales to Thailand are a matter of concern in Malaysia and Indonesia, even though the latter is moving to restore diplomatic relations with Beijing. To the extent that suspicion of China in Malaysia and Indonesia derives from deep-rooted domestic ethnic factors and China's record of subversion, these are unlikely to give way to endorsement of Thailand's currently more benign view of China.

In the final analysis, it is unlikely that any intra-ASEAN security arrangements geared to cope with the changing regional strategic context would take the form of a multilateral pact. ASEAN states have thus far viewed their bilateral arrangements as an appropriate and adequate response to the kind of security threats they have faced in the past and are likely to face in the future. Differing threat perceptions, lingering intra-ASEAN disputes and the limited deterrent value of any ASEAN pact are likely to weigh heavily in the minds of ASEAN policy-makers in deciding the future course of intra-ASEAN military collaboration. The coming years will undoubtedly see a continuing emphasis on bilateral cooperation. If there is to be an ASEAN 'defence community,' it is not likely to be structured around formal or multilateral military linkages within the existing ASEAN framework, but based on closer and more diversified forms bilateral security ties constituting what the Indonesian armed forces commander has aptly described as an ASEAN 'defence spider web.'

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<sup>163</sup> For some regional perspectives on the prospects for and constraints on maritime security cooperation among ASEAN states, see: J. Soedjati Djiwandono, 'The Security of Sea Lanes in the Asia-Pacific Region: The Prospect for Regional Cooperation,' *Indonesia Quarterly*, Vol.14, No.1 (January 1986), pp.46-54; A.R. Sutopo, 'Cooperation for SLOCs Security in Southeast Asia: The Experience of ASEAN,' Paper presented to the International SLOC conference on Resources, Maritime Transport and SLOC Security in the Asia-Pacific Region, Seoul 15-17 June 1987; Commodore Ahmed Ramli Noor, 'ASEAN Maritime Cooperation: An Appraisal,' Paper presented to the Defence Asia '89 Conference on 'Towards Greater ASEAN Military and Security Cooperation: Issues and Prospects,' Singapore, 22-25 March 1989.

<sup>164</sup> In a recent interview with the *Asian Wall Street Journal* (27-28 October 1989), Lee warned of the possible consequences of a US withdrawal:

The Soviets already are present. I suppose sooner or latter, the Japanese would have to fill up a large part of the gap on the naval side. Maybe the Chinese, Maybe even the Indians`.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This list excludes exercises conducted under the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) and Search and Rescue exercises. Malaysia and Singapore hold twice-yearly bilateral air defence exercises, called *Adex*, as part of the Integrated Air Defence System under the auspices of the FPDA. Search and Rescue exercises are conducted regularly between Indonesia and Malaysia, and Malaysia and Singapore.
- <sup>2</sup> *Kekar Malindo* is organized by the General Border Committee. Although it began as a Command Post exercise, the 1988 exercise involved the deployment of 1,064 troops and RMAF *Skyhawk* aircraft 'recapturing enemy occupied areas.' The objective of the exercise goes beyond training in counterinsurgency warfare. For example, the goal of *Kekar Malindo VII* was described by Malaysia as training in 'conventional warfare, especially defence and counterattack' (*New Straits Times*, 17 November 1983; *Star* 17 August 1988). Indonesia and Malaysia have also carried out army exercises of the *Tatar Malindo* and *Kripura Malindo* series. *Kripura Malindo 1*, a command post exercise, was held in Semantan, Sarawak, in February 1981 (*New Straits Times*, 21 February 1981). *Tatar Malindo*, a field training exercise held in Sabah/ East Kalimantan, to train troops in 'conventional warfare tactics,' was first conducted in January 1981 (Donald Weatherbee, 'ASEAN Security Cooperation and the South China Sea,' Paper presented to the Pacific Forum Symposium 'National Threat Perceptions in East/Asia Pacific,' Waikoloa, Hawaii, 6-8 February 1982; *New Straits Times*, 30 August 1983; *Star*, 20 August 1983). A total of 17 army exercises were held between 1977 and 1987 (Personal interviews in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 16 August 1989).
- <sup>3</sup> This is the name of the first exercise held in Singapore in May 1989. The two countries also held an army exercise in Sarawak in the following October (*Star*, 26 May 1989; *Sunday Times* [Singapore], 21 May 1989; *Pioneer*, No. 141, July 1989).
- <sup>4</sup> Organized by the Regional Border Committee for close support missions against CPM insurgents, *Air Thamal I* field exercise held in March 1982 was preceded by a command post exercise in October 1979. Thailand and Malaysia are planning new air defence exercises (B.A. Hamzah, 'ASEAN Military Cooperation Without Pact or Threat,' *Asia Pacific Community*, No. 22, Fall 1983, pp. 42-43; *Straits Times*, 3 August 1989).
- <sup>5</sup> Organized by the regular navies of the two countries, *Thalay* was first held in August 1980 at the Woodlands base. It was preceded by exercises of the *Sea Ex-Thamal* series launched in 1979 between the marine police of the two countries within the framework of their Regional Border Committee (Hamzah, op. cit., pp. 42-43; *New Straits Times*, 21 August 1980).
- <sup>6</sup> Apart from *Hornbill*, the two sides have held other naval exercises since 1981 (Personal interviews in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 16 August 1989; K.U. Menon, 'A Six Power Defence Arrangement in Southeast Asia,' *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol.10, No.3, December 1988, p. 314).
- <sup>7</sup> A naval exercise between Indonesia and Thailand in Gulf of Thailand was reported in January 1975, *The Straits Times* 28 January 1975. In the early 1980s, the *Sea Garuda* exercises appear to have been held annually. For example, *Sea Garuda 4B-83* was held in August 1983, and the exercise was again held the following year.
- <sup>8</sup> *Asian Defence Journal*, No.5, 1976, p. 26.
- <sup>9</sup> According to official Malaysian sources, Indonesia and Malaysia had conducted 12 *Malindo Jaya* naval exercises between 1972 and 1983, thereby indicating that the exercises began in 1973 (*New Straits Times*, 9 May 1984).
- <sup>10</sup> Command Post exercises involving officers from all three services, no warships or aircraft used (*Star*, 18 November 1982); *Darsasa 2* was held in November 1986 (*Star*, 20 November 1986). Recently, the two countries have announced plans to hold their first combined field training exercise in 1991 (*Indonesia Observer*, 10 August 1989).
- <sup>11</sup> *The Straits Times*, 16 December 1989.
- <sup>12</sup> *Pioneer*, No.82, August 1984.

<sup>13</sup> *Pioneer*, No.109, November 1986.

<sup>14</sup> *Bangkok Post*, 7 January 1982.

<sup>15</sup> The *Philindo* naval exercises most likely began in early 1970s. *Philindo II* was held in 1973, followed by *Philindo III* in 1975 (*China News*, 4 November 1975; *The Straits Times*, 13 June 1973). These appear to have been replaced by annual patrol exercises *Corpatphilindo* or Coordinate Patrol, Philippines-Indonesia (Personal Interview with the Defence Attache of the Philippines, Jakarta, 10 August 1989).

<sup>16</sup> *Pioneer*, No.84, October 1984.

<sup>17</sup> These exercises were initially reported to be an annual event, as indicated in the SAF publication, *Pioneer* (No.74, May 1984). However, a later issue of *Pioneer* (No. 129, July 1988) stated that *Sing-Siam* was a biennial exercise.

<sup>18</sup> *The Straits Times*, 18 August 1983; *Pioneer*, No.72, October 1983.

<sup>19</sup> *Pioneer*, No.120, October 1987.

<sup>20</sup> *Ex-Lancer* is an annual exercise while *Ex Singa-Hutan* was held in 1984. The latter was the first brigade level exercise of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces, in which a battalion of SAF soldiers and A-4 *Skyhawk* aircraft participated (*Asian Defence Journal*, January 1988, p. 18).

## Appendix I

### Bilateral Military Exercises in ASEAN<sup>1</sup>

Countries Involved	Type of Exercise	Name of Exercise	Year Started	Frequency
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Indonesia / Malaysia	Army	<i>Kekar Malindo / Tatar Malindo / Kripura Malindo</i> <sup>2</sup>	1977 1981 1981	Annual Intermittent (?) Intermittent (?)
Indonesia / Malaysia	Air	<i>Elang Malindo</i>	1975	Annual <sup>18</sup>
Indonesia / Malaysia	Navy	<i>Malindo Jaya</i>	1973	Annual (?) <sup>9</sup>
Indonesia / Malaysia	All Services	<i>Darsasa Malindo</i>	1982	Twice since 1982 (?) <sup>10</sup>
Indonesia / Singapore	Army	<i>Safakar Indopura</i>	1989	Annual <sup>11</sup>
Indonesia / Singapore	Air	<i>Elang Indopura</i>	1980	Annual <sup>12</sup>
Indonesia / Singapore	Navy	<i>Englek</i>	1975	Annual <sup>13</sup>
Indonesia / Thailand	Air	<i>Elang Thainesia</i>	1981	Annual <sup>14</sup>
Indonesia / Thailand	Navy	<i>Sea Garuda</i>	1975 (?) <sup>7</sup>	Intermittent (?)
Indonesia / Philippines	Navy	<i>Philindo</i>	1972	Irregular <sup>15</sup>
Malaysia / Singapore	Army	<i>Semangat Bersatu</i> <sup>3</sup>	1989	Annual
Malaysia / Singapore	Navy	<i>Malapura</i>	1984	Annual <sup>15</sup>
Malaysia / Thailand	Air	<i>Air Thama</i> <sup>4</sup>	1981	Annual
Malaysia / Thailand	Navy	<i>Thalay</i> <sup>5</sup>	1980	Intermittent (?)
Malaysia / Brunei	Navy	<i>Hornbill</i> <sup>6</sup> (and others)	1981 (?)	(?)
Singapore / Thailand	Air	<i>Sing-Siam</i>	1981	(?) <sup>17</sup>
Singapore / Thailand	Navy	<i>Thai-Sing</i>	1983	Annual <sup>18</sup>
Singapore / Brunei	Navy	<i>Pelican</i>	1979	Annual <sup>19</sup>
Singapore / Brunei	Army	<i>Ex Lancer / (Ex Singa-Hutan)</i>	(?)	Annual <sup>20</sup>

