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International Relations in Southeast Asia

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International Relations in Southeast Asia

Between Bilateralism and Multilateralism

Edited by
N. Ganesan and Ramses Amer

ISEAS

INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES
Singapore

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Preface

This book is the end product of a project on bilateralism and multi-lateralism in Southeast Asia. The contributions to this edited volume have been developed through a process involving presentations of papers at two international workshops held in Hiroshima and Kuala Lumpur in December 2007 and October 2008, respectively.

The contributors to this book have strictly adhered to an agreed timetable to deliver their individual contributions to this book. In so doing they have integrated feedback from the editors, from discussants at the two workshops and from other participants in the workshops. Finally, the entire manuscript benefitted from the feedback of three anonymous referees who reviewed it for ISEAS.

The project was generously funded by the Hiroshima Peace Institute (HPI) through the Hiroshima City Government, which also hosted the first workshop. Additional financial support to the two Workshops has been provided by the Asian Political and International Studies Association (APISA), Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS). APISA hosted the second workshop in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

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The chapter by Natasha Hamilton-Hart on Singapore-Indonesia relations appeared as “Indonesia and Singapore: Structure, Politics and Interests” in the journal *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 31, no. 2 (August 2009): 249–71, first published by ISEAS Publishing.

N. Ganesan and Ramses Amer
Editors

Hiroshima and Stockholm, October 2009

List of Abbreviations

ACMECS	Ayeyawady–Chao Phraya–Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
APISA	Asian Political and International Studies Association
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASA	Association of Southeast Asia
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BIMP-EAGA	Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area
CGDK	Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea
CIQ	Customs, Immigration, and Quarantine
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
CPM	Communist Party of Malaya
CPT	Communist Party of Thailand
CPV	Communist Party of Vietnam
DCA	Defence Cooperation Agreement
DK	Democratic Kampuchea
EAGA	East ASEAN Growth Area, see also BIMP-EAGA
FUNCINPEC	Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Indépendant, Neutre, Pacifique et Coopératif (National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia)
GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (Free Aceh Movement)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HPI	Hiroshima Peace Institute
ICJ	United Nations International Court of Justice
ISEAS	Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

JBC	Joint Boundary Committee
JCM	Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation
JESPA	Japan Singapore Economic Agreement for a New Age Partnership
JI	Jemaah Islamiah
KAS	Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
KNUFNS	Kampuchean National Front for National Salvation
KPNLF	Khmer People's National Liberation Front
KTM	Keretapi Tanah Melayu (Malayan Railway)
MILEX	Military expenditure
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MOFA	Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGC	National Government of Cambodia
NGO	non-governmental organization
OIC	Organisation of the Islamic Conference
PAP	People's Action Party
PAS	Parti Islam SeMalaysia (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party)
PDK	Party of Democratic Kampuchea
POA	Points of Agreement
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRG/DRV	Provisional Revolutionary Government/Democratic Republic of Vietnam
PRK	People's Republic of Kampuchea
PTA	preferential trade agreement
RBC	Regional Border Committee
RELA	Ikatan Relawan Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysian People's Volunteers Corps)
RSAF	Republic of Singapore Air Force
RMAF	Royal Malaysian Air Force
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SOC	State of Cambodia
TAC	Treaty of Amity and Cooperation
TBC	Township Border Committee
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UNCLOS	United Nations Law of the Sea Conference
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
WTO	World Trade Organization
ZOPFAN	Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality

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Introduction

N. Ganesan and Ramses Amer

The central theme of this book is the utility of bilateralism and multilateralism in Southeast Asian international relations. The intention was to examine a sufficient number of empirical cases in the Southeast Asian region since the mid-1970s so as to establish a pattern of interactions informing a wider audience of interactions unique to the region. Through these case studies, we seek to identify how this pattern of interaction compares with similar experiences elsewhere vis-à-vis the theoretical underpinnings of multilateralism and bilateralism. Consequently, this book also examines the theoretical drift in international relations literature at the broadest level and the overall drift of Southeast Asian international relations between the nations themselves and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Since the post-Cold War period, multilateralism has gained prominence as an approach for forging international consensus on a number of issues. Multilateralism quite simply refers to three or more countries coming together to deal with issues of common interest, whether they be positive or negative. During the Cold War, forging multilateral consensus on issues tended to be much more difficult given the ideological differences between the Soviet-led bloc and the U.S.-led bloc. The level of mutual distrust between those two blocs was so evident that each considered the other its antithesis. To further complicate the situation in Pacific Asia, deep conflicts emerged between communist countries, which pitted the Soviet Union against China, and Vietnam against both Cambodia and China.

With the end of the Cold War and the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991, there has been far better accommodation between the communist/socialist countries and the liberal democratic states. This accommodation witnessed a greater willingness on the part of the international community to seek common solutions to common problems, from civil war in Cambodia to collapsed states like Somalia and hunger in Ethiopia. The period also witnessed the international community's willingness to assign immediate tasks to international regimes for resolution. This mood in turn led to the empowerment of international agencies, in particular those associated with the United Nations. During the presidency of George W. Bush, the United States largely reversed its commitment to multilateralism, displaying a preference to act unilaterally or in alliance with like-minded countries such as the United Kingdom. Whether or not such an approach is conducive in the longer term is questionable as it dissipates diplomatic goodwill and costs too much to be sustainable as a permanent policy position. Besides, the world has become considerably smaller and much more interdependent to the point that unilateralism is neither a realistic nor sustainable policy.

The global developments also had an impact on the international relations of Southeast Asia. The region was deeply divided during the Cold War and was also the scene of severe conflicts linked to the Cold War, like the Vietnam War. Similarly, the Cambodian conflict sharply divided the region during the 1980s between ASEAN on the one hand and the communist countries of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia on the other. However, with the end of the Cold War and the resolution of the Cambodian Conflict in 1991, the ideological divide between communist and non-communist countries receded and rapprochement became possible. This process led to the expansion of ASEAN in the 1990s to include all ten Southeast Asian countries. Subsequently, ASEAN shed its ideological garb and introduced a number of multilateral initiatives on its own. These included the ASEAN Free Trade Area in 1993, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994, and the ASEAN Plus Three forum — including China, Japan, and South Korea — in 1998 that eventually culminated in the East Asian Summit Meeting in December 2005 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Multilateralism arose from this inward strengthening of ASEAN structures, membership, and outward expansion of its protocol, and came to take root in the region.

Just as there was greater regional cooperation, there were also a number of instances of extremely tense bilateral relations between

ASEAN member states. Also, the domestic political situation in some Southeast Asian countries deteriorated in the 1990s due to certain developments in Cambodia and Myanmar. Likewise, the Asian financial crisis had considerable impact on Indonesia and Thailand in particular. ASEAN's multilateralism appeared impotent in solving the problems of countries within the regional footprint. In fact, the attitude was one of not wanting to get involved in the situation in the first place. Hence, in contrast to an emerging consensus and the onset of multilateralism, it seemed as if ASEAN was unprepared to utilize multilateral initiatives at the regional level to resolve problems within individual countries, or for that matter, those between member states. Although ASEAN had established structures, such as the ASEAN Troika, they have not been called upon to arbitrate or intervene in such situations. Hence, ASEAN and its institutional mechanisms were either dormant or seemed to perform different functions during good times as opposed to turbulent ones. This observation also raises a fundamental question as to whether ASEAN's role is to create and establish norms for its members or whether such a role definition involves being an active mediator and actor in resolving interstate disputes in the region.

Structurally, there was also a tendency for ASEAN to be shunned as the platform of choice for dispute resolution. Countries experiencing internal difficulties or problems with proximate states were invariably disinterested in ASEAN auspices for dispute resolution. While part of the reason for this hesitation can be attributed to the relatively young states' (gaining independence after World War II) fear of surrendering sovereignty, appealing to ASEAN for assistance or arbitration does not even appear to have been seriously considered. In fact, the typical situation involved invoking a veil of secrecy and trying to resolve the situation internally, using force if necessary, or undertaking strictly bilateral negotiations between affected countries. Indeed this trend continues to be true today. Curiously, the reasons for this practice have never really been studied and the continued utilization of this approach is injurious to meaningful multilateralism where resources are collectively pooled to address common regional concerns. Additionally, the seemingly exclusive nature of bilateral conflict resolution does not appear to allow for the emergence of a region-wide diplomatic protocol. The evolution of such a protocol would significantly enhance dispute resolution within a common framework that could then be codified to endorse softer and more positive cultural practices which in turn would prevent miscalculations and

inhibit adventurous behaviour between states. This observation refers back to the nature of ASEAN's mandate and its relationship vis-à-vis regional mechanisms as well as the preference for bilateral initiatives to settle interstate disputes among ASEAN member states.

This project sought to examine a number of cases of bilateral tensions between ASEAN member states so as to determine the causes of persistent bilateral tensions. After a listing of reasons, the next stage of the research examines how the tensions have been managed and possibly resolved. An added question then arose, namely, why countries with bilateral tensions did not choose ASEAN or its institutions as the vehicle for dispute resolution. Another issue that has been researched is the role of ASEAN and its mechanisms for dispute settlement in the context of the bilateral disputes. The case studies will allow for hypothesis testing and cross-comparative treatment of findings from them. The latter will be especially useful in identifying a workable protocol with applied utility to resolve future disputes. As for the countries involved in bilateral disputes, nine sets of bilateral relationships have been chosen; they are in alphabetical order: Cambodia-Vietnam, Indonesia-Malaysia, Indonesia-Philippines, Indonesia-Singapore, Malaysia-Philippines, Malaysia-Singapore, Malaysia-Thailand, Myanmar-Thailand, and Thailand-Vietnam. These nine sets of bilateral relationships are a sufficient sampling of the entire region and representative of both mainland and maritime Southeast Asia. That the sampling actually correlates to a good representation of the region is indicative of the pervasiveness of bilateral tensions in the region. In order to frame the research within the international and regional context, one chapter examines the general nature of international relations and another chapter examines Southeast Asian international relations in particular.

This book is divided into three main sections for geographical and methodological reasons. The first section has two chapters; the first, by Etel Solingen, details the evolution of bilateralism and multilateralism in international relations theory, and the second, by Sheldon Simon, examines the general dynamics of international relations in Southeast Asia and, more specifically, the evolution of multilateralism in the region. The second section deals with mainland Southeast Asia and comprises four case studies of bilateral relations — Vietnam-Thailand by Nguyen Vu Tung, Cambodia-Vietnam by Ramses Amer, Thailand-Myanmar by Pavin Chachavalpongpun, and Thailand-Malaysia by N. Ganesan. The third section comprises five cases from maritime Southeast Asia — Indonesia-

Malaysia by Meredith Weiss, Indonesia-Singapore by Natasha Hamilton-Hart, Malaysia-Philippines by Isagani de Castro, Malaysia-Singapore by K.S. Nathan, and Indonesia-Philippines by Ikrar Nusa Bhakti. The book then ends with a concluding chapter that places the findings from the book in relation to the international relations literature.

The chapter writers for the case studies were provided common frames of references as well as a number of common questions. The first of these guidelines was that authors should try to place the relationships in question within a time frame. They were asked to focus on more contemporary developments after a brief historical overview of the relationship. Contemporary developments were then specified as those occurring after the conclusion of the Second Indochina Conflict in 1975. Despite the fact that the Third Indochina Conflict involving the Vietnamese military intervention in Cambodia and the subsequent Cambodian Conflict as well as the conflict between China and Vietnam did not finally draw to a close until 1991, there is general agreement that 1975 marked a major watershed in Southeast Asian international relations. Case study chapter writers have also been asked to identify the most important and sensitive issues in the bilateral relationship they were examining. Finally, they have been tasked to identify how these issues are typically dealt with at the bilateral level and whether there had been recourse to multilateralism.

