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A Neutralized Malaysia?

MURUGESU PATHMANATHAN

Faculty of Economics & Administration  
University of Malaya  
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## Conflict Management in Southeast Asia: A Neutralized Malaysia?<sup>1</sup>

by

Murugesu Pathmanathan

### Introduction

Since the outbreak of the Second World War Southeast Asia has been subject to continuous conflict. The conflict has varied in nature and intensity, ranging from wars of national liberation, great power intervention and insurgency. The conflict that has raged in the Indochina area has been the most prolonged and the costliest in terms of manpower and resources. A reaction to the conflict situation in the region has been the attempt through various schemes and plans to introduce some degree of stability and peace in the area. Of these, the latest has been Malaysia's call for a neutralized Southeast Asia, expressed subsequently in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration.<sup>2</sup> Issued at the end of the Foreign Ministers' Meeting of the ASEAN member nations, held in Kuala Lumpur in November, 1971, the Declaration states, "that the neutralization of Southeast Asia is a desirable objective and that we should explore ways and means of bringing about its realization," and continued to affirm:

1. that Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand are determined to exert initially necessary efforts to secure the recognition of, and respect for, Southeast Asia as a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, free from any form or manner of interference by outside powers,
2. that Southeast Asian countries should make concerted efforts to broaden the areas of co-operation which would contribute to their strength, solidarity and closer relationship.

Neutralization as a technique for the management of power in the international political system has not been extensively applied. In the historical experience relating to neutralization, the example that is often cited as a success is that of Switzerland. The neutralization of Switzerland was 'a conscious act of preventive diplomacy' which arose out of the 1815 Congress of Vienna. The neutralization of Austria in 1955 and the attempt to neutralize Laos in 1962 have been the more recent exercises in the management of conflict through neutralization.

The basic objective of neutralization is to insulate the neutralized state or area against certain forms of international contention and intervention. States form the most important candidates as potential subjects of neutralization. But states need not constitute the only potential subjects of neutralization. Other potential subjects include geographical regions such as Southeast Asia, disputed territories without any claim to sovereignty, cities, and service facilities and resources.<sup>3</sup>

The term neutralization is often confused with a number of other related and overlapping terms. For the purpose of this paper, the following meanings will be attached to the term neutralization and other related terms.

1. A neutralized state is one whose political independence and territorial integrity are guaranteed permanently by a collective agreement of great powers, subject to the conditions that the neutralized state will not take up arms against another state, except to defend itself, and will not assume treaty obligations which may compromise its neutralized status. In an abstract sense, neutralization is a special international status designed to restrict the intrusion of specified state actions in a specified area.

2. Demilitarization, sometimes confused with neutralization, is altogether different, although it may involve international guarantees. Historically, neutralized states have been rarely demilitarised. Demilitarization simply deprives the inhabitants of an area of organized military force; it does not - as neutralization, if it fulfills its basic function does - control the actions of other states toward the area involved or neutralize the area politically. However, demilitarization of a state or city, or part of a state, may be associated with neutralization.
3. Neutralism is distinct from neutralization. It connotes a disassociation from the global struggle for influence among the superpowers and their respective allies. It was primarily a function of and a reaction to the 'cold war'. Neutralist states were strongly critical of this East-west conflict and sought a non-aligned posture only with reference to this conflict. They did not seek to be neutralized and accept the obligations which that neutralization entails.
4. Neutralization is also different from neutrality. Neutrality is similar to neutralism in that it describes the attitude of a state vis-a-vis a conflict - often a military conflict - between other states. It is a policy of non-involvement in current conflicts. It is not, like neutralization, concerned with preventing, moderating or terminating interstate coercion. Unlike neutralism, however, neutrality is a legal status as well as a diplomatic or political posture. It could be said that neutralization means permanent neutrality, rather than neutrality only in time of a declared state of conflict.<sup>4</sup>

What are the functions of neutralization? As stated earlier, the basic objective is one of isolating an area from international contention. It is a process which seeks to ensure international order, of regulating interstate intervention and coercion and placing the highest premium on the settlement of international disputes through accepted norms of international law and diplomacy. For the neutralized state, the effect

the proposal has been channelled through a regional institution, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, (ASEAN). Thirdly, the proposal has passed the declaratory stage. Formal machinery has been established by ASEAN to examine the concept with regard to the problems and other associated issues.<sup>10</sup>

It is relevant at this point to consider the motivations behind the Malaysian initiative. A broad analysis of Malaysian external policy suggests a delineation of the following motivations for her policy of neutralization: the impetus from non-alignment; considerations of prestige and security motives.<sup>11</sup>

The foreign policy posture of Malaysia swung sharply to one of non-alignment in 1970. Formal symbolization of this was her participation in the Third Conference of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Lusaka in September 1970. It also coincided with a change in the political leadership of the country when Tunku Abdul Rahman stepped down as Prime Minister and was succeeded by his deputy, Tun Abdul Razak. Prior to 1970 Malaysian positions on external issues were very much aligned with the position of the West. To a large extent this was due to the Anglo-Malaysian Defence Agreement.<sup>12</sup> The adoption of a posture of non-alignment created the appropriate political milieu for the nurturing of the ideas of Tun Ismail, which he first enunciated as a backbencher of the Alliance Party in 1968. When the withdrawal of the British forces from the region was being discussed in the Malaysian Parliament in January 1968, Tun Ismail suggested that the time was 'ripe for the countries in the region to declare collectively the neutralization of Southeast Asia.'<sup>13</sup> The adoption of a



posture of non-alignment provided the backdrop for the emergence of the concept of neutralization. It was at the Lusaka Conference of Non-Aligned Countries that Tun Abdul Razak first placed the neutralization of Southeast Asia on the Malaysian diplomatic agenda.

A feature of the emergent states of Southeast Asia is the attention that many of their leaders have attached to initiatives in foreign affairs. One analysis of this has been that "the reputation, respect, and attention a statesman could command abroad served as the 'foreign diploma' giving him high standing in certain circles at home."<sup>14</sup> But added to this is the impelling drive among many of the Afro-Asian leaders to leave an 'international mark'. For Soekarno it was Bandung. For Tunku Abdul Rahman it was regional association. Is neutralization such a goal for Tun Abdul Razak? Certainly, if such a goal is realized, it would be a lasting testament to the political leadership and vision of the Malaysian Prime Minister.

The security motive is undoubtedly the strongest driving element in the Malaysian efforts for a neutralized zone in the region. The cornerstone in Malaysian security arrangements until 1971 was the Anglo-Malaysian Defence Agreement negotiated in 1957. The political survival of Malaysia in the face of Indonesian military confrontation was largely secured by the British defence umbrella through the AMDA. Indonesian-Malaysian relations were resumed on a peaceful basis through the signing of the Bangkok Accord in June 1966. In July 1967, Whitehall announced that while it would continue to honour its obligations under SEATO and AMDA, it intended to withdraw altogether from its bases in Malaysia and

Singapore in the middle 1970's.<sup>15</sup> The British plans for withdrawal were later accelerated and the date for final withdrawal fixed as the 31 March 1971.<sup>16</sup> The British decision provoked Malaysian fears for her security. In 1967, the Tunku attempted to persuade Britain to join in the five power talks (Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore) on future defence cooperation but was unsuccessful.<sup>17</sup> However, in early 1968 he was more successful and a series of Five Power Conferences were held.<sup>18</sup> The outcome of all this was, that when the Anglo-Malaysian Defence Agreement came to an end at midnight on the 31 October 1971, it was replaced by a Five Power Defence Arrangement.

While the Five Power Defence Arrangement replaced AMDA, it was not an effective substitute. It did not in any way allay the security fears of Malaysia. On the contrary, there were indications that Malaysian security anxieties were heightened during the period of negotiation of the defence arrangement which highlighted features that showed up the weakness of the arrangement. One of these was the differentiation made by the Australian Government between the defence of 'Malaya' and that of 'Malaysia'.<sup>19</sup> This was disconcerting to Malaysia. Further, as one study concluded: "Quite apart from the Sabah question, Australia avoided any formal commitment, but sought only a 'general understanding'."<sup>20</sup> What was more disconcerting from the Malaysian viewpoint, was that the Five Power Defence Arrangement only upheld a firm commitment for consultation rather than for action.<sup>21</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that disenchantment with the efficacy of the Five Power Defence Arrangement was expressed before long.<sup>22</sup>

In the light of these developments, especially the realisation of its vulnerability to an external armed attack as shown by Indonesian

Confrontation, it is quite tenable to put forward a hypothesis that the Malaysian concept for a neutralized zone in Southeast Asia, was a subtle attempt to lock her neighbours into a security framework provided by a neutralization arrangement. A neutralization arrangement would function to eliminate or minimise external intervention in the region's affairs, but also and more importantly, it could be an effective check on inter-state coercion within the region. A basis for this hypothesis is that of the Southeast Asian nations, Malaysia is one which has an interest in upholding the status quo. It has no territorial claims and its energies are focussed on the consolidation and integration, of the various components which were merged to form the enlarged state of Malaysia in 1963. Additionally, any security arrangement that minimises external attack will allow her to concentrate her energies to the primary task of nation-building.

A number of identifiable patterns appear in the diplomatic strategy adopted by Malaysia in her efforts to establish 'Southeast Asia as a zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality'. In summary, they could be stated as follows:

1. lobbying for the acceptance and active support of Southeast Asia as a neutralized zone within the membership of ASEAN;
2. encouraging efforts for the broadening of the membership of ASEAN to include all countries in the Southeast Asian region;<sup>23</sup>
3. seeking support for the concept of a neutralized zone from within the region but outside ASEAN, for example from Laos and Burma;<sup>24</sup>
4. tapping on the European experience of neutralization;<sup>25</sup>
5. actively promoting the neutralization concept in various international forums, such as the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations and the Conferences of the Non-Aligned Countries;

6. disassociating gradually with organizations of which membership would be incompatible with a policy of neutrality such as the Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC).

### The Problems of Neutralization

The prospects of the Southeast Asian zone being neutralized are outlined by greater clarity, when one takes the measure of some of the major problems involved. Such problems which will have to be faced and resolved before the idea of neutralization assumes any form of political reality, are to say the least, formidable and will certainly be a challenge to the collective political leadership and vision of Southeast Asian leaders, if they are fully committed to such a policy.

The range of these problems is wide and include among others such factors as the attitude of the Southeast Asian nations towards the People's Republic of China and in a similar fashion the perception of Peking of its future role in the region. Whether the nations in the region share a strong desire for a programme of neutralization is another such important factor. For the purpose of this exercise the following have been isolated as representing problems of a much more difficult dimension and the solution of which would provide the fundamental pre-requisites for the creation of a neutralized zone. These problems are encompassed in the following issues:

1. the issue of guarantees;
2. the issue of the Straits of Malacca;
3. the issue of boundaries;
4. the issue of insurgency; and
5. the issue of regional dominance.

The issue of guarantees. Guarantees are a critical issue if the neutralization of a state or a geographical region is not solely an act of self-imposition. If it is so, it does not constitute an act of permanent neutrality unless it is accompanied by some form of international agreement or recognition. The effectiveness of a system of neutralization is a function of guarantees, as generally, it has been the principal role of guarantor states to initiate, maintain, and terminate treaties for the neutralization of states.<sup>26</sup>

Since the pattern by which Southeast Asia is to be neutralized has not been clearly laid down by the interested parties, one could consider two positions which may be operative in relation to the question of guarantees. The first position would be that while guarantees would be essential, they need not be formal, underwritten by treaties and agreements. One opinion on this point is, "All that would be needed will be a declaration of individual support for the Kuala Lumpur Declaration at, for instance, the United Nations."<sup>27</sup> The second position would be that guarantees have to be formal, and there would have to be set up legal machinery for the activation of these guarantees. This would undoubtedly, be so, if neutralization is the outcome of a negotiated arrangement among the powers competing for influence in the region.

A compromise view has evolved that since the negotiation of formal guarantees would be a long-term undertaking, 'soft informal' guarantees be secured now.<sup>28</sup> This would be advantageous in two respects. First, a policy of neutralization without rigid treaty limitations for the countries involved will provide a greater latitude for manoeuvre. Second, the securing of 'soft informal' guarantees, would keep the

momentum for the creation of a condition of permanent neutrality.

One point requiring clarification on the issue of guarantees is who should constitute the guarantors. Any consensus on this point is confined to listing the superpowers as the minimal and crucial element from whom a guarantee would be required. The speeches of Malaysian political leaders on neutralization have been supportive of the fact that the United States, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China constitute this minimal and crucial group of guarantor states. In this context, it is relevant to note that the list of guarantors to Laotian neutrality included the following: Burma, Cambodia, Canada, China, Poland, France, the two Vietnams, Thailand, Russia, India, Britain and America. A total of thirteen states underwrote Laotian neutrality. While the effectiveness of maintaining a state of neutralization is not related to the criterion of the number of guarantor states, it could be contended quite justifiably, that a project of neutralization, unprecedented in its magnitude and involving ten national entities in Southeast Asia, would possibly have to be underwritten by guarantors other than the superpowers. The list of guarantors to underwrite Southeast Asian neutrality could be made up from the following categories:

1. the superpowers;
2. the former colonial powers;
3. the Australasian countries; and
4. the Indian Ocean powers.

Specifically, this suggested broader list of guarantors would include the USA, the USSR, the CPR, Japan, the UK, France, the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, India and Iran.

Unless there is a strong desire on the part of the superpowers to assist in the creation of a neutralized zone, discussion on the issue of guarantees will be purely exploratory. Attitudes expressed by the superpowers, especially by the USA and the USSR, on a neutralized zone in Southeast Asia have not been encouraging. The United States has been considered the most 'unresponsive'.<sup>29</sup> Evidence for this view is drawn from the fact that the United States had already rejected a proposal for a neutralized Southeast Asia made to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1966.<sup>30</sup> Further, it did not respond favourably to a diplomatic initiative by Malaysia, Indonesia and Japan for the reassertion of a neutral status for Cambodia. Also, it has been a party to the violation of the neutral status of Laos. In a more fundamental way, the American negative reaction to the Kuala Lumpur Declaration is underscored by the announcement of an alternative security arrangement for Southeast Asia. The outlines of this arrangement have been spelled out in the Nixon Doctrine. The essential elements of this doctrine are constituted of, defence self-sufficiency, regional military alliance and a nuclear guarantee by the United States. The reaction of the Kremlin has been decidedly a cool one. A parallel development to the Nixon Doctrine has been the mooted by Russia of an Asian Collective Security System. Russian efforts in this direction are an indication of a negative attitude to a neutralized Southeast Asia. The Soviet Union sees Southeast Asia as a region where "both Chinese and American influence can be and should be contained."<sup>31</sup> Of the three superpowers, it has been only the People's Republic of China which has shown any support for the Kuala Lumpur Declaration. This is partly explained by the fact that of the global powers, China has the greatest security interest in Southeast Asia.<sup>32</sup>

As for the nature of the guarantees themselves, a 'joint-and-several' pledge to come to the support of a state whose neutral status has been violated, would form "the strongest feasible basis for enforcement."<sup>33</sup> One uncertainty involved in the exercise of this 'joint-and-several' pledge by a great power, is that it could possibly justify intervention on the ground of meeting legal commitments under the neutralization arrangement.<sup>34</sup> A suggestion to overcome this has been the devising of a code of action for the neutralized zone, which would stipulate that, "intervention will only follow the invitation of a neutralized state and that invitation can only be made once all other methods of countering intervention and the instrumentalities of mediation and conflict resolution have been resorted to, or in the case where the breach is so serious that no other course is open to the threatened state."<sup>35</sup>

In the final analysis, the success of any scheme of neutralization is dependent not on any formal machinery but the balance of power among the major guarantors and that the maintenance of neutralization through international guarantees, "does not provide automatic assurance that the guarantee will be observed, but it does raise the cost of aggression to a higher degree than exists where there is no international guarantee."<sup>36</sup>

The Issue of the Straits of Malacca. An evaluation of the interests of the superpowers in Southeast Asia is that: "their interests are basically strategic and in a sense, negative; and that it is part of the big power game to establish spheres of influence and, therefore, the desire to ensure that countries in the region, if not hostile to others, would be friendly to them."<sup>37</sup> Intertwined with the strategic interests of the



superpowers, would be their perception of how guarantees of neutralization would affect their strategic interests in the region. An area in which the superpowers have a strategic interest is the Straits of Malacca. Almost coinciding with the advocacy of neutralization by Malaysia, it has become a focus of international contention and controversy.

The roots of the controversy over the Straits can be grouped under three broad developments. One has been the series of claims and counter-claims made by the littoral states, namely Indonesia and Malaysia, on the one side and the protestations of the maritime powers, especially the global naval powers. The second and earlier development was the November Accord on the Straits signed between Indonesia and Malaysia in 1971, of which Singapore took note. The third and earliest of these developments was the unilateral proclamation made jointly by Indonesia and Malaysia in 1969 of the extension of their territorial sea limit to twelve miles.

Assertion by Malaysia and Indonesia of their joint sovereignty over the Straits of Malacca has stemmed from various reasons, such as the need to control pollution in the Straits area and the need to exercise stricter traffic control for the sake of navigational safety to avoid such disasters as the Torrey Canyon. Additional reasons have include the desire to seek control and ownership of sea-bed resources in the Straits and security motives.

The Indonesian viewpoint has been the dominant influence in this joint stand. Two closely related concepts, have affected and shaped Indonesian strategic thinking. One is the idea of Wawasan Nusantara or the 'archipelago principle' as it is generally known. This was incorporated

as Indonesian municipal law in February 1970. According to this principle, the Indonesians regard that "the seas and straits must be utilised to bridge the physical separations between the islands, regions and the manifold ethnic groups."<sup>38</sup> The other has been the continuous strand in Indonesian policy which has regarded the control of the Straits of Malacca as being vital for its security.<sup>39</sup> The assertion of the joint control by the two littoral states is "thus seen as a claim to restrict the strategic mobility of maritime powers which possess the capacity to pose a challenge to the security of Indonesia and to its own conception of regional order."<sup>40</sup>

The maritime powers have been almost unanimous in rejecting Indonesian-Malaysian assertions over the Straits. Generally, this rejection has been on the principle that the Indonesian-Malaysian position is not in conformity with international law. The American view in this respect has at times been forcefully expressed. Admiral Thomas Moorer, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff stated in Washington that "we should have and must have, freedom to go through, under and over the Malacca Straits."<sup>41</sup> The controversy has been very much couched in legal terms. The maritime powers view the Indonesian-Malaysian claim as a double challenge to international law. First, as a challenge to the legal regime of the territorial sea and second, as a challenge to the legal regime of international straits.<sup>42</sup>

Of the maritime powers, Japan has the most crucial economic stake in the Straits. About 90 percent of her annual oil requirements of approximately 200 million tons are shipped through the Straits, and as such the Straits has been described as the 'life-line of Japanese industry'.<sup>43</sup> For the naval superpowers, the USSR and the USA, the Straits sea-lane occupies a vital position in their strategic calculus. This becomes evident

in the light of two factors rooted in the general framework of the naval and nuclear strategy of Russia and America. With the British withdrawal east of Suez, the ensuing 'power vacuum' has led to an intense rivalry between the two global naval powers to establish a 'naval presence' in the Indian Ocean. The Straits of Malacca is a vital access route to the Indian Ocean. For Russia there is the added importance of the Straits arising from the closure of the Suez Canal. It has been observed that "if Russia's naval presence in the Indian Ocean is to have full impact, unrestricted access to the Malacca Straits would seem imperative."<sup>44</sup>

The development of the nuclear-powered ballistic submarine - the SSBN has brought new dimensions to thinking about deterrence and the role of maritime strategy in this.<sup>45</sup> The SSBN with its submarine-launched ballistic missile, is at present the ultimate weapon in the strategy of nuclear deterrence. "It is harder to find, harder to reach and harder to destroy than any land-based deterrent system is now or can hope to be in the foreseeable future."<sup>46</sup> A strategic recalculation brought about by the SSBN is that: "it has injected a new constant - a quantity which has the effect of biasing the equation itself in favour of second-strike deterrence and against first-strike attack."<sup>47</sup> Any development which affects adversely the manoeuvrability, dispersal potential and detection possibilities of this 'second-strike deterrence' will not be conformed to by the two naval superpowers. It is of interest to note, that of the superpowers only the People's Republic of China has been in support of the Indonesian-Malaysian position on the Straits of Malacca.<sup>48</sup> This has been attributed to the fact that of the superpowers, only the CPR does not possess the resources to pursue global naval interests.

Further, she has not yet acquired the SSBN. Indonesian fears concerning the free passage of warships through the Straits, and the attempt to control such passage through procedures of prior notification has the potential of impinging on this modal point in the nuclear strategy of the two supernaval powers.<sup>49</sup> They might concede to negotiating the question of the passage of conventional naval forces through the Straits.<sup>50</sup> It is highly doubtful, however, that they the USA and the USSR would in any way consider any negotiation that may reduce the overall capability or advantages of their SSBNs.

From the viewpoint of such considerations in the naval and nuclear strategic framework of the two superpowers, the USA and the USSR, and in the face of the joint claim by Indonesia and Malaysia over the Straits of Malacca, serious doubts can be projected about the establishment and maintenance of a neutral zone in Southeast Asia, especially if such a scheme of neutralization have to be based on international recognition and guarantees from the superpowers.

The issue of boundaries. A source of conflict among the states of Southeast Asia has been the problem of boundaries. The Southeast Asian states inherited "a boundary system that, in its broad outlines, was satisfactory enough as a territorial basis for modern nation-hood. Yet their nations were not integrated ethnically, and they lacked the administrative apparatus either to reinforce their borders or to build out to them."<sup>51</sup> As a result boundaries in Southeast Asia have been in a situation of flux. A primary objective in the search by Cambodia for international guarantees for her policy of neutrality was to ensure her territorial integrity in the face South Vietnamese and Thai attitudes.

A study dealing with the problems of neutrality in Southeast Asia stipulated that among other things, one pre-requisite for the effective recognition of a state's neutrality would be that its borders must not be subject to dispute.<sup>52</sup> This pre-requisite does not prevail in Southeast Asia. At present there are a number of territorial claims and counter-claims among the states in the region. One such claim which could have serious implications for the proposed neutralization of the region is the Sabah claim of the Philippines. As a matter of fact, Filipino opposition to Southeast Asian neutralization has been based on the Sabah Claim. Mr. Jose Ingles, the Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, expressing his personal view before a special committee of the 1971 Constitutional Convention opposed neutralization on the basis that one of the obligations of a neutralized state was that it could neither cede nor acquire territory. Thus the Philippines would have to forego its claim to Sabah.<sup>53</sup>

State policy on borders is often affected by domestic considerations "in a manner that reflects the relative importance of various political groups as well as the transitory national priorities that relate domestic and international policy."<sup>54</sup> Further, national policy towards ethnic minorities is often related to boundary policy, especially if there exists a substantial minority from (or identified with) a neighbouring state.<sup>55</sup> Part of the colonial legacy in Southeast Asia is that national boundaries do not coincide with ethnic groupings.

If one remembers that the proposed neutralization of Southeast Asia will be multiple neutralization, involving a number of states, the settlement of existing boundary disputes would be almost among the first

order of things. This problem is closely related and compounded by the issue of insurgency.

The issue of insurgency. It has been the issue of insurgency that has been the motive for external intervention. The Vietnam conflict, of this problem of insurgency and the counter-insurgency operations aided and assisted by external powers. The broad spectrum of insurgency activities in Southeast Asia could be divided into two categories; those insurgency activities motivated either wholly or partly by a religious ideology and the others fuelled by a secular ideology. Often, these two categories of insurgency fuse and overlap into each other. The insurgency activities in which the Muslim inhabitants in the southern areas of Thailand and in the southern islands of the Philippines fall into the first category. Such insurgency movements could be considered as being irredentist. Until some solution to these problems of irredenta is found, an additional element of instability has to be removed in any programme seeking a neutralized Southeast Asia.

It is that type of insurgency based on the revolutionary armed struggle of communist ideology which is a more serious problem. The creation of SEATO was a reaction to this type of insurgency. Defence arrangements such as SEATO facilitate great power intervention. The long term answer to insurgency that is ideologically motivated will lie in the implementation of economic and social programmes which meet the aspirations of the masses or the replacement of the status quo regimes with more radical regimes prepared to undertake such economic and social reforms.

Southeast Asian nations which have defence arrangements with external powers, in either a bi-lateral or multilateral form may be

unwilling to dismantle these arrangements if they are not able to cope with insurgency problems on their own without calling upon external aid through these defence arrangements.<sup>56</sup> Another facet of insurgency bearing on neutralization is that a neutralization scheme tends to favour the status quo.<sup>57</sup> Generally, the insurgency movements have maintained a critical attitude to the Malaysian proposal. A broadcast of the Voice of the Malayan Revolution on April 17, 1971 stated that the 'Razak clique' was alarmed by the development of armed struggle throughout Southeast Asia and that the "guarantee of neutrality in Southeast Asia by the big powers is, to put it bluntly, only a by-product of the Nixon Doctrine" and that "Razak's policy of non-alignment is only a cover for your service to imperialism in opposing Communism, the people and China."<sup>58</sup> The Voice of the People of Burma, in a statement broadcast on 20 February 1972, said the neutralization proposal was a "plot to destroy the liberation movements."<sup>59</sup> Any consideration of the problem of insurgency in the region will have to take into account the attitude of the People's Republic of China to future 'wars of national liberation'. Chinese support for a neutralized Southeast Asia will not be compatible with support for insurgency movements.

An observation drawn from the historical experience of neutralization is that states which were neutralized successfully, enjoyed a fair degree of internal stability. For Southeast Asia the moral is that some degree of internal stability would be one of the pre-conditions in favour of a neutralized status.

The issue of regional dominance. A neutralized status implies a low profile in the conduct of foreign affairs. In other words, neutralization would not be a viable arrangement for any state which perceives for itself a 'major independent role in international politics'.<sup>60</sup> Whether this implication of a neutralized status is acceptable to all the nations in Southeast Asia is open to question. There are at least two potential candidates who may view for themselves a major independent role in international politics, at least on a regional scale. One such candidate is a unified Vietnam, which might emerge at some later stage, possibly as the result of a more permanent settlement of the conflict there, than the Paris Agreement. It is debatable whether a new and unified Vietnam may harbour territorial ambitions in the Indochina area and also have aspirations for regional dominance. This question is for the moment purely hypothetical. It is not such a hypothetical question in the case of Indonesia. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that Indonesia perceives for herself an active role in world affairs. The nature of the ruling regime may have changed in Indonesia since the ousting of President Soekarno but her aspirations for regional dominance are as clear as ever. The idea of a Melayu Raya, a state comprising all the peoples of Malay stock in the region is embedded in Indonesian history. When Indonesia opposed the formation of Malaysia she was of the firm view that "The stability and security of the region in Southeast Asia is of prime importance for all countries of the region, including Indonesia." (emphasis added)<sup>61</sup> A current assessment of Indonesian aspirations is that she "sees for herself a role as the fulcrum of a regional concert which, in time, will be able to provide unassisted



for the security of Southeast Asia."<sup>62</sup> In support of this assessment is a statement by the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Adam Malik, made in August 1971 that: "Indonesia is attempting to create an area of goodwill, friendship and co-operation. Indonesia needs close friendly relations and mutual understanding particularly in Southeast Asia, so that the limits of common interests can be projected directly to the eastern border of India and the southern border of China and Japan."<sup>63</sup> Her assertion for the exercise of sovereignty over the Straits of Malacca, discussed earlier, is a further indication of her aspiration to play an active role in international affairs. All this probably explains why there is little attraction for the political and intellectual leadership in a commitment to permanent neutrality.<sup>64</sup>

It is therefore salient to raise the question whether Indonesian perceptions of her role in international politics will conform to the implications of a neutralized status for Southeast Asia?

Conclusion. In the light of the above issues and problems militating against the establishment of a neutralized Southeast Asia, what are the prospects for the realization of the Kuala Lumpur Declaration? If there is one certain answer to this question, it is that it will have to be a long-term goal. It is only fair to reiterate that the Kuala Lumpur Declaration envisages the neutralization of an entire region, a political accomplishment without precedent.

What are the other alternatives suggested for the management of conflict in Southeast Asia? Three alternatives have recently emerged. They are, the denuclearization of Southeast Asia, the Nixon Doctrine and the Asian Collective Security System.

The suggestion of a denuclearized Southeast Asia has come from Indonesian and Filipino sources, among others.<sup>65</sup> An Indonesian justification denuclearization has been made on the grounds that developments in weapons technology, especially the SSBNs combined with the naval developments in the Indian Ocean have made the Southeast Asian region vulnerable since it lies on the crossroads between two continents and the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The argument is continued along the line that "If not as the theatre of the final holocaust it is at least potentially dangerous as a place of passage of nuclear delivery vehicles."<sup>66</sup> A plan of denuclearization would not be acceptable to the two supernaval powers for the reasons mentioned earlier relating to the SSBNs as their ultimate weapon in the escalation ladder. Further, the denuclearisation suggestion would be contradictory to the Nixon Doctrine which involves an American nuclear guarantee. In turn, the Nixon Doctrine is unacceptable to nations in Southeast Asia which are against an American presence in any form and which could facilitate intervention. As for the Russian initiative, it is curious indeed, how the repetition of history takes place, but the Asian Collective Security System proposed by Russia aims at the containment of Chinese influence. As an alternative to ameliorate conflict in the region, the chances of its success are not considerable. If there is any lesson that could be derived from the experience of SEATO, it is that any security arrangement organized against the CPR tends to be counter-productive, if it takes place in a zone which the CPR may view as their 'sphere of influence'. Like the Nixon Doctrine, it contains the potentialities for big power intervention in the area.

What then is left as a viable alternative in the Malaysian diplomatic agenda? Given the difficulties that are embedded in the goal

of a neutralized Southeast Asia, a feasible substitute goal for Malaysian foreign policy would be to establish a neutralized status for herself.

If there is one lesson that Malaysia can draw from the Swiss experience for such a policy of neutralization, it is that a country with a plural society, can through the adoption of such a policy minimize the political pulls of the original homelands of segments of her population. The appeal for Malaysia in a policy of neutralization may further lie in the opportunity that her foreign policy could be an instrument in the task of managing her political, social and economic development towards the task of nation-building.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>This paper was first presented at a Seminar at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London in May 1974.

<sup>2</sup>The Malaysian proposal for a neutralized zone in Southeast Asia was first put forward at the Lusaka Conference of Non-Alligned Countries in September 1970.

<sup>3</sup>Cyril E. Black and others, Neutralization and World Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. xi.

<sup>4</sup>The definitions have been drawn from Black, Neutralization. Also see Peter Lyon, Neutrality (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1963).

<sup>5</sup>Anthony Eden, Towards Peace in Indochina (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 12.

<sup>6</sup>Philippe Devillers, "A Neutralized Southeast Asia," in New Directions in International Relations of Southeast Asia, ed. by Lau Teik Soon (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1973), p. 118.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Neutralization in Southeast Asia: Problems and Prospects, J.W. Fulbright, chairman, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1966).

<sup>9</sup>Prince Sihanouk suggested in August 1960, that: "The creation of a belt of land from north to south, composed of two states (Cambodia and Laos) strictly and genuinely neutral - and whose neutrality will be seriously supported and guaranteed by the two blocs - would constitute an extremely valuable - not to say indispensable - element of stability and equilibrium in our region...." (Phnom Penh Radio, 23 August 1960).

<sup>10</sup>A firm indication of this has been the setting up of an ASEAN Committee of Senior Officials to examine the problems related to neutralization.

<sup>11</sup>Another analysis of Malaysia's policy of neutralization has attributed it to the following factors: "(1) disenchantment with the traditional alliance partners and the realization that all major alliances partners or patterns were undependable, (2) a desire to learn from the Vietnam experience and to avoid the mistakes made, (3) the new

spirit of self dependence, and (4) the non-existence of a conventional military threat. Noordin Sopiee, "The Neutralization of Southeast Asia," (paper presented at a Conference on Asia and the Western Pacific, Australian Institute of International Affairs, Canberra, Australia, 14-17 April 1973), p. 3.

<sup>12</sup>A prominent critic of the Tunku's foreign policy, Dr. Mahathir once described Malaysian policy as having been influenced by an 'apron string complex' nurtured by Tunku Abdul Rahman. This was with reference to the defence treaty that Malaysia had with Britain.

<sup>13</sup>Interestingly enough, it was Tun Abdul Razak, who replying on behalf of the Prime Minister, politely rejected the idea as being impractical. After the May 1969 civil disturbances Tun Ismail was recalled to the Cabinet and his position and influence in the Cabinet was second only to that of Tun Abdul Razak.

<sup>14</sup>Werner Levi, The Challenge of World Politics in South and Southeast Asia (Engelwood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968) p. 11.

<sup>15</sup>David Hawkins, The Defence of Malaysia and Singapore (London: Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, 1972), p. 28.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>18</sup>Of the Five Power Conferences, the most important were the 'summit' meetings held in Kuala Lumpur (10 June 1968), Canberra (19-20 June 1969), Singapore on board the HMS Intrepid (15 January 1971) and London (15-16 April 1971).

<sup>19</sup>Hawkins, The Defence of Malaysia and Singapore, p. 37.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>In the communique issued at the conclusion of the Five Power Defence Talks, held in April 1971, in London, it was stated that: "The Ministers also declared, in relation to the external defence of Malaysia and Singapore, that in the event of any form of armed attack externally organized or supported or the threat of such attack against Malaysia and Singapore, their Governments would immediately consult together for the purpose of deciding what measures should be taken jointly or separately in relation to such attack or threat." Foreign Affairs Malaysia, Vol. 4, No. 2 (June 1971), p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> At the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in January 1969, Tunku Abdul Rahman declared that "Britain has lost the power and the will to exercise the leadership expected of her," and there was, he said, "an apparent feeling of emptiness and insecurity in the hearts and minds of those who had previously looked to Britain for leadership." Foreign Affairs Malaysia, Vol. 2, No. 1 & 2 (December 1969), p. 6. Later, in the same year, he declared that the new defence arrangement was 'useless' as far as Malaysia was concerned. Straits Times, 2 August 1969.

<sup>23</sup> The Conference of Foreign Ministers from ASEAN countries in Kuala Lumpur on 15 February 1973, state that it "was desirable to expand the membership of ASEAN at the opportune time to cover all the countries in Southeast Asia and agreed that the trend of developments gave cause for encouragement that this may soon be achieved." Foreign Affairs Malaysia, Vol. 6, No. 1 (March 1973), p. 68.

<sup>24</sup> The joint communique issued at the end of the official visit of the Prime Minister to Laos to Malaysia in December 1971 referred to the Laotian Prime Minister as having welcomed the Malaysian proposal for the neutralization of Southeast Asia and firmly endorsing the Kuala Lumpur Declaration. Foreign Affairs Malaysia, Vol. 4, No. 4 (December 1971), pp. 90-91. Commenting on his visit to Burma in 1972, Tun Abdul Razak stated in Parliament that General Ne Win had stated that "when these arrangements (neutralization) came to fruition Burma would be a party to them." Foreign Affairs Malaysia, Vol. 5, No. 2 (June 1972), p. 125.

<sup>25</sup> In a speech to members of the Swiss Federal Council, Tun Abdul Razak said: "I am happy to have had the opportunity of my visit here to engage in fruitful discussions with your Government on your policy of neutrality and also to exchange views concerning our own proposal for the neutralization of Southeast Asia." Foreign Affairs Malaysia, Vol. 5, No. 3 (September 1972).

<sup>26</sup> Black, Neutralization, p. 35.

<sup>27</sup> Sopiee, "Neutralization of Southeast Asia," p. 11.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>29</sup> Lau Teik Soon, Malaysia and the Neutralization of Southeast Asia," in Trends in Southeast Asia No. 2 ed. by Patrick Low (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1971), p. 29.

<sup>30</sup> Writing in the foreword of the study made for the Committee on Foreign Relations, Senator Fulbright concedes that "events in Southeast Asia have moved rapidly since this study was made, and the options we have available have been largely given up for the present." Committee on Foreign Relations, Neutralization in Southeast Asia, p. iv.

<sup>31</sup>J.L.S. Girling, "A Neutral Southeast Asia?", Australian Outlook, Vol. 27, No. 2 (August 1973), p. 130.

<sup>32</sup>The New Zealand Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs, expressed the view after a visit to China that the People's Republic of China will endorse the neutralization of Southeast Asia in the long-run, and that the CPR was against any grouping of Asian countries which could be directed against her. On this basis, the CPR was prepared to guarantee the region against great-power intervention. Canberra Times, 5 April 1973.

<sup>33</sup>Committee on Foreign Relations, Neutralization in Southeast Asia, p. 33.

<sup>34</sup>Sopiee, "Neutralization of Southeast Asia," p. 13.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Black, Neutralization, p. 36.

<sup>37</sup>Zain Azrai, "Neutralization and Southeast Asia," in New Directions in Southeast Asia, p. 132.

<sup>38</sup>Indonesian Department of Defence and Security, The Function and Role of the Indonesian Armed Forces in the Period of Consolidation and Integration (Jakarta: 1970), p. 4.

<sup>39</sup>In July 1945 during a meeting of the Investigating Committee for the Preparation of Indonesian Independence, Soekarno was of the view that "Indonesia will not become strong or secure unless the whole Straits of Malacca is in our hands. If only the West coast of the Straits of Malacca, it will mean a threat to our security." Cited in Mohammad Yamin, Naskah persiapan Undang-undang Dasar 1945, Vol. I (Jakarta: 1959), p. 204.

<sup>40</sup>Michael Leifer and Dolliver Nelson, "Conflict of Interest in the Straits of Malacca," International Affairs, Vol. 49, No. 2 (April 1973), p. 192.

<sup>41</sup>Japan Times, 8 August 1972.

<sup>42</sup>M. Pathmanathan, "The Straits of Malacca: a basis for conflict or co-operation?", in New Directions in Southeast Asia, p. 192. For a fuller discussion of the legal aspects see Jacob Vertzberger, "The current crisis at Malacca Straits," (graduate seminar paper, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1972) and Garth L. Hunt, "Politics and International Law: The case of the Straits of Malacca," (Research Paper, Department of Political Science, University of Hawaii, 1972).

M. Pathmanathan, "The Straits of Malacca," p. 186.

44 Ian Ward, "Major Row Developing on Straits," Daily Telegraph, 13 March 1972.

45 Ian Smart, "From Polaris to the Future," in Dreadnought to Polaris - Maritime Strategy Since Mahan, ed. by A.M.J. Hyatt (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1973), p. 102.

46 Ibid., p. 105.

47 Ibid., p. 106.

48 M. Pathmanathan, "The Straits of Malacca," p. 188.

49 Indonesian intentions in this respect can be considered as seeking the domination of the Straits of Malacca by seeking to control the movement of other naval forces of the other powers.

50 Discussion on this point took place between the Indonesian and British Foreign Ministers in Jakarta in July 1972. When Admiral Moorer stated the American position he also added that intense negotiations on the issue were ongoing.

51 Robert L. Solomon, "Boundary Concepts and Practices in Southeast Asia," World Politics, Vol. 23, No. 1 (October 1970), p. 17.

52 A.W. Stargardt, Problems of Neutrality in South East Asia: The Relevance of the European Experience, Occasional Paper No. 12, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1972), p. 2.

53 Cited in Sopiee, "Neutralization of Southeast Asia," p. 8.

54 Solomon, "Boundary Concepts and Practices," p. 19.

55 Ibid., p. 20.

56 One specific example is that of the Philippines. Even though, it currently accepts neutralization in principle, it is questionable whether in the face of armed dissident movements, it would work actively for the realization of neutralization, in the eventuality it might require external assistance to suppress insurgency.



57 It is relevant to ask the question whether North Vietnam would be agreeable to a neutralized status if it means the continued existence of a divided Vietnam.

58 Towards a Neutral Southeast Asia? (No source indicated but reputed to be put out by the British Foreign Office or DI 6, 1972), p. 21.

59 Ibid.

60 Black, Neutralization, p. 151.

61 A Survey of the Controversial Problem of the Establishment of the Federation of Malaysia, (New York: Permanent Mission of the Republic of Indonesia, 1963), pp. 4-5, (mimeographed).

62 Leifer and Nelson, "Straits of Malacca," p. 203.

63 Indonesia Raya, 18 August 1971, cited in Leifer and Nelson, "Straits of Malacca," p. 203.

64 A.W. Stargardt, "Neutrality within the Asian System Powers," in New Directions in Southeast Asia, p. 111.

65 See Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, "Neutralization and the Need for a Denuclearization of the area," (paper presented at the Conference New Directions in the International Relations of Southeast Asia, by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 3-8 July 1972), and Diosdado Macapagal, "Implications of Neutralization," The Ambassador, Vol. 2, No. 3 (February 1972).

66 Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, "Neutralization and Denuclearization," p. 5.

### POSTSCRIPT

Since the writing of this paper, a period of almost three years has lapsed. Within that time span a variety of events, some of enormous significance for the future of Southeast Asia have taken place. Even at the time of the writing of this postscript, very few of the states in Southeast Asia are fully adjusted to these new developments. The speed of the events that have unfolded has been heady.

Postscripts by nature are simply an attempt to point out the direction in which an academic piece has been outmoded or is being outmoded, and to sum up some of the more important developments. It is difficult to perform the latter function here as the events referred to earlier are of such importance that they justify more extensive treatment. But there has been one constant theme in this dynamic scenario of political change. This has been the value set by the Malaysian political leadership on neutralization as a long term strategy for peace and development in Southeast Asia. The aspiration towards Southeast Asia as a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality is a theme element in the political strategy of Malaysian foreign policy.

The events that have taken place and which will impinge strongly on any proposed scheme for the neutralization of Southeast Asia can be categorised as those affecting the internal political dynamics of states, the regional political dynamics of Southeast Asia and the political dynamics of the general international political system. This categorisation does not fall into neat compartments and overlaps at various points.

An intensification of armed insurgency, whether communist inspired or otherwise and the changing of ruling political regimes are the events that come to mind immediately when one is discussing the internal political dynamics of states in Southeast Asia. The most important of these has been the change of ruling regimes in Indo-China. With the imposition of communist led and communist inspired regimes in South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, the whole area of Indo-China has come under the spectrum of societies being fashioned on the basis of communist ideology. The subsequent unification of Vietnam consequent to the ousting of the Thieu administration in 1975, brings about a new and strong factor that will be bound to have a bearing on any suggestion for a neutralized Southeast Asia. Among the countries of mainland Southeast Asia, Vietnam will occupy the strong political position similar to that of Indonesia among the states of insular Southeast Asia. However, the full force of this will only be felt when the reconstruction and the economic development of Vietnam gets under full swing.

Although the whole of Indo-China has come under the domination of communist regimes, it must be borne in mind that there are important differences between them and that they do not necessarily have a common viewpoint on various issues confronting them.

One important development falling within the ambit of both internal political dynamics as well as regional political dynamics has been the establishment of formal diplomatic links between thenon-communist states of Southeast Asia and the Peoples Republic of China. In this direction, the political leadership of Malaysia has played a pace setting role. The rapprochement of Malaysia and China in 1974 sealed by the visit of Tun Abdul Razak 1974 was repeated by Thailand and the Philippines. Only Indonesia still does not have formal diplomatic relations with China. Thinking on the part of the Malaysian political leadership has been very conscious of the

need to have Peking's support in order to ensure viability of any neutralization proposal.

Within the region itself, the Association of Southeast Asian nations has developed into a more cohesive regional organization. The days when doubt was cast on the viability of ASEAN are over. The Bali Summit of 1976 when various important arrangements for political and economic cooperation were worked out will constitute a landmark in the history of the development of the association. One discordant note in this, is that since the founding of ASEAN, the association has not been able to enlarge its membership, despite overtures to the other states of Southeast Asia. Without doubt, the coincidence of Southeast Asia with the membership of ASEAN will be a profound development that can only augur well for the development of the full potential for regional cooperation. For the present however, there appears to be polarization among the states of Southeast Asia into ASEAN member states and non-ASEAN states. This has been partly due to the developments in Indo-China leading to the established of communist administrations there.

Finally, the broader developments of the general international political system can be briefly stated, to be the changed role of the United States in Southeast Asia, the intensification of the Sino-Soviet rivalry in Southeast Asia and the competition for influence in the Indian Ocean area.

Each of these is bound to have repercussions on any political arrangement affecting the peace and stability of Southeast Asia. Although the United States has withdrawn from Vietnam and elsewhere in Southeast Asia, it has still not come out with a strong endorsement in favour of the neutralization of Southeast Asia.

The death of Tun Abdul Razak, in January 1976 who can be considered the chief architect of the neutralization policy adds a note of political poignancy in the context of the efforts to effect Southeast Asia as a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality. If at all the scheme for neutralizing Southeast Asia takes root, it will be the outstanding testimony to the statesmanship and foresight of Tun Abdul Razak.

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Faculty of Economics & Administration

MP:zmb

**THE AUTHOR**

**Mr. Murugesu Pathmanathan**

**B Sc., M. A., M. Sc. (London)**

**is a lecturer with the Division of Public Administration  
Faculty of Economics & Administration, University of Malaya.**

UNITIANIS/ PENYELIHARAAN BUKU

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