

ASEAN-Philippine Relations: The Fall of Marcos

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I certify that this sub-thesis is my own
original work and that all sources used
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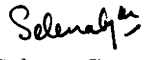

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Abbreviations

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
ASA	Association of Southeast Asia
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CGDK	Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea
Comelec	Commission of Elections
CPM	Communist Party of Malaya
CPP	Communist Party of the Philippines
EEC	European Economic Community
EPC	European Political Cooperation
FPDA	Five Power Defence Arrangement
KBL	Kilusan Bagong Lipunan
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
Namfrel	National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections
NPA	New People's Army
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Conference
PAP	People's Action Party
PAS	Partai Islam
PDP	Philippine Democratic Party
PKI	Indonesian Communist Party
RAM	Reform the AFP Movement
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
Unido	United Nationalist Democratic Organisation

US United States

ZOPFAN Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality

Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been in existence for twenty years. It was formed in Bangkok, Thailand in August 1967. ASEAN now comprises six countries, namely, the five founding members: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand; and ASEAN's newest member, Brunei Darussalam, which joined in January 1984.

The history of Southeast Asia has been characterised by the failure of regional organisations. This has been due mainly to a combination of old factors such as traditional and historical enmities, as well as new factors such as the conflict between regional aspirations and the nationalistic desires of member states for individual modernization and development.¹ ASEAN is unique in Southeast Asia because of the number of years that it has remained intact, and has been perceived as viable by its members. It is the sequel to organisations such as the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA), which lasted from 1961 to 1967, and Maphilindo (an acronym for Malaysia, Philippines and Indonesia), formed in 1963 but which never truly got off the ground.²

In addition to the long period of its existence, ASEAN has also been successful in terms of the recognition accorded to it by other members of the international arena. The organisation has to some extent attained the economic and social aims listed as the first goal of the 1967 Bangkok Declaration, namely:

To accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavours in the spirit of equality and partnership

¹Sandhu, Kernial S, 'The Potential of ASEAN', in Hagiwara, Yoshiyuki (ed), Asia in the 1980s: Interdependence, Peace and Development, (Tokyo, Institute of Developing Economies, 1982), pp.111-112.

²For an account of why these organisations failed see Pechkam, Danai, Regional Organisation and Integration in Southeast Asia, Unpublished Thesis, Claremont Graduate School, 1974, and Laird, Donald T, The Philippines in Southeast Asia: Transactions, Interactions and Conflict with Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, Unpublished Thesis, University of Michigan, 1975.

in order to strengthen the foundation for a prosperous and peaceful community of South East Asian Nation(s).³

Its success in this respect can be measured by the ties ASEAN has formed with other regional organisations, like the European Economic Community (EEC), as well as with major industrial countries like Japan and the United States (US).⁴ ASEAN, moreover, has also had success in political terms. ASEAN solidarity increased with the American withdrawal from Vietnam in 1975. Two major ASEAN agreements were signed in Bali, Indonesia, in February 1976 by the heads of government of the five member states. These were the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and the Declaration of ASEAN Concord. The summit meeting of the five ASEAN heads of government was a success both in terms that it had brought together for the first time a meeting of all five leaders, and in the cordiality of the atmosphere of numerous bilateral and multilateral negotiations before and during the summit. This had the effect of solidifying the 'spirit of togetherness that had originally brought ASEAN together in 1967'.⁵ More recently ASEAN has provided united support for the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK).

The Philippines, a founding member of ASEAN, was also involved with the ASA and Maphilindo. Significantly, the Philippines was largely responsible for the failure of both organisations. This responsibility resulted from its continual bid to reclaim Sabah, now a state of Malaysia, as a part of the Philippines.⁶ However, after an initial attempt during the early years of ASEAN to renew the claim, the government in Manila downplayed its claim in the interest of ASEAN solidarity and cooperation. The major role the Philippines has played in the politics of Southeast Asian regional organisations has made the 1986 Philippine political crisis, when long-time leader Ferdinand Marcos was challenged and later ousted by Corazon Aquino in February 1986, of immense interest to any analysis of intra-ASEAN politics.

³ASEAN, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, (Second Edition), August 1975, p.85.

⁴ASEAN Report Update, Asian Wall Street Journal, (Hongkong, Dow Jones Publishing Co.,1980), pp.113-115.

⁵Far Eastern Economic Review, 5 March 1986, pp.10-11.

⁶Jorgensen-Dahl, Arnfinn, Southeast Asia and Theories of Regional Integration, Unpublished Thesis, Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1976, p.104.

The main objective of ASEAN was defined in Bangkok as the creation of

a peaceful, prosperous and resilient community through joint efforts with the view of strengthening economic and social stability in the respective countries.⁷

Clearly, this objective cannot be separated from the problem of political stability within each member country. While the socio-economic conditions of each member are to an extent dependent on wider regional political conditions, it is also true that the internal political conditions of one member can affect other members depending on the level of interaction between member nations. As the former Foreign Minister of Singapore, S Rajaratnam declared on January 1, 1971:

Political boundaries notwithstanding what happens in one ASEAN country can affect the fate of the rest for better or for worse. We are like passengers travelling in the same boat. We are separate entities but with a common interest - that the boat should not sink lest we all sink with it ... the people of the ASEAN region have to operate at two levels simultaneously - they are independent nations: they are also interdependent nations.⁸

Indeed, the advent of internal discord within a member nation will always be of greater importance to the rest of ASEAN than the occurrence of instability in a country outside the organisation. By the same token, internal change or disorder occurring in a nation outside ASEAN will be felt by ASEAN members through an insulation layer because it would not be a part of the 'existing patterns of communications and political relationships.'⁹

Political Crisis in Manila

On 21 August 1983, after almost ten years of martial law under Marcos, the return and abrupt assassination of Senator Benigno Aquino, one of the President's major political opponents, signalled the beginning of a new political era for the Philippines.¹⁰ The assassination was eventually to lead to a massive popular upsurge against further repression by a corrupt political dictatorship. In the short term the investigation resulted

⁷ASEAN, *op.cit.*, p.14.

⁸*Ibid.*, p.60.

⁹Gordon, Bernard K, 'Common Defense Considerations and Intergration in Southeast Asia', in Tharp Jr, Paul A, Regional International Organisations/Structures and Functions, (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1971), p.248.

¹⁰Far Eastern Economic Review, 10 April 1986, pp.75-76.

in further confusion, confirming public suspicion of the involvement of the Marcos government and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). The Commission of Inquiry into the assassination found that Marcos' righthand man, AFP Chief-of-Staff General Fabian Ver, was involved. Although Ver was finally acquitted, the assassination and events which followed only served to further damage Marcos' reputation in the eyes of Filipinos, ASEAN, and the rest of the world.

Benigno Aquino's assassination triggered further pressure by the US on Marcos for reform. Washington feared that without the necessary reform the communist insurgency would grow to threaten the US bases in the Philippines to the detriment of US policy in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Further, the prospect existed that US economic and military aid could be curtailed by the Congress since, as late as December 1985, questions were being asked as to the location of some US\$100 million of military aid assigned to the Philippines. US investigations into the Marcos government were underway.¹¹ Feeling the pressure from the Americans, Marcos decided to call snap presidential elections in early 1986, in the hope of providing himself with a 'new mantle of 'legitimacy''.¹² Marcos was quite confident that he would win. Martial law had enhanced his executive powers and, it seemed, his control of the military. Both the AFP and the Philippine Constabulary had been numerically strengthened during the years of martial law. In addition, the democratic opposition was disunited. At the same time there was doubt whether Marcos would allow the elections to be fair. The Americans were also worried about this.¹³ They were disappointed with the split opposition and anxious that the elections should be as fair as possible.

In early December, the strongest contenders for the elections were Corazon Aquino, Benigno Aquino's widow, and Salvador Laurel, longtime opposition leader and head of the United Nationalist Democratic Organisation (Unido). Under pressure from the strong

¹¹Far Eastern Economic Review, 19 December 1985, p.45.

¹²Far Eastern Economic Review, 21 November 1985, p.53.

¹³Ibid., p.62. Marcos had previously allowed some fairness in the 1984 Batasan Pambansa (National Assembly) elections but this had proved embarrassing for Marcos as the moderate opposition won more seats than expected. The Kilusan Bagong Lipunan (KBL), Marcos' party, lost 30% of all seats contested.

Philippine Roman Catholic Church, Laurel finally agreed to run as a vice-presidential candidate against Marcos' running mate Arturo Tolentino. This move united the opposition forces in the last week of December 1986 to the detriment of Marcos. The coalition of Aquino/Laurel,

covered a wide spectrum of political forces. On the right stood the traditional, conservative Unido political machine, strong in parts of Luzon and in the South of the country. Church-affiliated Manila businessmen plus brazenly partisan clergy and religious-order members held part of the centre. Alongside them stood a Philipino Democratic Party (PDP) now merged with the Laban Party begun by Aquino's late husband ... PDP-Laban drew on sources of local strength in Luzon, Cebu and parts of Mindanao; ... and because of Aquino's earlier ties to nationalist figures such as former Senator Lorenzo Tanada, even some Left-leaning elements found room in the anti-Marcos electoral ticket that carried green (Unido) and yellow (Aquino) colours.¹⁴

Elections were held on 7 February 1986 with predictions of a close contest. Observers of the elections witnessed mass fraud and voter-list manipulation. Confusion resulted as the government's Commission of Elections (Comelec) showed Marcos victorious, and the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel) showed Aquino the winner. Marcos had miscalculated Aquino's popularity and his own evident unpopularity. Nevertheless, just before midnight on 14 February 1986, Marcos' Kilusan Bagong Lipunan (KBL)-dominated Batasang Pambansa (National Assembly) proclaimed him President. The official tally recorded 10.8 million votes for Marcos against Aquino's 9.3 million. Aquino refused to recognise the official count, contending that the elections had been wracked with fraud and that if an honest count had been taken she would have won. Aquino then called for a non-violent protest of civil disobedience against Marcos' claim to the presidency. She received crucial support for this action from the Catholic bishops of the Philippines.¹⁵

Marcos' control of the situation was further eroded when, fearing for their lives, his Defence Minister, Juan Ponce Enrile and his deputy Chief-of-Staff of the AFP, General Fidel Ramos, defected. Reports had reached them that they were to be arrested. The AFP was divided, with the Reform the AFP Movement (RAM) faction within the army

¹⁴Far Eastern Economic Asia 1987 Yearbook, pp.222-223.

¹⁵Far Easter Economic Review, 27 February 1986, p.11. In a country which is 85% Catholic the Church is a formidable force for any government.

defecting with Ramos and Enrile. This signaled the beginning of further army defections from Marcos. A major additional blow came with the US distancing itself from Marcos.¹⁶ At that time Marcos had not received diplomatic support from any country except the Soviet Union. In spite of these events, Marcos hung on, certain that he had President Reagan's support. However, on 25 February a telephone call from Senator Paul Laxalt, a close friend of Reagan's, confirmed that the US would support Aquino. Having lost Reagan's support, Marcos admitted defeat. He and his family were flown out of Malacanang Palace at 9.05 pm on 25 February 1986, to Clark Air Force Base, later to be transported by US forces to Guam and thence on to Hawaii.

Structure

The events of the crisis in Manila were of concern to the other ASEAN leaders. Each ASEAN country had its own concerns over the instability in the Philippines, much of it reflecting both bilateral and regional issues. Ultimately, the crisis highlighted negatively the weakness of intra-ASEAN relations. This subthesis will analyse the intra-ASEAN weakness through a study of the bilateral relations of each major ASEAN country most concerned with the Philippines, namely Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore.

Clearly the recurring nature of the Sabah issue between Malaysia and the Philippines, makes it imperative that in any political disorder in the Philippines, Malaysia-Philippine bilateral relations should be examined. Chapter One of this subthesis will investigate Philippine-Malaysia relations both during and after the crisis. The Sabah claim, as well as the existence of the Muslim revolutionary movement in Mindanao provide two major factors affecting the brittle relationship between the two countries, which adversely affect stability within ASEAN.

Chapters Two and Three will deal with Indonesia-Philippine and Singapore-Philippine relations respectively. Both President Suharto of Indonesia, and Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, came to power around the same time as Marcos.¹⁷

¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp.12-13.

¹⁷President Suharto came to power in 1967, largely as a result of the attempted coup in Indonesia known as the Gestapu Affair. Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew came to power in 1959, but only became Prime Minister of an independent state in August 1965. Marcos was inaugurated President in the Philippines on 30 December 1965.

They have had a long association with him. This subthesis will therefore analyse the effect of a leadership change and subsequent crisis in the Philippines upon the attitudes of the two leaders and their governments.

The question of leadership change is especially significant for Southeast Asia. In a region where most, if not all, of the states are highly authoritarian in nature, foreign policy is determined by a narrow clique of elites surrounding the leaders. A change in leadership can sometimes result in a change in foreign policy, which in turn could portend instability within the region.¹⁸ An example of this can be seen in the case of Philippine President Macapagal. It has been stated that one factor which led to the failure of ASA as a regional organisation was Macapagal's lack of interest compared with his predecessor, Garcia.¹⁹ Similarly, the personalities of leaders play a large part in the foreign policies of ASEAN states. A measure of volatility exists when uncertainty persists as to whether a country's key individuals will disappear from the scene.

This level of unpredictability is particularly worrisome to the other ASEAN leaders in view of their staunch anti-communist stance. The Philippine domestic political scene seems particularly unstable vis-a-vis encroaching communist influence. It is the only ASEAN country where there is a sizable communist movement in the countryside. ASEAN concern on this matter can be traced in the agreements reached in Bali in 1976. The declaration of principles governing ASEAN relations called on each member country to 'eliminate threats posed by subversion to its stability, thus strengthening national and ASEAN resilience.'²⁰

Chapter Four will investigate wider ASEAN-Philippine relations in order to provide a better understanding of the intra-regional politics of ASEAN in view of the above factors. The strength and cohesion of ASEAN in the face of an external threat is well-

¹⁸Jorgensen-Dahl, *op.cit.*, pp.311-316.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p.125.

²⁰Yahuda, Michael, *Patterns of Regionalism in Asia: New Opportunities for the 1980s*, Flinders University Asian Studies Lecture 14, 1983, p.19.

known and well-documented.²¹ However, the internal threats of political disorder and traditional antipathies are less well-known. Evidently, even after the twenty years of its existence, ASEAN has not yet achieved the kind of integration developed by other regional organisations, such as the EEC.²²

For the purposes of this work, the two other ASEAN countries, Thailand and Brunei, will not be dealt with individually. Their reactions and concerns will be included in the final chapter and conclusion covering wider ASEAN-Philippine relations. This is primarily because Thailand has few, if any, major disputes or problems in its bilateral relations with the Philippines. Moreover, Thailand is geographically distant from the Philippines compared with the other ASEAN countries. Its major concern is with the Indochinese stalemate at its borders. Brunei is relatively new to ASEAN. Its foreign policy is aligned to that of Malaysia and Singapore. Any reaction or concern on the part of either Thailand or Brunei would simply reflect the ASEAN line.

The Philippine political crisis, a major domestic crisis in an ASEAN country, has served to illustrate the internal weakness of ASEAN. ASEAN was acutely concerned but was unable in any way to influence the confusion in the Philippines. Unlike the US it had no major input during the entire presidential election period. Evidently, US support, decisions and advice were sought after and had more of an impact on the elections and their aftermath, than did the position of any ASEAN member country. Although Marcos was declared victorious on 14 February 1986, ASEAN did not announce its support for either candidate. Indeed it was only on 23 February that ASEAN issued a joint statement of concern regarding the situation in the Philippines. The concluding chapter of this subthesis will critically examine the extent of integration within ASEAN, the degree of each member's concern, why they reacted as they did to the crisis, and finally the extent

²¹ ASEAN resilience and solidarity has been responsible for the continued seating and increasing number of votes in favour of the CGDK at the United Nations (UN) since 1979. Votes at the last UNGA on the ASEAN resolution on Kampuchea was the highest since 1979 with 115 votes for the resolution and 21 against. *ASEAN Newsletter*, September-October 1986, p.8.

²²Matsumoto, Shigekazu, 'The Structure of Interdependence in Southeast Asia and the Future of the ASEAN States', in Hagiwara, *op.cit.*, pp.119-120. In terms of the volume of intraregional trade, ASEAN's had been very low compared to the EEC. ASEAN trades more with outside countries like Japan and the US than among themselves.

to which they sought to or could influence events in the Philippines. Perhaps after all ASEAN cannot be expected to conform to the integrative style of Western regional organisations, to sustain institutions equivalent to the European Parliament and the organisation of European Political Cooperation (EPC) maintained by the EEC. Integration within Southeast Asia is more likely to remain of a different character with newly independent states, fiercely nationalistic, fully aware of and sensitive to their territorial integrity and sovereignty.²³

²³Jorgensen-Dahl, op.cit., pp.4-5.

Chapter One

Malaysia - Philippine Relations

Introduction

The history of relations between Malaysia and the Philippines has been one of conflict since the formation of the Federation of Malaysia on 16 September 1963. Specifically, it has been the Philippine claim to Sabah, one of the thirteen states that make up the Federation of Malaysia, that has soured relations between the two countries. Although both countries are now members of ASEAN, bilateral relations have remained cool and formal. All Malaysian official visits are banned unless they are on ASEAN business. Further, no Malaysian prime minister has made a trip to the Philippines since the Philippine claim to Sabah. The difficulty of solving this conflict has increased over the years as a separate issue has complicated the Philippine 'terra irredenta' attempt. The Filipino Muslim separatist movement has become embroiled in the conflict, as many rebel Muslim Filipinos have received training, support and refuge in Sabah and other parts of Malaysia. Sabah has at present about 100,000-120,000 Filipino Muslim refugees in its territory. These two related issues plagued Malaysian-Philippine relations throughout the presidency of Ferdinand Marcos and have yet to be finally resolved. This chapter seeks first, to briefly explain the history of relations between the two countries since the Philippines first officially claimed Sabah as Philippine territory in June 1962. The major part of this history concerns Malaysian experiences with Marcos on the two issues mentioned above. Malaysia's attitudes and preferences during the Philippine crisis which led to the fall of Marcos had their origins in their reaction to Marcos' treatment of these two issues. Secondly, this chapter will deal with the reasons why Corazon Aquino was preferred by the Malaysians.

The Sabah Claim

The quarrel between Malaysia and the Philippines over Sabah concerns the question of whether in January of 1878 the Sultan of Sulu, Mohammed Jamalul Alam, leased or ceded the territory. The Sultan leased or ceded the territory to two private citizens, Gustavus Baron de Overbeck and Alfred Dent 'together with their heirs, associates, successors and assigns, forever and or until the end of time.'¹ The Sultan was to receive five thousand Straits dollars annually for this lease or cession. Overbeck eventually sold out to Dent in 1880. Dent then secured the granting of a Charter of Incorporation from the British Government in 1881, which began the British North Borneo Company. Britain established a formal protectorate in 1888, and assumed direct administration of the territory from the North Borneo Company in July 1946. Earlier in March 1885, Spain had signed a protocol which renounced any claim to North Borneo in return for British recognition of Spanish sovereignty over Sulu. This protocol was in turn accepted by the Americans when they took over the Philippines from the Spanish.²

With the formation of the Federation of Malaysia on 16 September 1963, Malaysia inherited the United Kingdom's sovereignty over Sabah. The basic issue, however, remains as to whether Sabah belongs to the Philippines or to Malaysia. The confusion lies in the translation of the Malay word 'padjak'.³ The Philippine government maintains that the word means 'lease' while the Malaysian and British governments translate it as 'cede'.⁴

It is significant that it was only in June 1962 that President Diosdado Macapagal of the Philippines made the first formal assertion that Sabah was part of the the sovereign territory of the Philippines. The significance of his declaration lies not in the conclusion that the Philippine claim was a whim on the part of Macapagal but rather with the

¹Leifer, Michael, The Philippine Claim to Sabah, Hull Monographs on Southeast Asia, No 1, (Switzerland, Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Hull, 1968), p.4.

²Ibid., pp.3-6.

³Ariff, M O, The Philippines' Claim to Sabah: Its Historical, Legal and Political Implications, (Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1970), pp.1-3, and p.34. Ariff lists other legal complications of the issue which do not concern the political aspects of the claim examined here.

⁴Kaul, Man Mohini, The Philippines and Southeast Asia, (New Delhi, Radiant Publishers, 1978), pp.75-76.

change in Philippine foreign policy which occurred at that time. The prospect of a claim had existed since the Philippines became independent in 1946.⁵ However, Philippine foreign policy was centred on the United States to the detriment of any realisation of an Asian identity by the Philippines. In turn, because of this special relationship and dependence on the US for both economic and security matters, in the eyes of other Asians the Filipinos 'enjoyed little prestige and were perceived in terms of the unfortunate label of President Taft's, 'little brown brothers''⁶ It was only with the Presidency of Carlos Garcia (1957-1961) that Philippine foreign policy began to change to a more independent mode, looking towards Asia, for by this time the impact of the April 1955 Bandung Conference had reached fertile ground.⁷ By the end of the 1950s the Garcia Administration realised that there was a

grievous misimpression which has gained currency in Asian and European circles that our freedom notwithstanding, we remain a virtual colony of the US ... Our independence did not gain for us the respect we expected from our fellow Asians.⁸

Moreover the Philippines did not pursue the claim to Sabah before 1962 since, at the time the British assumed direct administration of Sabah, the Philippines had just gained independence. It was felt by the early Presidents of the Philippines who in any case were preoccupied with other issues, that it would be too soon for a young state to 'twist the tail of the British lion',⁹ or in any way stir up an international 'storm'. It was only as the idea of the Federation of Malaysia, including Sabah, was mooted and looked likely to succeed that the Philippines formally asserted its claim by objecting to the incorporation of what was alleged to be a part of the Philippines.¹⁰

With the trend toward realignment away from the US and towards Asia, the Philippines became more active in regional organisations and regional politics.

⁵Leifer, The Philippine Claim to Sabah, pp.6-7.

⁶Leifer, Michael, The Foreign Relations of the New States, (Australia, Longman, 1974), pp.40-41.

⁷Laird, op. cit., pp.32-34. At Bandung there was an underlying feeling among key Filipinos that they were not being taken seriously because of their American links and pro-Western policies.

⁸Ibid., p.38. Quoted from Department of Foreign Affairs Review, October 1959, p 52.

⁹Leifer, The Philippine Claim to Sabah, p.8.

¹⁰Ibid., p.23.

Recognition of its Asian identity and destiny brought with it a realization of the importance of the environment in which the Philippines was to survive. Starting from the change that Garcia had initiated, Macapagal was to try to manipulate that regional environment for the good of the Philippines. Regional politics in the specific form of the Sabah claim, which had previously been ignored, now became the most important foreign policy initiative Macapagal was to undertake. In essence the claim became a reflection of Philippine interest in, and proclamation of, its Asian identity.¹¹

Officially the Philippine government expressed another reason to support its claim to Sabah other than that of historical right, namely, that the security of the Philippines was at stake. Although it was unlikely, the government in Manila stated that it feared that Sabah's inclusion in Malaysia would encourage communist penetration of a part of Borneo which was considered to be directly linked to the preservation of Philippine sovereignty.¹² Macapagal declared that the new state of Malaysia would be incapable of preventing a communist takeover of North Borneo and this would in turn facilitate communist infiltration into Southern Philippines. Indeed, Sabah was geographically only 18 miles from the nearest Philippine island, whereas it was 1000 miles from Malaya.¹³

Much of the energy devoted by Manila to the Sabah claim was the product of one man, Diosdado Macapagal.¹⁴ However, the Sabah claim did not die a natural death with the inauguration of a new president in 1965. Nor did the Sabah claim diminish with the perceived decline of the communist danger in Malaysia or the acceptance of the Philippines as an integral part of Southeast Asia upon its assumption of membership in ASEAN.

Macapagal's successor, Ferdinand Marcos, restored full diplomatic relations with Malaysia in 1966, which had been broken off with the formation of the Federation. However, Marcos still did not drop the Philippine claim to Sabah. His policy was not to actively pursue the claim but at the same time not to jeopardize it. The issue was no

¹¹Laird, *op.cit.*, pp.8-24. Also see Leifer, Dilemmas of Statehood in Southeast Asia, pp.128-129.

¹²Leifer, The Philippine Claim to Sabah, p.37.

¹³Littaua, Ferdinand, The Philippines and Southeast Asia 1954 -1972: A Study of Philippine Policies towards Regional Organisations, Thesis, University of Geneva, 1977, pp.52-53.

¹⁴Ibid., p.12.

longer discussed between Malaysia and the Philippines and did not form part of major discussions for the formation of ASEAN.¹⁵

However, the Sabah issue was not destined to remain dormant for long. In January 1968 Marcos visited Malaysia. A joint communique was issued at the end of the visit stating that Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Malaysian Prime Minister, and Marcos had agreed to hold talks on Sabah at their earliest convenience. Before this could take place, on 21 March 1968, Manila newspapers carried reports of a group of Filipino Muslim commandos in secret training on Corregidor island. It was presumed that their purpose was to infiltrate Sabah.¹⁶ Thereafter, relations between the two countries deteriorated rapidly. Sabah again entered the Philippine and Malaysian domestic political scenes. Malaysia broke diplomatic relations with the Philippines on 19 September 1968. This was a direct result of the passing in the Philippine Congress and Marcos' subsequent decision to sign Senate Bill Number 954. This Bill defined Philippine territorial parameters as being

without prejudice to the delineation of the baselines of the territorial sea around the territory of Sabah situated in North Borneo, over which the Republic of the Philippines has acquired dominion and sovereignty.¹⁷

At the same time Marcos made clear that there would be no intention to 'physically' incorporate Sabah into the Philippines. His actions aimed to serve the twin purposes of reassuring the Malaysians on the one hand and using the issue to rally nationalist support in the coming elections of 1970.

The deterioration of relations between the two countries resulted in the non-functioning of ASEAN for eight months. However, with the mediation efforts of Indonesia and Thailand, and the resumption of diplomatic relations with Malaysia in December 1969, Marcos promised not to raise the Sabah issue again within ASEAN auspices. Marcos made this promise for the sake of the survival of ASEAN, believing that

¹⁵Jorgensen-Dahl, *op.cit.*, pp.104-107.

¹⁶Kaul, *op.cit.*, p.95. The sole survivor of the mutiny at the island told a congressional committee that infiltration had been the purpose of their training. This was denied by the officer-in-charge of the camp, stating that the purpose of both camp and training was to combat possible insurgency by communists.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp.99-100.

at the time ASEAN was of paramount importance to developing countries like the Philippines. In spite of this, the Philippines continued to assert that it was the rightful heir to Sabah and that the issue should be settled by the International Court of Justice.¹⁸ But finally, at the Second Summit Conference of the ASEAN Heads of State held in Kuala Lumpur in August 1977, Marcos announced that the Philippines intended to withdraw its claim to Sabah, stating that:

Before ASEAN can look to the outside world for equity, for justice and fairness we must establish order, fairness and justice among ourselves. As a contribution, therefore, I say in earnest to the future of ASEAN, I wish to announce that the government of the Republic of the Philippines is therefore taking definite steps to eliminate one of the burdens of ASEAN - the claim of the Philippine Republic to Sabah. It is our hope that this will be a permanent contribution to the unity, the strength and the prosperity of all of ASEAN.¹⁹

The Philippines was then under martial law imposed by Marcos. He therefore, could afford to largely ignore domestic nationalist feelings over Sabah. Moreover, it was an auspicious moment for Marcos to demonstrate his 'benevolence'. He was in the Malaysian capital and could be seen to be working towards better Malaysian-Philippine relations and thereby, working towards better ASEAN solidarity by lifting one of the few remaining political 'burdens of ASEAN'.²⁰ Marcos stated that he did this as a 'permanent contribution to the unity, the strength and prosperity of all of ASEAN'.²¹

Malaysian Ties with Filipino Muslims

The geographical proximity of Sabah and the Southern islands of the Philippines has only served to worsen the conflict over Sabah. Not only has this proximity been presented as a reason for Manila's claim to Sabah, but the notion that 'from time immemorial the Sulu Archipelago had constituted a single economic and cultural unit' has

¹⁸The Malaysians did not consider the sovereignty question debatable because they believed that UN reports which ascertained that the Sabah people wanted to be a part of Malaysia demonstrated the legitimacy of Malaysian sovereignty. To bring the matter to the International Court of Justice would be to deal with the issue in a purely legal manner. Malaysians believed the matter could be settled by an assertion of self-determination on the part of the Sabahans. See Noble, Lela Garner, Philippine Policy toward Sabah: A Claim to Independence, (Arizona, The University of Arizona Press, 1977), pp.212-220.

¹⁹Foreign Policy Digest, Perfecto Jr, Isidoro T, (ed), (Philippines, Foreign Service Institute, 1983), p.20.

²⁰Far Eastern Economic Review, 19 August 1977, pp.20-21.

²¹Ibid.

enabled Filipino Muslim rebels to find sanctuary, refuge, aid and support in Sabah away from the Philippine government.²² Almost all the Filipino Muslim groups have relatives and kinsmen in Sabah. A major Filipino Muslim group in Sulu, the Tausag, are found in Sabah; other Filipino Muslim groups, the Maranao-Ilaun and Maguindanao also have relations in Sabah.²³

The Muslim Filipino problem has plagued the Philippine government since independence.²⁴ It was one factor used by Marcos in 1972 as justification for the imposition of martial law.²⁵ By the time martial law was lifted on 17 January 1981, the Muslim problem had still to be resolved, in spite of actions Marcos took to end the Muslim separatist movement and promote factionalism within the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).²⁶

The first linkage between Malaysian-Philippine relations over the Sabah issue and the Muslim separatist movement in the Philippines, occurred six years after the first formal assertion by Macapagal for control of Sabah. This was the Corregidor incident mentioned above. On 21 March 1968, Manila newspapers reported that there had been a mutiny in an army camp on Corregidor island situated at the mouth of Manila Bay. These mutineers were later disarmed and killed in what became known in the Muslim world as the 'Jabidah Massacre'.

Corregidor had become the site of a secret project code-named 'Operation Merdeka'.²⁷ Operation Merdeka was to have been the infiltration of Sabah by Filipino Muslims trained at Corregidor. Supposedly these Muslims mutinied because they refused

²²Ariff, *op.cit.*, p.35.

²³Gowing, Peter G, Muslim Filipinos - Heritage and Horizon, (Quezon City, New Day Publishers, 1979), p.3.

²⁴*Ibid.*, Gowing states that, 'from the Moro standpoint, it was one thing to acquiesce in the government of Americans who had defeated them time and again in battle; it was another thing to acquiesce in the government of Christian Filipinos who, as soldiers under the Spaniards, had never effectively conquered them after three centuries of trying.'

²⁵May, R J, and Nemenzo, Francisco, (eds), The Philippines After Marcos, (Sydney, Croom Helm Ltd, 1985), p.113.

²⁶*Ibid.*, pp.110-124, May gives a succinct account of Marcos' actions and his success in dividing the leading Muslim movement, the Moro National Liberation Front.

²⁷George, T J S, Revolt in Mindanao: The Rise of Islam in Philippine Politics, (Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1980), pp.122-123.

to fight fellow Muslims. This version was supported by many opposition politicians. However, the official version of the whole affair was that the operation had been one of counterinsurgency. The Muslims had been recruited to deal with the guerilla activities of communist elements from Indonesia.²⁸ The mutiny was said to have been sparked by a delay in the payment of salaries and too rigorous training. However, the whole affair remained suspicious as the very name of the operation means 'to liberate' in English.²⁹ Many other people apart from Marcos' opponents believed that the operation was for the infiltration of Sabah if Sabah could not possibly be obtained through legal settlement.³⁰

The Corregidor incident provided one further link between the Sabah issue and the Filipino Muslims. Marcos had apparently, in secret, decided to make available the forces to support a possible insurgency in Sabah, but at the same time he tried to improve relations with Malaysia. The attempt to improve relations can be clearly seen in the visit by Marcos to Malaysia in January 1968 which resulted in an anti-smuggling pact. Marcos, however, had to keep a balance. He was facing elections in 1970 and he intended to win. He could not, therefore, allow even a marginal issue like Sabah to go unheeded. Although he could not afford to alienate the Muslims in the south in a contest with Malaysia, an Islamic country, he also needed to preserve his country's prestige which was important to his electorate, and which would be damaged by perceived weakness on the Sabah issue.³¹ His toughness with the Malaysians immediately after Corregidor must be seen in this light.

Ultimately, however, Marcos decided that the consequences of pursuing the Sabah claim would be of greater detriment to the Philippine national image, as this would upset relations not only with Malaysia but also with the rest of ASEAN. The Philippines was beginning to realise that regional cooperation was important, if not vital for the country's security and economy. The country had to preserve and strengthen what Southeast Asian links it could since:

²⁸Indonesia until 1965 was controlled by Sukarno who was under the influence of the pro-Beijing Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). Their destruction by Suharto was still being completed in 1968.

²⁹Noble, *op.cit.*, p.165.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p.166.

³¹*Ibid.*, p.206.

The place of the Philippines in Asia was marginal already, certainly to a greater degree than that of Malaysia, which had increasing cooperation with Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and India.³²

However, despite Marcos' attempts to downgrade the Sabah claim, he did not succeed in stopping the consequences of the Corregidor incident. This failure not only provided the Filipino Muslims with the impetus for organising to counter what they believed to be a genocidal campaign against them,³³ but it made

all sections of Muslims - secular and religious, modern and backward alike - concerned about their future.³⁴

Worse still Corregidor led to an escalation of Muslim resistance in Southern Philippines which received external aid channelled through Sabah.

Malaysian Support for Filipino Muslims

Sabah's then Chief Minister, Tun Mustapha bin Datu Harun, reacted angrily to the Corregidor incident.³⁵ Mustapha probably decided to aid the Filipino Muslims for two reasons. First, he was a Tausag from Sulu and most of the dead in the Jabidah massacre, after the Corregidor mutiny, were Suluanos. Mustapha's clan was not only extensive in the Sulu islands but scores of his relatives were also engaged in the insurgency in one way or another; his own kith and kin were involved. Moreover, as a Muslim himself, the plight of Muslims so close to his doorstep would have been in any case a matter of concern to him.³⁶

Secondly, it is possible that Mustapha had bigger plans for Sabah. Federal leaders in Kuala Lumpur believed that Mustapha's aims were to enlarge the political entity that was Sabah to include the whole of the Sulu Archipelago, in effect restoring the Sulu Sultanate. Their suspicions were fuelled by Mustapha's background and character. His autocratic, ruthless personality made it difficult for Kuala Lumpur to deal both with him

³²Ibid., p.219.

³³Gowing, *op.cit.*, pp.193-194.

³⁴George, *op.cit.*, pp.125-126.

³⁵Noble, *op.cit.*, p.170. He charged that Marcos had double-crossed Malaysia by not dropping the Sabah claim in exchange for Malaysian help in ending smuggling between the border of the two countries. Leifer, in *Dilemmas of Statehood in Southeast Asia*, also refers to this.

³⁶George, *op.cit.*, p.234.

and the possibility that he would force the separation of Sabah from Malaysia.³⁷ It was for this reason that Malaysian leaders in Kuala Lumpur attempted to remove him from the Sabah political scene by offering him a cabinet post in the Federal government.³⁸ However, Mustapha was to refuse this offer, seeing through the political ploy to remove him from power in Sabah. He was eventually forced to retire on 31 October 1975, and soon lost his pivotal position of power in Sabah when he lost the December 1976 elections there. With Mustapha's defeat, the new Chief Minister, Datuk Harris Salleh, assured Marcos that Sabah would no longer aid the Filipino Muslims. Marcos was willing to accept this undertaking. At the very least, Marcos was sure that any further aid would not be given in the open fashion and in the large quantities that was prevalent during Mustapha's time.³⁹

From the perspective of the Filipino Muslims too, Sabah was the most natural refuge and source of support. Not only was Mustapha willing to assist them but Sabah, because of its geographical proximity and cultural closeness to the Filipino Muslims, provided the most natural base for their operations.⁴⁰ However, Sabah was not alone in its provision of support for the Muslim Filipino rebels. The Malaysian government itself was also reported to be involved.⁴¹ Pulau Pangkor, a Malaysian island north of Kuala Lumpur, was said to have been set up as a training base for Filipino Muslims.⁴²

Reports of Malaysia's active support for the Filipino Muslim rebels, particularly from Sabah under Mustapha, have been difficult to prove. Official Malaysian policy has

³⁷Ibid., pp.236- 238. It was a belief accepted by large numbers of people, backed by personal testimony of a former blood brother of Mustapha, Tun Mohammad Faud.

³⁸Far Eastern Economic Review, 8 August 1975, p.14. Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak was so keen to have Mustapha removed from power in Sabah that he went out of his way to make Mustapha third in the seniority list in the Federal Cabinet.

³⁹Far Eastern Economic Review, 16 September 1977, p.30.

⁴⁰George, op.cit., p.235.

⁴¹Noble, op.cit., pp.207- 208.

⁴²The Bulletin, 25 May 1974. Nur Misuari, leader of the MNLF, was supposed to have been trained there. Manila apparently showed a dossier to the Saudi Foreign Minister in April 1974 containing evidence that Malaysians had trained several hundred Filipino guerillas for the 'People's Army' of the 'Moro National Liberation Front'. It showed also that the MNLF had landed 58 parties in the Philippines after Malaysian army officers had instructed them in jungle warfare, sabotage and intelligence, and to have supplied the insurgents with 200,000 rounds of ammunition, more than 5000 automatic weapons, mines and grenades since December 1972. See also Far Eastern Economic Review, 3 June 1974, p. 15.

been to deny any such support. It is probable that Malaysia did provide sanctuary and a measure of aid to Muslim Filipinos. This action was probably intended to achieve Philippine renunciation of its claim to Sabah. The level of aid was probably not high, especially in later years when Malaysia felt that the claim had already come to a de facto ending. Moreover, Malaysia places a higher priority on the internal stability of ASEAN.⁴³ Since Sabahans have chosen to remain in Malaysia, the legitimacy of self-determination would act to defeat any present legal basis for the Philippine claim to Sabah. Malaysia has also acted to minimise any external interference in the matter from interested parties such as the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) by stating clearly that the 'problem was being handled by the ASEAN'.⁴⁴ To this end, Malaysia has the support of Indonesia, especially in light of Indonesia's past problems with regional Islamic rebellions. It is also not in Malaysia's interest to promote excitement over the plight of the Southern Philippine Muslims, since this would only serve to provide an additional reason for domestic agitation on the part of the fundamentalist Islamic opposition in the Partai Islam (PAS). For this reason, any action by the Malaysians to aid the Muslim Filipinos since the mid-1970s has been covert and low level. It has been used as a type of 'bargaining chip' to ensure that Marcos would back his promise in 1977 to eliminate the claim and take concrete steps such as changing the Philippine constitution to remove all indirect references to Sabah as part of the Philippines.

For his part, Marcos also downplayed the Philippine claim to Sabah after the Corregidor incident. He realised ASEAN's priorities of stability in the region and economic development. Moreover, the US was sympathetic to the Malaysian position over Sabah.⁴⁵ However, Marcos probably still retained a residual Philippine claim to Sabah in order either to force the Malaysians to pledge complete non-interference in the Southern Philippines or to ensure that no future Malaysian leader would increase aid to the Filipino Muslims. Although the Moro problem diminished in intensity to the extent that it constituted only an irritant during the last years of Marcos' rule, the potential

⁴³Bulletin Today, 25 October 1985.

⁴⁴Far Eastern Economic Review, 24 June 1974, p.18.

⁴⁵Kaul, op.cit., p.102.

remained that Filipino Muslims could again resort to arms to physically obtain what they believed to be their due.⁴⁶

Marcos or Aquino?

Residual conflict between the two countries did exist to the extent that Marcos never formally declared that Sabah belonged to Malaysia even after he verbally assured Malaysian leaders in 1977 that the Philippines would drop the claim.⁴⁷ The Malaysians wanted a constitutional amendment to this effect. Marcos had said in 1977 that there were legal, political, and psychological obstacles which prevented a quick renunciation. His main critics were the 'old society' politicians led by former President Macapagal.⁴⁸ The Malaysian leaders' scepticism was proved correct when no further action was taken to amend the constitution. They believed that Marcos' pronouncements renouncing Sabah were superficial considering that Sabah was still indirectly declared as constitutionally a part of the Philippines. The 1973 constitution of the Philippines defines the national territory in such a way that it implies that Sabah belongs to the Philippines by 'historic right or legal title'.⁴⁹ In short Marcos failed to convince Malaysian leaders of his sincerity to solve the Sabah issue.

A reflection of this failure is the fact that the Malaysian Prime Minister has not visited the Philippines since the making of the Sabah claim. Moreover, in 1981 the Sabah issue flared up once again when the Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir bin Mohammad, made it pointedly clear that he would not visit the Philippines until the Philippines formally dropped its claim to Sabah.⁵⁰ In apparent retaliation against Mahathir's statement, then Philippines Defence Minister Juan Ponce Enrile alleged that some Filipino rebels had set up a training camp in Sabah. There was also a further move in the Philippine National Assembly to revive the Sabah claim. Malaysian officials denied that

⁴⁶Far Eastern Economic Review, 9 August 1984, p.30. For many Muslim Filipinos, to be without a gun is to be naked. In all cases of MNLF surrenders the Filipino Muslims are allowed to keep their weapons.

⁴⁷Agence France Press, 13 October 1985.

⁴⁸Far Eastern Economic Review, 19 August 1977, pp.20-21

⁴⁹Business Day, 6 June 1986.

⁵⁰Far Eastern Economic Review, 4 December 1981, p.10.

Malaysia would allow any individuals or groups to use its territory to carry out clandestine activities against it or any other country. The Sabah Chief Minister at the time, Harris Salleh, then called on the Malaysian government to sever diplomatic ties with the Philippines if they did not drop the Sabah claim and 'continued 'to harass' the state with allegations of harbouring Muslim and any other anti-Marcos rebels in its territory.'⁵¹ Both Marcos and Mahathir moved to dispel the tension between the two countries, Marcos denying that Enrile's allegations were the view of the Philippine government and Mahathir emphasising that there should not be a rupture of diplomatic ties in light of Marcos' 1977 declaration. The Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister at the time, Musa Hitam, also stressed the importance of ASEAN as well as his faith that all problems could be solved within ASEAN auspices.

On 23 September 1985, pirates identified as Filipinos, attacked the town of Lahad Datu on the east coast of Sabah. This attack pointedly illustrated the continuing lack of cooperation between Malaysia and the Philippines in border patrols, despite the membership of both countries for more than ten years in ASEAN. A further report of an apparant retaliatory attack by Malaysian soldiers on the Philippine island of Maranas close to the Philippine-Malaysian border, illustrated the continued conflict between the two countries over the unresolved Philippine claim to Sabah during the Marcos era. In an attempt to dissipate tensions between the two countries, both concluded that the Maranas raid was an attempt to create dissension within ASEAN on the eve of a UN debate on Kampuchea.⁵²

It was obvious to the Malaysians, especially after 1977, that they could not trust Marcos. Since he first came to power in 1965 until the time he was forced out in February 1986, Marcos had not formally renounced the Philippine claim to Sabah despite his promises firstly, to settle the issue peacefully in the 1960s, and secondly, to renounce the claim in the 1970s. Moreover, the issue was again brought up by the Philippines in 1981. This was at the expense of much needed cooperation between the two countries to

⁵¹Malaysian Digest, 31 December 1981, p.3.

⁵²Asiaweek, 18 October 1985, p.10.

end piracy and smuggling at their borders. The pirate attack at Lahad Datu provided one more example that pointed to Marcos' lack of commitment to resolve the issue once and for all, and thereby restart border patrol cooperation with Malaysia.

It was, moreover, not only Marcos' diffidence and broken promises over Sabah that upset the Malaysians. The tables had turned. The communist victory that Macapagal had feared would happen in Malaysia in the 1960s did not take place. In fact the recent surrender in March 1987 of eighty-nine communist insurgents from the Eighth Regiment of the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM), one of its strongest sections, has been regarded as possibly the beginning of the end for the forty year movement.⁵³ In contrast, the Philippines now faces a major threat from the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its military arm, the New People's Army (NPA).⁵⁴ Mahathir was clearly concerned about this as well as Marcos' lack of public support. He was reported to have said at the Commonwealth Summit in the Bahamas,

We would expect the Philippine government would learn from its neighbours that the best way to handle the situation would be to come to terms with the wishes of the people. If the majority of the population is behind the government and believes in the fight against terrorism, there is no problem.⁵⁵

In light of this statement from Mahathir and the massive growth of the communist problem in the Philippines, Mahathir had come to the conclusion that Marcos had little support.

It was not only the spread of communism in itself that worried the Malaysians. They were also worried about the US bases in the Philippines, should Marcos lose control and the communists take over. Although at present Malaysia does not face an immediate external threat, much of Malaysian defence policy relies on its Western allies, first of the British until its withdrawal East of Suez in 1959, then on the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA) with Australia, New Zealand, Britain and Singapore, as well as on a continued American presence in the region. The most serious long-term threat the

⁵³Sydney Morning Herald, 17 March 1987.

⁵⁴Far Eastern Economic Review, 5 July 1984, p. 12.

⁵⁵Business Day, 25 October 1985.

Malaysians perceive is the possibility of Chinese expansionism in Southeast Asia.⁵⁶ Indeed within ASEAN, Malaysia's attitude toward Vietnam has been sympathetic. After the Vietnamese Occupation of Kampuchea in 1978-79, ASEAN embarked on a project to drum up international condemnation of the invasion, but it was 'notably the Malaysian government that remained responsive to Soviet overtures for amelioration in ASEAN attitudes towards Hanoi.'⁵⁷ Malaysian perceptions of a threat from China has led to its hopes of Vietnam as an ally. At the same time, although Malaysia does not fear Vietnam, its real worry would be the Soviet Union's support of Vietnam, Soviet extension of its forces into the region and increasing Soviet activity in the region. To counter this, Malaysia strongly supports the continued US presence in the region through its bases in the Philippines, as for all accounts, the FPDA 'falls well short of a 'real' alliance.'⁵⁸

Lack of access to official data has made it close to impossible to provide conclusive analysis of the Malaysian reaction to the strong challenge Corazon Aquino provided to Marcos in the 7 February 1986 presidential elections. As will be seen below, most of the data collected from public sources points to possibly more Malaysian support for Aquino than from the rest of ASEAN. Much of this had to do with Malaysian experiences with Marcos as outlined above. However, Malaysia's favourable reaction to Aquino was also a product of their perceptions of Aquino herself.

On the issue of insurgency, which had Malaysia and most of ASEAN worried, Aquino had little experience.⁵⁹ However, she had the popular support that Mahathir described as fundamental to the fight against communism. Even with an election 'wracked by fraud, violence and voter-list manipulation', Aquino was able to garner more than 46% of the vote.⁶⁰ Moreover, in spite of Marcos' experience with the communists,

⁵⁶Far Eastern Economic Review, 20 October 1983, p.48.

⁵⁷van der Kroef, Justus M, 'ASEAN in the 1980s', World Review, Vol.19, No.3, August 1980, p.61. van der Kroef goes on to report that a few days after Malaysian Foreign Minister Rithauddeen's visit to Hanoi, 'Rithauddeen declared that ASEAN in fact should accept Vietnamese assurances that the SRV (Socialist Republic of Vietnam) had no territorial ambitions on Thailand or other members of the association ...'

⁵⁸Far Eastern Economic Review, 20 October 1983, pp.49-51.

⁵⁹Far Eastern Economic Review, 19 December 1985, p.44.

⁶⁰Far Eastern Economic Review, 27 February 1986, p.10.

their numbers had actually increased during the years of his rule.⁶¹

Both in terms of style and experience, Aquino could more or less be seen as an opposite to Marcos. Indeed her presidential campaign platform emphasized this. Her late husband, Senator Benigno Aquino, was perhaps Marcos' strongest political opponent. Reports from the press describe Aquino as 'constantly referring in her impromptu speeches to asking for guidance from ... the example of her dead husband ('what would 'Ninoy' have done?').⁶² She had also been in the best position, and used that position, to advise her husband occasionally as he climbed the political ladder. Her years with Benigno Aquino would have provided for the absorption of his political ideas.⁶³ When Senator Aquino was in jail during martial law, Cory Aquino became his 'eyes, ears and voice ... acting as his liason with what remained of the Philippine opposition.'⁶⁴ This went on for more than seven years and she received valuable tuition from her husband on opposition strategies. It is possible therefore that the prime factor that would have placed the Malaysians on Aquino's side would have been the anticipation that she would reflect the political views that her husband the late Senator had held. Primary to the issue would be his views on Sabah. In the early 1970s in reference to to Sabah, he stated that:

I believe all this fuss, all this excitement is nothing more than an exercise in futility and we are being brainwashed to wage a campaign of hate and possibly war over a territory we surely will never want to get - if we abide by our holy preambles and prime principles as a people.⁶⁵

Marcos' past record proved that the Malaysians really had little to lose from Aquino's ascension to power in the Philippines. In fact they had everything to gain. Aquino had come to power 'free of plans and programmes, free of restricting ideologies ...' and she could 'join the growing ranks of Asia's pragmatic leaders, dealing with problems on their merits.'⁶⁶ She was also seen as a conservative leader who was not anti-American. Her campaign platform endorsed the US bases agreement reached during Marcos' term of

⁶¹Far Eastern Economic Review, 21 November 1985, pp.52-57.

⁶²Far Eastern Economic Review, 19 December 1985, p.40.

⁶³Ibid., p.41.

⁶⁴Time, 5 January 1987, p.11.

⁶⁵Quoted in Kaul, op.cit., p.77.

⁶⁶Far Eastern Economic Review, 6 March 1986, p.15.

office. She agreed that the bases should remain at least until 1991.⁶⁷ Thus there was every indication that the Sabah problem would be more easily resolved with Aquino than with Marcos had he remained in power. This proved to be correct as a month after Marcos had left, Foreign Minister Salvador Laurel's first foreign policy speech to the Philippine Council of Foreign Relations, stated that the Sabah issue 'for too long has ... been allowed to fester and adversely affect relations' between the two countries. He also stated his desire to resolve the Sabah issue thus strengthening ASEAN.⁶⁸ He added that Manila would only seek a reassurance from Malaysia that Sabah would not be allowed to become a source of threat to the Philippines in exchange for dropping the claim.⁶⁹

The Philippines Under Aquino

However, in spite of this initial start towards ending the Sabah dispute, the issue has yet to be resolved according to Filipino and Malaysian expectations. Aquino decided to draw up a new Philippine constitution and the Malaysians quickly let it be known that the Philippines should renounce Sabah through a change in the constitution concerning Philippine national territory, rather than by presidential declaration. Specifically, Kuala Lumpur proposed that the claim be renounced by way of a provision in the constitution 'defining the exact boundaries of the Philippines.'⁷⁰

Although many members of the Constitutional Commission drafting the new constitution of the Philippines were in favour of totally dropping the claim to Sabah, it was an emotional issue to modify the definition of national territory, as this was defined as 'including territories belonging to the Philippines by historic right or legal title'.⁷¹ Changes in this definition could also have repercussions on other disputed territorial claims of the Philippines, like the Kalayaan islands in the South China Sea. Opposition leader Blas Ople, a member of the Constitutional Commission, had also stated that, 'it will be sufficient to show that at the time of the writing of the new Constitution, the

⁶⁷ Asiaweek, 9 February 1986, p.22.

⁶⁸ Far Eastern Economic Review, 24 April 1986, p.42.

⁶⁹ International Herald Tribune, 14 April 1986.

⁷⁰ Agence France Press, 19 May 1986.

⁷¹ Straits Times, 10 June 1986.

framers had recorded their intent to exclude (Sabah) from the purview of the territorial provision.⁷²

Therefore, there was a growing consensus in the Constitutional Commission that the claim over Sabah should be dropped and no reference be made about it in the new constitution.⁷³ To this end the new constitution defines Philippine national territory as comprising

the Philippine archipelago, with all the islands and water embraced therein, and all other territories over which the Philippines has sovereignty of jurisdiction ...⁷⁴

Although the phrase 'historic right or legal title' was deleted from the Constitution, the new definition is said to be

broad enough to allow the authorities to pursue the Sabah claim, should they decide to do so, on the basis of having sovereignty or jurisdiction. At the same time, it does not provoke neighbouring states that may feel referred to by the phrase 'historic right or legal title'.⁷⁵

Clearly some sensitivity still surrounds the Philippines claim to Sabah, as was evident in the Constitutional Commission's refusal to state directly and clearly that the Philippines renounced Sabah as part of its territory. Concomitant with this is the statement over Sabah made by Enrile, at present the major opposition figure. Enrile has said that the Constitutional Commission did give away Sabah and that it 'made a big mistake. It abandoned a long-standing claim and lost priceless resources that foreigners will now be able to exploit.'⁷⁶ However, such statements by opposition political figures in the Philippines can be seen as attempts by them to embarrass the government.

Senator Aquino also played more than an active part in the Muslim Filipino problem. Notably it was the Senator who had gone on a fact-finding tour of Sulu after the Jabidah Massacre. He witnessed the intense personal tragedy that scores of families had experienced. In 1980-81 he attempted to solve that problem on the basis of the 1976

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Reuter, 5 June 1986.

⁷⁴1986 Constitution of the Philippines, p.2.

⁷⁵Romero, Florida Ruth, and Regaldo, Florenz D, Understanding the Constitution.

⁷⁶Far Eastern Economic Review, 29 January 1987, p.21.

Tripoli Agreement on which Marcos had reneged. He met several times with the head of the MNLF, Nur Misuari.⁷⁷ Although that attempt failed, Cory Aquino subsequently found she received Muslim support, albeit only because the Muslim rebel groups were strongly anti-Marcos. They were eager to establish channels of communication and cooperation with the opposition to hasten the downfall of Marcos.⁷⁸ Aquino promised in her election campaign to assist Muslims 'to develop as autonomously as possible ... not, however, apart from the republic.'⁷⁹ She had largely carried this out when the Constitutional Commission recommended constitutional provision for autonomy in Mindanao. Malaysia being an Islamic country could not fail to approve of such attempts to solve the Muslim problem in Southern Philippines. Just as the Malaysians perhaps approved of the Senator, so too his wife, would be perceived in the same light.

Conclusion

This Chapter has indicated that Marcos' insincerity and his inability to gather popular support behind him to counter the communist insurgency, would have placed Aquino in a favourable light with the Malaysians. Some evidence of this can perhaps be seen in an editorial in the pro-government newspaper, The New Straits Times, on 24 February 1986 before Marcos fell from power. The editorial stated that Aquino had emerged as 'a highly credible leader' and was attracting 'crowds to her public rallies'. Despite her naivety in dealing with the communists, she was seen as a moderate leader, certainly non-communist and with strong popular support. All these factors lined up against Malaysia's previous experience with Marcos over matters that most directly affect the two countries. Of the three ASEAN countries dealt with in this thesis, it is perhaps the Malaysians who have had the most to gain from a change in the Philippine leadership. However, it would seem that the two issues that were an irritant in bilateral relations, remain sensitive issues to the Filipino people and the new Philippine leader has respected this.

⁷⁷May and Nemenzo (eds), *op.cit.*, p.120.

⁷⁸May, R, The Philippines Under Aquino: A Perspective from Mindanao, p.7.

⁷⁹Ibid., p.12.

Chapter Two

Indonesian-Philippine Relations

Introduction

Indonesian foreign policy has been conditioned by its past political experience. Its relations with the Philippines have been affected by the major differences between the political histories of the two countries. A major component of the Indonesian elite are the Javanese with their history of empire, especially Majapahit, and a pride in their culture and civilisation. The Filipinos, however, had little or no 'shared culture, political structure or nobility', which could unite them into a cohesive socio-political entity.¹ With the exception of the Filipino Muslims, they were easily colonized first by the Spaniards, and then the Americans. In the process Filipinos to a considerable extent adopted Western cultural and political values. Significant differences exist in the ways in which the Philippines and Indonesia became independent. The Philippines was the first country in Southeast Asia to attain independence. This was freely given in July 1946. Indonesia, however, had a long and difficult struggle against the Dutch before independence was granted. It had declared itself independent on 17 August 1945 but international recognition of its independence was not won until 1949 because of attempts by the Dutch to retain colonial control.² These differences in their respective records of colonial history served to shape both Indonesian and Philippine foreign policy, as well as their perceptions and attitudes towards one another. This especially aggravated relations between the two countries in the early years of their independence. Although at present relations between the two countries can be described as cordial, the Philippines and Indonesia have never had very close relations with each other.

¹Laird, *op. cit.*, p.2.

²Leifer, *The Foreign Relations of the New States*, pp.5-16.

The Indonesian archipelago stretches across Southeast Asia. It is the largest state in the region in terms of both size and population. If for no other reason than this, every major political event in Southeast Asia must, at some point, be assessed in the light of the actual or potential Indonesian reaction to it. In the case of the Philippine political crisis, arising from the February 1986 snap presidential elections, Indonesia appears to have had several concerns. First, there was the question of geographical proximity to the Philippines as the southern tip of the Philippine islands is close to the eastern edge of the islands of Indonesia. This proximity has given rise in the past to charges of Philippine aid to insurgent Indonesian movements against the Indonesian government. The proximity to each other has also given rise to anxiety on the part of the Filipinos. This is due to the Muslim rebels in the south of the Philippines. The fear is that these rebels might receive aid at some time from the Indonesians who are a predominantly Islamic people.³ The second Indonesian concern stemmed from apparent similarities between the political and economic situations of the two island groups of Southeast Asia. The possibility of a 'ripple effect' spreading from the Philippine political crisis to the domestic political situation in Indonesia would concern the Indonesian political elite. Third, any instability in a member country of ASEAN, of which Indonesia is the pre-eminent member, would affect the stability of ASEAN itself to the discomfort of Indonesia. This threat became more pertinent with the dangerously high level of communist insurgency in the Philippines. Fourth and last, Indonesia had reason to fear that instability in the Philippines could lead to a change in the regional balance of power, since two of the largest overseas US military bases are located in the Philippines. Had the political crisis in the Philippines led to a closure of the two bases, the US presence in the region would have diminished at a time when Chinese and Soviet presence was increasing in Southeast Asia.

This chapter intends to examine the concerns of Indonesia with the Philippine

³Suryadinata, Leo, 'Indonesia' in Mauzy, Diane, K (ed), Politics in the ASEAN States, (Malaysia, Marican & Sons, 1986), p.111. Although 90% of Indonesians are Muslims 60% are not strict Muslims. They are divided into the abangan or nominal Muslims and the santri or rigid Muslims. Most of the Indonesian elite are Javanese and it is the Javanese that are mainly nominal Muslims and the other ethnic groups living in the Outer Islands of Indonesia that are the rigid Muslims.

political crisis in the light of the four issues above, and also provide an analysis of the Indonesian reaction to the demise of one of the longest serving leaders in a Southeast Asian country and the rise of a new leader, in a region that has seen little political change since the formation of ASEAN.

The Question of Geographical Proximity

The vastly different political histories of the Philippines and Indonesia, which in the early years of independence formed the basis of each country's foreign policy orientations, made geographical proximity an irritant in bilateral relations. Since the late 1950s, Indonesia's foreign policy under President Sukarno, although professing an 'independent and active' nonalignment in fact leaned towards the foreign policy orientations of the Eastern bloc and especially towards China after 1963. The growing communist influence over Sukarno exercised by the China-linked Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), together with the increasing centralism of the Indonesian government sparked off revolts in the Outer Islands of the archipelago.⁴ This revolt was successfully put down after only a few months in mid-1958. However, the rebels had the support and sympathy of the West, especially the US. At that time Philippine foreign policy was strongly pro-Western and anti-communist in character. Although the Philippines professed neutrality, they were sympathetic to the rebels and permitted Indonesian rebels access to Philippine territory.⁵

In the early 1960s it was the Filipinos who became concerned over their geographical proximity to Indonesia. There had been a rapprochement between the two countries after the 1958 rebellion in Indonesia. However this easing of tension had been due primarily to the common goal of both to stop the formation of the Federation of Malaysia. The rapprochement was in reality superficial, as evidenced by the subsequent cooling of relations which occurred as Indonesia adopted a confrontationist policy towards Malaysia. Not only was the Indonesian confrontation anathema to the Philippine belief in peaceful negotiations as the basis for the settlement of foreign policy disputes, Manila was

⁴Ibid., p.74.

⁵Kaul, *op.cit.*, pp.113-116. Indonesia suspected that the Philippines and the US were aiding the rebels through material support and the provision of facilities, for example, allowing the rebel air force to make use of the US Clark Air Force Base.

also concerned that the dynamism of the Indonesian approach would appeal to Filipino Muslims. They were concerned that such an attraction might lead to Filipino Muslims requesting aid from Indonesia. After all the geographical proximity of Indonesia gave it the opportunity to do so most effectively.⁶

With the coming of Suharto, a more moderate new leader who downplayed Sukarno's confrontationist style of foreign policy, and the entrance of both countries into ASEAN, conflict between the two dissipated. Nevertheless, a precedent had been set. Geographical proximity has remained a factor of concern in such circumstances as the Philippine political crisis of the mid-1980s. Domestic instability in the Philippines could have a spill-over effect on a close neighbour such as Indonesia, beset by similar internal problems.

Similarities and the Spill-Over Effect

On the surface, at the time of the political crisis in Manila, Indonesia and the Philippines appeared to be in a similar political, social and economic situation. The Indonesian political system was highly authoritarian under the domination of Suharto. Although after independence the Philippines was regarded as the only true democracy in the region, Marcos had controlled the country under martial law from 1972 to 1981. With the lifting of martial law in 1981, Marcos nevertheless secured for himself far-reaching executive powers. Under Marcos the country was subject to strict authoritarian control. Both Suharto and Marcos had been in power for close to twenty years. As each continued to consolidate his power, however, the problem of succession remained. Although this problem was solved in the Philippines with the downfall of Marcos, the question of who will succeed Suharto is still unanswered. As Crouch has stated

Jakarta politics are being increasingly played out under the shadow of the inevitable departure of President Suharto from the scene.⁷

This creates an increasingly unstable situation in Indonesia, and it was inevitable that at the time of the crisis in Manila, Jakarta would have monitored developments with concern.

⁶Leifer, *Dilemmas of Statehood in Southeast Asia*, p.36.

⁷*The Age*, 10 September 1986.

Both countries have had economic difficulties, though for different reasons: Indonesia because of the world economic recession and the drop in oil prices⁸; and the Philippines because of Marcos' disastrous economic policies.⁹ Control of the two countries' island groups was a problem for both Suharto and Marcos. Rebel nationalist movements still operate against the Indonesian government in East Timor and Irian Jaya. Marcos continued to have problems with the MNLF and the growing strength of the communists during the period of his rule in the Philippines.¹⁰

Although there were fundamental differences between the two countries which made it unlikely that the events in Manila could occur in Indonesia, the crisis presented long-time leader Suharto with serious concern. Major differences between the two countries lay in the amount of control Suharto had in Indonesia as compared with Marcos. The Indonesian army had much wider control over the country than the Philippine army ever did in the Philippines. The Indonesian army performs a major functional role in government and permeates all sectors of government. In the Philippines the army is only one arm of a civilian government.

The economic histories of the two countries were also different. Suharto had rescued Indonesia from the disastrous economic policies of his predecessor, Sukarno.¹¹ In spite of the economic doldrums in which the Indonesians found themselves, Indonesia under Suharto had a hard-won, well-earned reputation among Western financial circles.¹² Marcos on the other hand had presided over a damaging economic decline in a nation which had, twenty years ago, been considered a 'Southeast Asian pacesetter'.¹³ His

⁸Far Eastern Economic Review, 23 April 1987, p.74.

⁹The Asian Wall Street Journal, 16 February 1986. See also Far Eastern Economic Review, 23 January 1986, p.56.

¹⁰Far Eastern Economic Review, 21 November 1985, pp.52- 62.

¹¹Crouch, Harold, The Army and Politics in Indonesia, (London, Cornell University Press, 1978), pp.95-96. Sukarno's political moves had stopped the entry of Western aid. The economy was in a decline by the early 1960s.

¹²Asiaweek, 4 May 1986, pp.30-32. 'The IMF people in Washington give Indonesians top marks for economic management. Bankers in New York give them good credit ratings. They didn't fritter away their petrodollars, didn't go over their heads in debt, didn't neglect rural development.' Besides which the Indonesians have a comfortable cushion of \$12 billion in foreign reserves. The situation is a vastly brighter economy than in 1965.

¹³The Asian Wall Street Journal, 16 February 1986.

practice of 'cronyism' had led amongst other things, to coconut and sugar monopolies and an increasing foreign debt such that in 1986 the Philippines was saddled with more than \$25 billion in foreign debt.¹⁴

These differences between the two countries remain sufficient to ensure that Suharto and the military will not be put in the same situation as Marcos. However, Suharto and the military have always been concerned over such dynamic movements as the phenomenon of 'people power' which occurred in the Philippines after the February presidential elections. At the same time, surface similarities between the two countries would have given the February crisis in the Philippines some impact on the Indonesian leadership. The Indonesians would certainly have paid close attention to events in Manila, especially since similar though more violent mass movements by students in Thailand in 1973 led to the fall of the Thai military-led government and had repercussions on the situation in Indonesia at the time.¹⁵ Further, the riots that occurred in Bandung in 1973 and Jakarta in 1974, had been the direct result of 'growing public dissatisfaction with corruption, foreign domination of the economy, and the failure of economic development to improve the lot of the mass of the people'.¹⁶ Suharto's anxiety would have increased had he known that the downfall of Marcos would later boost opposition movements in other authoritarian-style leaderships across Asia, for example, in South Korea, in Bangladesh, and in Pakistan - where Benazir Bhutto is compared with Corazon Aquino and Marcos with Zia.¹⁷ Reflective of Suharto's worry over the internal impact of the Philippine crisis on Indonesia was the Indonesian army's Chief-of-Staff, General Benny Murdani's confirmation in an interview with Asiaweek, in 1985, that the biggest threat to Indonesia at present was internal in nature.¹⁸

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Crouch, op.cit., pp.311-316.

¹⁶Ibid., p.330.

¹⁷Asiaweek, 18 May 1986, pp.23-31.

¹⁸Asiaweek, 11 October 1985, p.22.

Possible Instability in ASEAN

Indonesia is especially interested in maintaining stability within ASEAN. It is interested not only because it is a member country of ASEAN, but also because ASEAN was the first regional venture undertaken by Indonesia and established on Indonesian terms.¹⁹ Jakarta believes that the stability of ASEAN can only be achieved by internal stability of all its member countries.²⁰ Thus the gradual loss of control by Marcos threatened to portend the introduction of instability to a region that, except for the Indochina conflicts, had seen an unusual period of continuity and maintenance of the status quo. That the instability of one member of ASEAN could have repercussions for other countries, most pertinantly Indonesia itself, was a serious concern to Indonesia. This concern was not new. It was recognised in the Declaration of ASEAN Concord that

the stability of each member state and of the ASEAN region is an essential contribution to international peace and security. Each member resolves to eliminate threats posed by subversion to its stability, thus strengthening national and ASEAN resilience.²¹

As Leifer explains:

The underlying rationale of that statement was that political stability was indivisible among the ASEAN states and conversely, that any incidence of political instability in any one state would have repercussions for all the others.²²

Evidence of the Indonesian concern can be traced in the opinions expressed in Indonesian newspaper editorials, which reflect government opinion. In one editorial it was suggested that Filipino communists in the Philippines were gaining in number not because of any allegiance to the communist party but because they were 'fervently anti-Marcos and

¹⁹Leifer, Indonesia's Foreign Policy, pp.119-120. One reason why Indonesia refused to join an expanded ASA was because it did not ensure a primary role for Indonesia within the region. It wanted an organisation which would promote Indonesia's leadership within the region. The only way this could be done was by establishing an organisation in which Indonesia could 'stamp its own imprint on regional cooperation'.

²⁰Indonesian Observer, 6 November 1985. Expressed in the editorial was the statement that 'Whatever their causes and nature, we in Indonesia and our ASEAN friends are much concerned about the security and integrity of the Philippines, which is vital for its contribution to stability in Southeast Asia.'

²¹Leifer, Indonesia's Foreign Policy, p.162.

²²Ibid.

seeking a change'.²³ This clearly reflected the views of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In an interview with Asiaweek, the present Foreign Minister of Indonesia, Mocktar Kusumaatmadja stated that

the biggest failure of the Marcos government was that they neglected rural development. The unrest stems from that. The resurgence of the communist party there is basically an agricultural matter.²⁴

At the same time, Indonesia was also dismayed at the level of communist insurgency within the Philippines, which stemmed from the failure of Marcos to address problems of internal discord. Not only was the Philippines a close neighbour of Indonesia²⁵, the Indonesian military must have compared their experience of the PKI in the 1960s with the dangers facing the Philippine military at that present time. To them, the Philippine army appeared on the defensive. The AFP was seen to lack US military support and aid because of the investigations by the US Congress into the alleged mishandling of the economy under Marcos.²⁶ As such Indonesia would have welcomed any tough measures that Marcos took to contain both the communists and the deepening political crisis.²⁷

As the crisis deepened in the Philippines, the Indonesians could not see any alternative to Marcos. They saw only a stark choice between him and the communists in the countryside. It was in response to these concerns and in the absence of a viable alternative, that the Indonesians displayed their support for Marcos. At this time, the democratic opposition in the Philippines was still disunited and remained as such until the final month and a half preceding the presidential elections. Suharto's support for Marcos was conveyed through the then Labour Minister Blas F Ople, who was in Jakarta in the first week of December for the 10th Asian Regional Conference of the International

²³The Jakarta Post, 11 July 1985.

²⁴Asiaweek, 4 May 1986, p.39.

²⁵Indonesian Observer, 8 May 1985. It was stated in an article that the strength of the Philippine communists 'should be taken as a warning to all of us, because the Philippines' Republic is the home of the 'guys next door'.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Weatherbee, Donald B, 'The Philippines Under Aquino in ASEAN', prepared for the panel The Aquino Regime in Retrospect, Association for Asian Studies, 39th Annual Meeting, Boston, 12 April 1987, p.5.

Labour Organisation.²⁸ Suharto also authorized the loan of two military transport aircraft manufactured in Indonesia 'to be placed at the disposal of President Marcos'.²⁹ Significantly, the Indonesian delegation which accompanied the two planes to the Philippines was headed by the Indonesian army's Chief-of-Staff, General Benny Murdani.³⁰ While in the Philippines, Murdani again reiterated Indonesia's concerns stating, 'We want stability in this region and if anyone of our neighbours is not stable it would immediately affect us.'³¹

US Bases in the Philippines

Indonesian concern at the time of the Philippine crisis extended beyond perceptions of a threat to regional stability via possible disruptions to ASEAN. Jakarta also had reason to fear an upset to the regional balance of power³² The Philippines houses the two largest US military bases in the Pacific region, Subic Naval Base and Clark Air Force Base. Within Indonesia, however, the civilians in government on the one hand, represented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the army on the other, differed over their attitudes towards the Americans and the most preferable balance of power in the region.³³ Although both groups agreed that Indonesia should play the primary role in Southeast Asia, they recognised that at present it is not within Indonesia's capacity to do so. The disagreement remained over how far Indonesia's foreign policy could lean towards the West without compromising its non-aligned principles. Since the 'New Order' government of Suharto came to power, Indonesia's Foreign Ministry tried to steer an 'independent and active' non-aligned foreign policy inspite of the large measure of aid and economic help obtained from the West. The military, however, in placing 'security considerations above all else ... in many cases expected to obtain immediate economic

²⁸Business Times, 7 December 1985.

²⁹Ibid. The two planes were on loan to the Philippines perhaps reflecting Indonesian recognition of the poor economic situation in the Philippines, thus sparing Marcos the further embarrassment of having to pay for aircraft when his country's economy was in tatters.

³⁰Straits Times, 7 January 1986.

³¹Jakarta Post, 10 January 1986.

³²Leifer, Foreign Relations of the New States, p.103.

³³Crouch, op.cit., p.330.

benefits from a policy of closer cooperation with the United States.³⁴ Further, the military's experience with the communists, especially the bloody 1965 PKI coup, made them extremely anti-communist. This suspicion of communism also extended to the Soviet Union even though the Kremlin pursued an anti-Chinese policy.³⁵ Therefore, despite the views of the Foreign Ministry, the army developed closer links with the US.³⁶ However, the differences between the army and Foreign Ministry existed more in terms of degree than substance, for on the whole Indonesia did desire that the US maintain its presence in Southeast Asia until such time Indonesian capability for the projection of its influence in the region improved.

For these reasons there was much concern in Indonesia as to what the Philippine crisis meant for the US bases in the Philippines, as the preservation of these bases would determine the extent of a continuing US presence in the region. That the US should remain in the region was paramount given perceptions of expanding Soviet and Chinese power and interest in the region. Indonesia did not want the US to abandon the region since this would leave China and the Soviet Union as prime contenders to fill the vacuum left by the receding US military presence.³⁷ Evidence of Indonesia's concern over the US bases is again reflected in Indonesian newspaper editorials which highlight the growing Soviet influence and its negative effect on the balance of power in the region should the US leave.³⁸ Indonesia considered it had no alternative to Marcos since the only other possibility seemed to be communist control in the Philippines. If the Philippine government was to fall to the communists the lease for the US bases would certainly be terminated.

³⁴Ibid., p.331.

³⁵Ibid., pp.334-335. See also Leifer, Indonesia's Foreign Policy, pp.124-127.

³⁶Ibid., pp.337-338. See also Asiaweek, 4 May 1986, p.39. In an interview, Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar replied to a question on the threat of the Soviet naval presence in Southeast Asia that, 'if the Americans had base facilities in the Philippines, there could be no objections to the Russians having them in Vietnam.'

³⁷Fifield, Russell, H, National and Regional Interests in ASEAN: Competition and Cooperation in International Politics, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Occasional Paper 57, Singapore, 1979, pp.31-32.

³⁸Jakarta Post, 6 September 1985 and 5 November 1985. The September editorial reiterated a recent Tokyo announcement that 'Soviet military strength continues to grow in the Asian arena, potentially posing a threat along the Pacific rim and into the South Pacific and Indian Oceans.' The Russians 'seek to convert their growing military might into political advantage, and two regions mentioned in that context are the Philippines and Indonesia.' The November editorial points out the difficult situation the Americans are in with regard to their bases in the Philippines.

Marcos or Aquino?

It would appear that Indonesia, because of its concerns discussed above, supported Marcos. The strongest confirmation of this would appear to be the loan of the two Indonesian-manufactured aircraft to Marcos. However, since the offer of the two planes took place between Suharto and Ople in early December 1985 before the non-communist opposition had united behind Aquino and her running mate Salvador Laurel in late December, it cannot be certain that had Suharto known of the intentions of Aquino and Laurel he would still have given his support to Marcos.³⁹ Suharto might still have been inclined to lean towards Marcos because Aquino was an unknown. What is certain is that during the period of acute instability and uncertainty which accompanied the mass rallies and demonstrations preceding the elections, the Indonesian leaders were deeply concerned. Moreover, they would have dreaded the prospect that the communists might be able to take advantage of the situation to further infiltrate the populace while the two non-communist parties battled it out at the elections. Finally, Jakarta would have been concerned that Aquino would revoke the Philippine-US Bases Agreement reached between Marcos and the US. Her speeches before the elections indicated this possibility.

However, if the ultimate choice was to be between Aquino or the communists as an alternative to Marcos, the Indonesians, and the rest of ASEAN, were more than willing to accept Aquino.⁴⁰ Thus, although Marcos declared himself the winner in a narrowly won, fraud-racked election, the Indonesians did not send their customary note of congratulations to Marcos. The crisis at that point made the prospect of civil war a distinct possibility unless Marcos backed down. This would only have been to the advantage of the communists. Mochtar, therefore, stated that there were 'other factors' involved which needed to be considered before reaching a decision on the Marcos 'victory'.⁴¹ Ultimately what was important to the Indonesians was stability in the Philippines and thereby within ASEAN. It had become clear that Marcos could not

³⁹The fact that he sent his Chief-of-Staff Murdani could be construed as showing Indonesian concern over the Philippine issue and also so that Murdani could report to him on the situation after meeting with Marcos and Ver.

⁴⁰Weatherbee, *op.cit.*, p.5.

⁴¹*Straits Times*, 21 February 1986.

control the situation any longer, and in spite of his long association with the leaders in Indonesia, the Indonesian priority was towards the region. Their priorities were confirmed later when the Jakarta government stated that it would not allow Marcos asylum in Indonesia, respecting Aquino's call on her ASEAN neighbours not to receive Marcos into their countries.⁴²

The Philippines Under Aquino

Indonesia perceived Aquino to be a moderate leader, who was not communist, but was popular with the people of the Philippines. They were pleased that Aquino recognised and accepted the importance of ASEAN for the region. She underlined this by choosing to visit Indonesia and Singapore before visiting the US during her first overseas trip. Indonesian new-found faith in Aquino was also vindicated over the issue of the US bases in the Philippines. Aquino decided to honour the Philippine-US Bases Agreement reached under Marcos. The main problem now was that the new Philippine constitution declared the Philippines a nuclear-free country. Filipinos were aware that the other ASEAN countries preferred that the bases should remain, but they were also aware that the rest of ASEAN was getting a 'free ride' due to the security which the bases brought to the region. The Indonesians and the rest of ASEAN probably attempted to give Aquino the same advice that they gave to Marcos, that is, to allow the US bases to remain in the Philippines.⁴³ Whether this is successful or not would only be known after 1991, when a plebiscite is to be held to decide the issue. Although opposition to the US bases is vocal and growing, it does not as yet constitute a majority.⁴⁴ Moreover, they bring in US\$1 billion annually in rent to an economy that is in deep trouble.⁴⁵ There do exist other facilities in the rest of ASEAN where some of the Philippine facilities can be duplicated,

⁴²Straits Times, 25 August 1986.

⁴³Weatherbee, *op. cit.* pp.15-18.

⁴⁴International Herald Tribune, 3 October 1985. In a nationwide poll conducted in September 1985, 43% of Filipinos surveyed agreed that the US bases should be kept or tolerated, while only 23% disagreed.

⁴⁵Asiaweek, 2 August 1985, pp.14-16. See also Asian Defence Journal, December 1986, p.22. It is not only the US\$1 billion in rent that has to be considered but also removal of the US bases would mean the disappearance of employment for 37,000 Filipinos, as well as the amounts of money, estimated at some US\$300 million annually, that US servicemen spend in the Philippines.

but the US military do not consider these of sufficient standard relative to those in the Philippines. The other problem is of course that very few of the other ASEAN countries want the US bases in their territory. The Indonesian attitude especially has been well documented. Both in Sukarno's and in Suharto's era the Indonesians have insisted that the phrase

that all foreign bases are temporary and remain only with the expressed concurrence of the countries concerned ...⁴⁶

be included in regional agreements of the Maphilindo Manila Agreements of 1963, and the ASEAN Bangkok Declaration of 1967 respectively.

What further perturbed the Indonesians was the initial attempt by Aquino to negotiate with the communists instead of fighting them as Marcos had done. There was a measure of concern that she was too naive about who the communists were and what communism was all about.⁴⁷ The Indonesians could do little to affect what after all was an internal matter for the Philippines. However, during her visit to Indonesia the problem of communist insurgency was high on the agenda of bilateral talks with Suharto. It was pointed out that such advice came from a country which had successfully passed through the political phase of national consolidation which the Philippines was experiencing.⁴⁸ Indonesia, in contrast with the Philippines, had defeated the communists - they had not done so through negotiations. Aquino, however, made it clear that although she respected the Indonesian leader and valued Indonesia's friendship, she would handle the communists in her own way, and this was through communication and negotiation. Only if this failed would she resort to arms. Aquino preferred this method as she felt that, after Marcos, the Philippines required a period of national reconciliation.

However, it would have come as a relief to the Indonesians that Aquino's negotiations with the communists broke down and fighting resumed. The Indonesians felt that negotiations and the ceasefire only contributed further to communist entrenchment in the Philippine countryside. The interval would only be used to consolidate communist

⁴⁶Leifer, Indonesia's Foreign Policy, p.121.

⁴⁷Asian Wall Street Journal, 7 April 1986.

⁴⁸Straits Times, 25 August 1986.

positions.⁴⁹ In spite of these differences, Aquino's visit to Indonesia was highly successful. The Indonesians appreciated Aquino's gesture towards Indonesia and ASEAN symbolised by her visit.⁵⁰ In the light of these developments, relations between Indonesia and the Philippines appear to have had a good start. Time will only tell as to whether the two countries will grow closer together.

⁴⁹Far Eastern Economic Review Asia Yearbook 1987, p.156.

⁵⁰The Nation, 25 August 1986.

Chapter Three

Singapore-Philippines Relations

Introduction

Past relations between Singapore and the Philippines have not been antagonistic, with few, if any, bilateral disputes between them. Unlike Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines had both experienced easy routes to independence. Neither faced the sorts of underlying irritants which marred the relationship between Indonesia and the Philippines, and which resulted in sudden fluctuations in Indonesian-Philippines relations before the formation of ASEAN. However, there were few reasons to improve ties between Singapore and Manila. Relations, though generally good, remained distant.

After the formation of ASEAN in 1967, bilateral Singapore-Philippines relations remained stagnant for two reasons. First, Singapore was preoccupied with its two closest neighbours, Malaysia and Indonesia. Both were larger than Singapore and had predominantly Malay populations. The Philippines was considered too geographically remote to be of immediate concern to Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. Indeed, Singapore had not long been separated from Malaysia.¹ Bad feeling persisted between Malaysia and Singapore for some time after separation. Singapore-Indonesia relations were also not in the best of health. Indonesian armed confrontation against Malaysia, including Singapore at the time part of the Federation, had just ended. Moreover, the 1965 coup attempt in Indonesia had led to anti-Chinese riots as part of the anti-communist purge which followed. This aspect of the Indonesian domestic scene had worried the leaders of predominantly Chinese Singapore. Then in 1968, after ASEAN had been in existence for only one year, Singapore executed two Indonesian commandos captured after exploding

¹Separation of Singapore from the Federation of Malaysia took place on 9 August 1965.

bombs in the country's business district. The execution took place despite a personal plea from President Suharto to Prime Minister Lee. Although ASEAN remained intact due largely to the skill of the then Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik, Indonesia-Singapore relations took on a decidedly downward turn.

The second reason which explains the stagnation of Singapore-Philippines relations after 1967 lies in what was arguably Prime Minister Lee's lack of enthusiasm for ASEAN.² Singapore had joined up only on the 'conviction that no harm and some good might come of it.'³ Since Singapore foreign policy was dominated by Lee Singapore did not as a whole involve itself too much in ASEAN affairs. Lee's lack of interest was clearly indicated by the fact that by 1972 he had visited Europe and the US several times but had not visited an ASEAN nation in an official capacity.⁴ Lee doubted the utility of ASEAN, believing that weaker members benefitted most from the organisation. As a consequence Lee delegated much of the work on ASEAN-Singapore matters to then Foreign Minister Rajaratnam.

In the early 1970s, as the regional situation in Southeast Asia changed, so too did Lee's perceptions of ASEAN. Although in 1970 Singapore was already stressing the necessity for ASEAN to solve the region's economic and social problems, the series of communist victories in Indochina served to galvanise ASEAN into a more dynamic organisation. Singapore, in common with the other ASEAN states recognised

that South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia had fallen due to, at least in part, weaknesses in their internal political, social and economic systems. Most ASEAN states made efforts to put their individual houses in order.⁵

The Vietnam war, moreover, had led to the Nixon doctrine and the reduction of

²Obaid Ul-haq, 'Foreign Policy', in Quah, Jon (et al), Government and Politics of Singapore, (Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1985), p.279. As in most small newly independent states, foreign policy is essentially an 'elitist' enterprise. Obaid states that 'foreign policy decisions are invariably made by a handful of top political leaders.' This is more so the case in Singapore in terms of Singapore's Prime Minister of twenty years, Lee Kuan Yew.

³Rau, Robert L, 'The Role of Singapore in ASEAN', Contemporary Southeast Asia, Vol.3, No.2, September 1981, p.102.

⁴Wilairat, Kawin, Singapore's Foreign Policy, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, Field Report No.10, 1975, p.80. Lee had holidays in Cameron Highlands in Malaysia and made a brief stop-over in Thailand once on his way to the US. This was the extent of his visits to ASEAN countries.

⁵Rau, op.cit., p.106.

American commitment to Southeast Asia. This began to worry leaders in Singapore since the country professed itself to be 'non-aligned in all aspects but security.'⁶ In matters of security, Singapore was clearly aligned with the West.⁷ Increasingly, therefore, ASEAN became more important for Singapore as power alignments shifted within and beyond the region. The fluidity in international relations with which Singapore was obliged to deal could be seen for example in

rapprochement between China and the West, ... the move of other ASEAN countries towards an accommodation with her; ... the raising of the Russian profile in the region and the increasing Sino-Soviet rivalry; and the growing Japanese domination of the economies of Southeast Asia.⁸

In economic terms ASEAN had simultaneously become more attractive. It was hoped that in trade negotiations a unified ASEAN would be able to contend with the industrialised nations from a position of strength denied to individual Southeast Asian states operating alone.⁹ Singapore was made clearly aware of this during the 1973 oil crisis which underlined its economic vulnerability.¹⁰ Finally, Singapore's survival depended ultimately on its neighbours. Singapore was

willy-nilly a part of Southeast Asia, dependent on her neighbours for such vital things as her water supply, food, and raw materials and that, because of her size and location and economic structure, it is difficult for her to be insulated from the repercussions of her neighbours' foreign policies and internal politics.¹¹

As such relations between Singapore and its ASEAN neighbours began to improve.¹² The realization of the contribution which ASEAN could make to the promotion of Singapore's

⁶Ibid., p.100.

⁷Lee Khoon Choy, 'Foreign Policy', in C V Devan Nair (ed), *Socialism that Works*, (Singapore, Federal Publications, 1976), p.108. Moreover, the country's close links with the West is related to the 'imperatives of economic development'. The major part of trade and investment in Singapore is with the West.

⁸Wilairat, *op.cit.*, p.80.

⁹Lau Teik Soon, 'The Role of Singapore in Southeast Asia', *World Review*, Vol.9, No.3, August 1980, pp.38-39.

¹⁰Turnbull, C M, *A History of Singapore 1819-1975*, (Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1977), p.332.

¹¹Wilairat, *op.cit.*, p.80.

¹²Minchin, James, *No Man is an Island: A Study of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew*, (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1986), pp.173-174. Lee's personal relation with Suharto improved accordingly after his 1973 visit to Indonesia. Lee now has regular 'four-eyes' meetings with Suharto. In 1985, during Lee's visit to Indonesia, the Indonesians presented him with gifts normally reserved for a king, receiving him in a traditional Bugis ceremony.

security and wider national interests made it imperative that Singapore should adopt a higher profile within the region and develop a greater interest in the affairs of the other members.

Singapore Reaction to the Political Crisis in the Philippines

Actual or potential instability in the Philippines will always be of great concern to Singapore's leaders. In 1986, however, Singapore was less concerned with the possibility of a 'spill-over' effect than were the Indonesians. It was not concerned that the 'February revolution' in the Philippines might occur in Singapore. This lack of concern resulted from an awareness that the populations of the two nations experienced totally different conditions. Singapore's standard of living and economic development differed markedly from the corrupt, poverty-stricken economy evident in the Philippines. The living standards of Singaporeans were higher than those of Filipinos. In spite of the dominance of Lee's leadership, 'few Singaporeans yet believe they have anything to gain by rebellion.'¹³ Many don't want Singapore to be without Lee and the leadership he heads. Singaporeans prefer to show their displeasure at specific government policies through the ballot box; as occurred in the last general election of December 1984, when a 12.6% swing was recorded against Lee's People's Action Party (PAP).¹⁴ Moreover, the Singapore government has effectively contained internal security threats through measures like the Internal Security Act (ISA).¹⁵

Prime Minister Lee's concern over the instability in the Philippines caused by Marcos' snap presidential elections, focusses instead on the highly vulnerable character of Singapore as a small island state, faced with certain 'limitations imposed by geography, demography, economy',¹⁶ and situated in a region governed by global and regional balances of power which might become adverse. The island is small by any standard. The

¹³Ibid., p.26.

¹⁴Far Eastern Economic Review, 8 January 1987, p.52.

¹⁵Lau Teik Soon, 'Threat Perceptions of Singapore', in Morrison, Charles E (ed), Threats to Security in East Asia-Pacific: National and Regional Perspectives, (USA, D C Heath and Company, 1983), pp.115-121.

¹⁶Singh, Bilveer, 'Singapore's Management of its Security Problems', Asia Pacific Community, Summer 1985, p.80.

predominantly Chinese population feels itself surrounded by a 'Malay Sea' comprising numerically larger and often difficult Malay neighbours. Singapore remains devoid of natural resources making it almost totally dependent on world trade and 'highly vulnerable to the vagaries of world trade cycles'.¹⁷ Because of these factors, the country's leadership has become imbued with a 'do or die' attitude; one mistake, it is believed, could be fatal. This awareness of Singapore's vulnerability led to great interest in the Philippine political crisis for two basic reasons; first, a concern that growing communist insurgency in the Philippines might exploit such instability to bring about another communist regime in Southeast Asia; and second, a concern that the US bases might be closed if a new regime were to come to power, communist or non-communist.

Possible Instability in ASEAN

Having found that after all ASEAN was important to Singapore, Lee threw his weight behind the organisation. After 1975 he went about orchestrating a new prominence for ASEAN.¹⁸ Lee coupled this newly acquired zeal for ASEAN with a pro-Western attitude and established himself as a staunch anti-communist. Lee believed that communism had the strength and the organisation to 'wreak havoc on the global scene either on its own account or if connected to other, smaller sources of conflict'.¹⁹ Despite this, Singapore continues to trade with communist countries for pragmatic reasons. Trade and economic links ensure that socialist countries have an interest in the survival of Singapore. It also ensures that Singapore does not lose its independence and 'become a pawn of any single big power in the big power rivalry and conflict in Southeast Asia'.²⁰

Lee saw that the situation in the Philippines in the 1980s could have worked only to the benefit of the communists. By late 1984 the Singapore government realised the growing danger that a poverty-stricken Philippines might turn to the Communist Party of the Philippines. The centre pages of the pro-government newspaper, Straits Times,

¹⁷Ibid., pp.78-80. For a fuller account of Singapore's problems see Lau Teik Soon, 'Threat Perceptions of Singapore', in op.cit., pp.114-123.

¹⁸Lee Boon Hiok, 'Constraints on Singapore's Foreign Policy', Asian Survey, Vol.XXII, No.6, June 1982, pp.529-530.

¹⁹Minchin, op.cit., pp.192-193.

²⁰Lee Khoo Choy, op.cit., p.109.

continually focused on the growing communist insurgency in the Philippine countryside.²¹ An editorial in the Straits Times in December 1984 urged the Philippine leadership to heed the 'warning signs' of the deepening troubles in the Philippine domestic scene.²² The possibility of a communist victory was considered detrimental to Singapore, for the following reasons. It would upset the status quo and reduce investors' confidence in the region.²³ To an introverted but outward-looking country like Singapore, dependent on trade and investment, this would mean its economic death-knell. After the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, Lee developed a 'refined domino theory' addressing possible communist take-over of Thailand. This theory can be extended to cover the case of the Philippines. On that earlier occasion he stated that

... I have seen governments collapse and whole peoples destroyed; because I have seen leaders ... become refugees ... therefore I recognise how vital the security and stability of our ASEAN neighbours is to us. Today it is Thailand which is threatened. Tomorrow, it can be any one of us. Without ASEAN cooperation and solidarity, one by one, we can be subverted and manipulated. Once revolution and strife upset stability, investments, development and prosperity will vanish. We shall all be refugees.²⁴

Lee also expressed fears of the insidious nature of communist insurgency. Although the threat from the CPM has diminished over the years, it has taken time for the Singapore leaders to relax their guard against communism accordingly. The old guard of the PAP which remains in power has not forgotten its experience with communism in the 1950s. They had come too close to losing the battle against the communists in Singapore.²⁵ Indeed this bitter experience was to lead to Lee's extreme caution on the question of establishing ties with China. Because of its predominantly Chinese

²¹Straits Times, 27 November 1984. Throughout the last months of 1984 and the beginning of 1985 the Straits Times published a greater number of reports on the communist problem in the Philippines.

²²Straits Times, 11 December 1984.

²³Singh, op.cit., pp.86-87.

²⁴Ibid., p.88.

²⁵Turnbull, op.cit., pp.271-293. See also Minchin, op.cit., pp.81-98 and pp.115-119. The PAP in the 1950s had consituted both communist and non-communist members, as the more left-wing of the party had popularity with the Chinese-educated which were a majority in Singapore at the time. In July 1961 these communists disagreed with the proposal for merger with Malaya and split with the non-communist group of Lee, Toh Chin Chye, Goh Keng Swee and Rajaratnam, to form a separate party the Barisan Socialis. The PAP organisation was almost crippled. It was only gradually and with great risks that Lee, Toh, Goh and Rajaratnam were able to get the better of the communists in the party.

population, Singapore has said that it will be the last ASEAN nation to establish diplomatic relations with China. This is largely because Singapore does not wish its neighbours to perceive that it can in any way be construed as a 'Third China'. Moreover, Singapore leaders fear that in the absence of any strong national identity the overseas Chinese in Singapore still have feelings of loyalty towards China. Similarly, if the communists in the Philippines were to profit and grow from the instability that resulted from the political crisis in the Philippines, there would be an influx of subversive influence in Singapore and other neighbouring countries. The degree of vigilance on the part of the Singapore government against communist influence can be seen in the recent arrest of an apparent Marxist group made up of church and social workers.

US Bases in the Philippines

Lee's concern over the future of the US bases in the Philippines has its roots in his perceptions of the regional balance of power. Singapore is pro-American, is fearful of the presently increasing Soviet presence in the region, and therefore, wishes to see a counterweight preponderance of American power in Southeast Asia.²⁶ Lee has become more anti-Soviet since the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea in December 1978, and considers the Soviet Union as the country that has made such Vietnamese aggression possible.²⁷ It is therefore not enthusiastic about the Malaysian neutralization proposal of 1971 that Southeast Asia become a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN). For Singapore ZOPFAN was merely an ideal and acceptable as such. The most important reality was the continuance of

external involvement and the impotence of the region to stop larger and more powerful states which, in pursuit of their policies, may do something we do not like or is contrary to our well-being. Rather than keeping out all outsiders, therefore, it would be better for as many interested powers as possible to come in and develop a stake in the region, thereby ensuring that no single great power gets into a dominant position.²⁸

²⁶Wilson, Dick, The Neutralization of Southeast Asia, (New York, Praeger Publishers, 1975), pp.83-84.

²⁷Lau, 'The Role of Singapore in Southeast Asia', op.cit., pp.40-41. Vietnamese aggression is attributed to Soviet support and Lee feels that they can and should be contained by the US. See also Lau Teik Soon, 'Threat Perceptions of Singapore', op.cit., pp.121-123.

²⁸Wilairat, op.cit., p.97.

According to Singapore while the balance of power developed in Southeast Asia a balance of interest should also develop. Each great power should nurture its stake in maintaining the status quo. Moreover, Singapore leaders also believed that the presence of all the major powers in the region would improve the chances of survival for their city-state.²⁹ Singapore's ports remain open to trade with the Soviet Union and other communist countries as well as, with the Americans.

In spite of this foreign policy orientation Lee's fears increased with the ascendancy of the Soviet Union in the 1970s while the US followed an opposite course and suffered a series of set-backs. Although there is still belief in the need for multipolarity in Southeast Asia, the Soviet Union is regarded with suspicion and uncertainty. The Kampuchean conflict involved two great communist powers, China and the Soviet Union. China is regarded by Singapore with less suspicion since it is clearly on the side of ASEAN with regard to Kampuchea. The Soviet Union is regarded with greater suspicion because of its support for Vietnam. Since ASEAN cannot force the Soviets from the region it is imperative to Singapore that the Americans remain in sufficient strength to counter the Soviet Union.³⁰ Lee therefore, remains in support of the continued strong presence of American forces in the region, specifically the key US bases at Clarke Air Field and Subic Naval Base.

For Singapore it is important that the US maintains its presence in Southeast Asia in the form of its two bases in the Philippines. Singapore thereby avoids the difficulties which would result from having to provide alternative facilities if the US was obliged to relocate their bases. This reluctance, common to other ASEAN countries, was expressed by Singapore's First Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong when questioned as to whether Singapore might provide alternative sites for the US forces in the region. He replied,

Do you know the length of the outer perimeter of Clark Air Base? The length of the outer perimeter of Clark Air Base is 26 miles. That is exactly the length of Singapore.³¹

²⁹Singh, *op.cit.*, p.91.

³⁰O'baid, *op.cit.*, pp.292-296.

³¹Weatherbee, *op.cit.*, p.18.

However, facilities are available or could be established in Singapore for use by American naval forces especially with regard to requirements for communications and repair.³² The real question is not one of Singapore's capability but its willingness to comply should the American forces be obliged to move. Ultimately Singapore is committed to a US presence in the region. It is the most hawkish ASEAN member concerning the Kampuchea issue and the Soviets continued support of Vietnam in this military venture.

In the end, however, Singapore might have to provide some sort of assistance to the US if it was forced to move. To prevent such an event, Lee would prefer that the US remain in the Philippines for reasons of personal pride³³ and because Singapore ultimately would not be able to provide a suitable alternative to the US bases in the Philippines. If forced to move from the Philippines the US would in the event be a less effective force in the Asian region.

Marcos or Aquino?

By the early months of 1986, Prime Minister Lee's concern with the political crisis in the Philippines was governed by his changing perceptions of ASEAN's importance, Singapore's vulnerability to external threats to the region's stability, as well as the changing balance of power in Southeast Asia. This was especially so since the decline of the Philippine economy had made it the weak link in ASEAN, while the other ASEAN countries had all improved their economies since 1967. Lee foresaw grave consequences for the rest of Southeast Asia from the potential for instability in the Philippines. Singapore's pro-Western elite feared the loss of the US bases and hence a reduction in the US regional presence. The other major concern centred on the growing insurgency

³²US Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Assessing America's Options in the Philippines*, 23 February 1986, pp.75-89. Singapore has in fact been one of the areas that the US Navy had looked at with regard to relocation of the bases in the Philippines.

³³Minchin, *op.cit.*, pp.182-183. Lee has boasted, 'I am the only chap in the whole of Southeast Asia that is not on the American payroll.' Minchin makes the point that Lee, 'is one of the few leaders to have outwitted the blunderbuss-wielding giant that is the world's most powerful nation. Singapore has no US military installations on her soil; the only American troops to come her way have merely been short-term visitors on rest and recreation leave. She has no treaty that obliges her to make facilities available on demand, whatever her qualms. On the other hand, she has acquired sophisticated capability in areas of her choice, ... she has received so much - the feting of the CIA and of successive administrations, preferential rights to personnel training and equipment, high mutinational corporate rating and input ...'.

movement in the Philippines. With communist regimes established in Indochina, and a growing regional Soviet presence, reflected most clearly through the growth of the Soviet naval facility at Cam Ranh Bay, the prospect of communist rule in Manila would portend an alarming deterioration of the external Southeast Asian environment so important to the security of Singapore.

By late 1984 Lee's concern over the prospect of instability in the Philippines had intensified. Not only did newsreports highlight the growing communist insurgency, awareness of growing Philippines instability had led to falling trade relations between the two nations. In January 1985, Lee hosted a meeting between senior ASEAN ministers and former US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger. Although no concrete decisions were reached, discussions centred on Philippine instability, the growing communist insurgency, and the effect of these developments on the presence of Clark Field and Subic Bay.³⁴ Because of these domestic problems the Philippines had not played an active role in ASEAN affairs for the past few years.³⁵ During his visit to the US in October 1985, Lee's views added to the strong pressure foreign policy advisers in the US were exerting on their president to act against Marcos.³⁶ Newsweek reported that Lee's views were 'powerfully held: he later told a private gathering that Marcos was 'living on borrowed kidneys' and stopped just short of saying that the United States should take covert action to remove him.'³⁷ Reagan was prompted to send Senator Paul Laxalt to see Marcos.

It was no surprise that Lee disliked Marcos as a person. He was a total opposite to Lee. Although Marcos admired or professed to admire Lee, Lee's opinion of Marcos was low.³⁸ The poor state of the Philippine economy, Manila's growing insurgency problem and the lack of a successor to Marcos were probably an anathema to Lee. The Singapore leadership, particularly the old guard of the PAP, found the high level of corruption developed under Marcos difficult to understand:

³⁴ Far Eastern Economic Asia Yearbook 1986, p.230.

³⁵ Lianhe Zaobao, 4 July 1986.

³⁶ Newsweek, 5 November 1985, p.122.

³⁷ Ibid., pp.123-124.

³⁸ Minchin, op.cit., p.184.

Singapore's puritanical drive for incorruptibility ... is ... almost a religion. Goh Keng Swee once confided that he really could not understand why so many government officials elsewhere were so greedy. Did they not earn enough legitimately without having to supplement their income by robbing the rest of society?³⁹

However, despite his dislike of Marcos Lee was prepared to develop diplomatic relations with Manila. He was governed in this decision by a number of factors. First, Marcos was as willing as Lee to propel ASEAN economically forward. In 1976, during Lee's visit to Manila, he and Marcos signed a joint statement calling for 'increased economic cooperation and initiatives between the two countries and their three ASEAN partners.'⁴⁰ Both went one step further by implementing 10% tariff reductions on all products traded between the two countries. Second, Lee lacked real influence over either Marcos or events in the Philippines. In no way was he able to contemplate the possibility of manouvering Marcos from power, no matter how desperate the level of instability in that country. Moreover, for as long as Marcos remained in control and continued to stand firm against the NPA, his stance would be acceptable to Singapore and the other ASEAN members. Lee considered that ultimately, there was no real opposition leader able to tackle Marcos and establish a credible alternative. Lee did however, exert all possible pressure to influence events before the Philippine political crisis of 1986. The Prime Minister expressed his views, indirectly but forcefully through the only nation capable of bringing significant pressure on Marcos, the United States. He did this during his October 1985 visit.

Despite his dislike of Marcos, Lee could well have been apprehensive of the alternative, Corazon Aquino. With her emergence in early 1986 as an opposition leader, to Lee the 'former housewife' represented a weakening of the country's leadership, faced as it was with a growing insurgency problem. During the election, Aquino's policy on counterinsurgency reflected her firm belief in non-violence. Aquino stated that there should be a 'dialogue between all the forces of the opposition', clearly including the communists.⁴¹ However, she was allied to two staunch anti-communists, Enrile and

³⁹Far Eastern Economic Review, 8 January 1987, p.63.

⁴⁰Far Eastern Economic Review, 28 January 1977, p.7.

⁴¹Far Eastern Economic Review, 19 December 1985, p.41.

Ramos, who had deserted Marcos for Aquino after the elections.⁴² That Lee appreciated this factor and hoped that the Enrile-Ramos duo would form the strength behind Aquino could be read between the lines of his personal letter to Enrile following the departure of Marcos. The tone of that letter was warmer than the congratulatory notes he sent to both Aquino and Laurel.⁴³ It was as if Lee felt that Enrile and Ramos were responsible for changing the course of history in the Philippines.⁴⁴ Moreover, after the rise of the Enrile-Ramos partnership Lee probably became more confident that with Aquino as a figure-head in a new anti-communist government, the US bases would remain on Philippine soil. Indeed, Aquino's campaign platform had included the promise to allow the 'current US bases lease to stand and 'keep options open' after 1991, consulting with ASEAN partners.'⁴⁵

However, despite the uncertainty which accompanied the prospect of a new leadership in Manila, Lee had judged accurately that Marcos' time was up. The masses which crowded the streets of Manila, the Church coming to the support of Aquino and the disintegration of AFP loyalty for Marcos, all pointed to the inevitability of Marcos' downfall. Indeed, Lee backed his acumen with action and sought once again to influence events in Manila during the February crisis. A Singapore government press release of March 1986 contained the revelation by Singapore ambassador in the Philippines, Aziz Mahmood, that during the height of the crisis in Manila, on 24 February 1986, he had, on behalf of the Singapore government, 'offered the then Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos and his family temporary stay in Singapore while he (Marcos) decided on his future plans.'⁴⁶ Marcos however, refused. Officially, the offer of political asylum was

⁴²Asian Defence Journal, December 1986, pp.26-27. Lee's perceptions of Ramos and Enrile could have been shaped by US views on the two, especially Ramos - 'Ramos is a general committed to the continuance of civilian government and ze is anti-communist ... Ramos has long had the reputation among US experts as the only senior general in the Philipines who could beat the communists.' Added to this Ramos was trained in the US. Enrile too is staunchly anti-communist, and has vowed that he will stop the communists taking over.

⁴³Manila Times, 28 February 1986.

⁴⁴Far Eastern Economic Review, 16 March 1986, p.23.

⁴⁵Asiaweek, 9 February 1986, p.22.

⁴⁶Singapore Government Press Release, No.38/Mar, 09-0/86/03/19, Information Division, Ministry of Communications and Information, Singapore.

extended to Marcos in order to speed his departure and thereby avoid bloodshed and civil war. While in all probability the official line was correct, Lee given his extensive links and familiarity with 'significant officials and operatives from the agencies and front organisations that exist in the United States, ...',⁴⁷ would have been well aware that the US was on the point of abandoning Marcos. Whatever the specifics of the reasoning behind the offer, Lee was well aware that the longer the country remained in a state of chaos, the more advantageous the situation would have been for the communists. For Lee, the best possible development was to remove Marcos quickly and allow some form of normalcy to return to the Philippines. The alternative, namely Marcos holding grimly on while Filipinos divided to sow the seeds of civil war, was too horrible to contemplate. In such a situation, the one political party with the organisation and strength to prevail would have been the communists. For Singapore this would have meant the weakening of ASEAN and further instability in the region. The apparently ailing Marcos was unable to control the situation. Lee could only trust that Aquino, with the Church, Enrile and Ramos in support, would be able to exact a stabilizing influence. For Lee, as for Indonesian President Suharto, there was little choice; it was Aquino or the communists.

The Philippines Under Aquino

Lee's concern at the fragility of democracy in the Philippines was evident from the speed with which Singapore's leaders established contact with the new Filipino regime. In April 1986, Singapore Foreign Minister Dhanabalan was the first ASEAN Foreign Minister to visit the Philippines following Aquino's ascent to power. Lee, himself, paid a visit to the Philippines on 1 July 1986. The aims of both visits were similar, namely, to promote personal ties with the new leaders; to convey Singapore's hope that Aquino would allow the US military bases to remain beyond 1991, and to offer technical aid and assistance to the fledgling regime.⁴⁸ Lee was also keen to gain first-hand experience of the situation in the Philippines, especially with regard to the communist presence.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Minchin, *op.cit.*, p.177.

⁴⁸See Straits Times, 2 April 1986, Business Times, 1 July 1986, and Straits Times, 2 July 1986. Lee offered US\$5 million in aid to the Philippines during his visit there.

⁴⁹Asian Wall Street Journal, 1 July 1986.

The early visits by Lee and Dhanabalan to the Philippines generated personal warmth between the political elite of both countries. Sensitive to Aquino's wishes, Singapore revoked its earlier offer and refused to allow Marcos political asylum when on 4 March 1986, Marcos contacted the Singapore Ambassador Aziz Mahmood, for permission to stay in Singapore for a few weeks.⁵⁰ Following Lee's visit to Manila in July 1986, Aquino duly indicated that her priorities lay with ASEAN when she visited Indonesia and Singapore before going on to the US, during her first overseas trip.⁵¹

The exchange of visits between Lee and Aquino encouraged businessmen in their respective countries to enter into investment and trade agreements with each other. Aquino was especially interested in obtaining for her nation investment from Singapore.⁵² Her economic ministers were keen to sell fruit and vegetables to Singapore, rear pigs in the Philippines for consumption in Singapore, and to help relocate labour-intensive industries in the Philippines.⁵³ Lee for his part, pointed to 'investment opportunities in the Philippines.'⁵⁴ Moreover, both Singapore and the Philippines appeared to be drawing closer in terms of wider intra-ASEAN relations. Aquino agreed to support Lee's suggestion that the rule of unanimity in ASEAN be replaced by the 'five-minus-one' principle, namely,

when four agree and one does not object, this can still be considered as consensus; and the four should proceed with a new regional scheme. An ASEAN five-minus-one scheme can benefit the participating four without damaging the abstaining one. Indeed the abstaining one may well be encouraged to join in later by the success of the scheme.⁵⁵

In turn, Singapore was willing to support a Philippine proposal for a 'standstill to a rolling back of non-tariff barriers in ASEAN.'⁵⁶

As stated earlier in this chapter, both the Philippines and Singapore although

⁵⁰Singapore Government Press Release, *op.cit.*

⁵¹She began her two day stay in Singapore on 26 August 1986 after a successful visit with Suharto in Indonesia.

⁵²*The Journal of Commerce*, 27 August 1986.

⁵³*Straits Times*, 2 July 1986.

⁵⁴*Business Times*, 4 July 1986.

⁵⁵Lau, 'The Role of Singapore in Southeast Asia', *op.cit.*, p.39.

⁵⁶*Straits Times*, 27 August 1986.

historically having few incentives to improve relations, experienced few, if any, disputes. Relations have remained generally good. The political crisis in the Philippines coupled with Prime Minister Lee's concern to maintain the stability of the region and the strength of ASEAN, have in fact given new incentives to improving relations between Singapore and the Aquino regime. Lee will continue to contribute to the stabilization of the troubled country through economic aid and the prospect of improved trade links which, at the same time, would provide the most effective form of strong action which Lee would take against the growth of communism in the Philippines. Moreover, stabilization of the domestic Philippine scene would allow the Philippines to again play an active part in ASEAN in years to come, a development which could only serve to strengthen ASEAN. Thus regional resilience would be strengthened from within through national resilience. Internal regional strength could be augmented, and could in its turn support external assistance - through the continued presence of the US bases.

Thus it is somewhat ironic that the period of intense turmoil which occurred in Manila in the early months of 1986, and which appeared to threaten the viability of ASEAN and the security of the region, has resulted in warmer relations between Singapore and the Philippines. Significantly, it was also evident that contrary to its small size, Singapore's leaders did try to influence events within the Philippines.

Conclusion

ASEAN-Philippine Relations

Regionalism in Southeast Asia, as manifest in ASEAN, has largely succeeded. This success continues largely because the concept of regionalism

vaguely defined, seems to promise different benefits to different national leaders. To many regionalism has meant a revival of cultural, and perhaps political, ties among Asian 'brothers', long divided during the period of European colonialism. For many others regional cooperation has offered hope for a more efficient path to national economic development. To another group, regionalism has seemed to offer small nations a stronger guarantee of defense and security.¹

Although Bernard Gordon arrived at this assessment before the formation of ASEAN, it is this reasoning which accounts in large part for the perennial attraction of the organisation. The changing balance of power between the great powers, China, the Soviet Union, and the United States, within the region; and the success of communism in mainland Southeast Asia, have also contributed to the survival of ASEAN. In response, ASEAN members have sought strength through unity against the dangers of the outside world. However, this thesis has been concerned with intra-ASEAN politics, particularly with regard to the problem of preserving internal strength during a time of political crisis experienced by one of its members.

The unique domestic circumstances prevalent in the Philippines, coupled with the strategic contribution which the nation makes to the security of the region, gives the Philippines immense importance in the eyes of the other ASEAN members.

In terms of domestic conditions, as noted previously, the Philippines is now the only ASEAN country subject to a strong and growing communist insurgency. Instability within the Philippines would be beneficial not only to the communists there, but also to

¹Gordon, Bernard K, 'Regionalism and Instability in Southeast Asia', in Nye, Joseph S Jr (ed), International Regionalism: Readings, (Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1968), pp.106-107.

interests beyond that movement. Since the late 1970s, two regional groups have evolved in Southeast Asia, namely the non-communist ASEAN grouping and a communist bloc comprising the Indochinese states controlled from Hanoi. The two sides have been on less than friendly terms since Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea in December 1978.² In order to preserve a counter-force to communist Indochina, ASEAN members have placed a premium on the maintenance by each of internal strength thereby achieving regional resilience. The growing communist movement in the Philippines was therefore, of major concern.

The strategic role played by the Philippines derives primarily from the accommodation of base facilities for US forces. A strong US presence in the region is supported by all ASEAN countries whose economies are tied to the Western industrialised countries. The increased presence of the two great communist powers in Southeast Asia has heightened concern among most ASEAN members. Not only is China perceived as a potential long-term threat to the region, the growing Soviet presence, especially within Indochina, is considered by ASEAN to be undesirable.³ Fear and distrust of both the Soviet Union, and to a lesser extent China, has led to a favourable reaction by ASEAN to President Reagan's hardline foreign policy.⁴ However, news of the recent political crisis in the Philippines was received differently in the capitals of ASEAN. For the Malaysians, a history of difficult bilateral relations with Marcos over the Sabah dispute and the support of rebel Muslim Filipinos largely determined their reaction to the downfall of Marcos and the ascent of Aquino. According to Malaysia, Marcos had dishonoured his promise to renounce the Sabah claim. Despite his verbal statement renouncing the Sabah claim in 1977, Marcos had failed to alter the Philippine Constitution to remove the clauses implying Philippine ownership of Sabah. Similarly the Filipino Muslim problem had long

²van der Kroef, *op.cit.*, pp.61-62.

³Choudhury, G W, 'ASEAN and the Communist World', *Asia Pacific Community*, Summer 1981, p.37 and p.39. Most ASEAN states have a negative image of the Soviet Union and believe that it poses the greatest single threat to Asia today. China too has made few steps forward in its relations with Indonesia. Although the civilian elements of the Indonesian government react positively toward China, the Indonesian army still dislikes, and is suspicious of, the leadership in Beijing.

⁴Toba, Reijiro, 'ASEAN Favours Reagan's Hardline Foreign Policy', *Asia Pacific Community*, Winter 1981, p.55-68.

been a source of acrimony between Malaysia and the Philippines. Both countries at times used the issue as a bargaining chip for their own ends - Malaysia, to force the Philippines to drop the Sabah claim in return for an end to aid for the Filipino Muslims; and the Philippines raising the Muslim issue everytime Malaysia demanded it renounce its claim. As recently as 1981, in response to Prime Minister Mahathir's announcement that he would not visit the Philippines until Manila formally renounced its claim to Sabah, Defence Minister Enrile again alleged that Malaysia was continuing to provide bases for rebel Filipino Muslims. Ultimately, both Sabah and the Muslim rebel disputes resulted in a favourable reaction in Kuala Lumpur to the rise of Aquino. Although Malaysians knew little of the new leader, her husband's reputation, especially toward Sabah, her initially conservative attitude toward the US bases and her astute alignment with the conservative opposition leader Salvador Laurel, stood her immediately in good favour. The Malaysians really saw that they had nothing to lose from Marcos' downfall especially if Aquino was to take over. Although they hoped that the Sabah dispute would finally be resolved, even if it was not, relations between the two countries could not be any worse.

Indonesia's reaction to the events of early 1986 was governed less by considerations which might directly affect bilateral relations between Manila and Jakarta. Although past pragmatic and antagonistic relations had existed between the two, Indonesian concern focussed primarily on possible ramifications for its own political stability and the preservation of the regional balance of power. Indonesian dislike for the type of popular movement which occurred in Manila can be traced back to the demonstrations which occurred in Jakarta during the visit of Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka in 1974; demonstrations which were perceived to have been inspired by a 'spill-over' effect from student demonstrations in Thailand during the previous year. Jakarta was concerned that its economic recession, due largely to its vulnerability to fallen oil prices, would be compared to the Philippines economic disaster, with a resultant upsurge in similarly 'revolutionary' demonstrations against the government. Indonesia also feared that the communist movement in the Philippines would gain an advantage in the instability and would also be able to exploit Aquino's policy of negotiation with their leaders. Indonesian experience with communists suggested that instability and negotiation with the

communists could only lead to their victory in the Philippines. Should this occur, Clarke Field and Subic Bay would be lost and the delicate balance between the region's communist and non-communist blocs would be upset. Chapter Two of this thesis outlined the concern that Jakarta had to counter the growing Soviet presence with a solid regional commitment to American strategy in the region. Despite its non-aligned status, Indonesian trade and investment is strongly linked to the West. With no apparent alternative to Marcos, Suharto demonstrated his support of the dictator two months prior to the elections by offering Indonesian transport planes for use against the insurgency. It is clear, however, that following the reunification of the democratic opposition forces in Manila, Suharto realised that he could do nothing more to help. Indeed, there was no further indication of a desire to do so. Aquino was far from being a communist or even anti-American. Where Marcos had patently failed to control the domestic situation, the Aquino camp might well stem both communist and anti-American sentiment in the Philippines.

For slightly different reasons again, the leadership in Singapore was closely concerned about a possible 'spill-over' effect. Economic conditions in Singapore were much better than in either Jakarta or the Philippines. Moreover, the internal situation in Singapore was tightly controlled by the PAP leadership. Singapore was therefore more anxious about the potential for regional instability. Singapore's geographic, demographic and economic limitations had made the country extremely vulnerable to external disruption. Instability in Southeast Asia could lead to a loss of investor confidence in the region. Regional communist powers might take advantage of such instability to exacerbate that climate of lost confidence and turmoil. Lee was also worried about the US bases in the Philippines. He strove to prevent such a possibility. Lee was at the time, and remains, a figure of influence in international affairs; influence which extends beyond that which would normally be assigned to a state of comparable small size. Through his access to US officials, Lee both received and offered advice. In October 1985, he consulted with Reagan. He had some influence in the decision to send Paul Laxalt to Manila to see Marcos. Lee attempted to influence the course of events in Manila after the election results. On 24 February 1986, in a bid to end the instability that gripped the nation, Lee

offered Marcos political asylum. Marcos refused. It was Lee, more than any other ASEAN leader who embraced Aquino as an alternative to Marcos; all the more so since she had at her side two staunch anti-communist, pro-American conservatives, namely Enrile and Ramos.

Of the three ASEAN countries seen to be most involved with the Philippine political crisis, only Malaysia had bilateral problems with the Philippines which influenced its reaction to the February 'revolution'. Singapore and Indonesia shared a predominant concern for the regional ramifications of the crisis, but here again perceptions differed. While Indonesian concern arose from its perception that South East Asia was its sphere of influence, Singapore was concerned because its survival depended on the preservation of political stability in the region. While Indonesia and Singapore were strongest in their support for a continued US presence in the region, all three states could perceive that continued instability in the Philippines threatened to undermine the very foundations of ASEAN.

However, despite their varying degrees of concern, and despite piecemeal action by some, none of the three could act decisively to control events in the Philippines. As a regional entity, the members of ASEAN adopted a 'wait and see' attitude and said little, even when Marcos proclaimed himself victor on 14 February. Asiaweek reported that the Singapore Foreign Minister Dhanabalan had noted that

'all of us in ASEAN are concerned' but that 'from all accounts, it appears that it's going to take some time before things stabilise, and it is something worrying.' In Malaysia, Foreign Minister Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen said his country was 'monitoring the situation but would not send an envoy ... no congratulatory message had been sent ...' Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja could only say that 'We are continuing to observe developments there'.⁵

The nation of greatest influence on Philippine affairs remained the United States. Perhaps the realization of this fact by the ASEAN states was reflected in their inaction as a regional grouping until the final stages of the crisis. It was only on 23 February 1986 that ASEAN issued a joint statement of concern:

As member states of ASEAN, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia,

⁵ Asiaweek, 2 March 1986, p.13.

Singapore, and Thailand have followed with increasing concern the turn of events following the presidential elections in the Philippines.

A critical situation has emerged which portends bloodshed and civil war.

The crisis can be resolved without widespread carnage and turmoil. We call on all parties to restore national unity and solidarity so as to maintain national resilience.

There is still time to act with restraint and bring about a peaceful resolution of the crisis⁶.

It is perhaps ironic that while individual leaders like Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew could seek to influence events in the Philippines, ASEAN the organisation could do no more than issue a joint statement of concern. ASEAN as a regional organisation was relegated to the sidelines. Marcos did not seek advice from ASEAN and looked more to the US for support. In fact it was on Reagan's word that the dictator finally acquiesced and abandoned the country. All ASEAN could do was watch and wait upon the outcome of events that were beyond its control. There was no institutional framework within ASEAN to bring to bear on such a crisis. Indeed, it was the US again that strove to make Marcos and Aquino compromise in a power-sharing solution. If such was to be the quality of the 'solutions' imposed on the Philippines from without, perhaps it was just as well that ASEAN lacked the means to intervene. Perhaps also it was evident to the member states that the creation of such machinery would have established a dangerous precedent, introducing the potential for future unrest within ASEAN. Significant differences and suspicions persist between ASEAN states due both to traditional animosities and the more recent nationalistic demands of each as modern states.⁷

Ultimately, however, no ASEAN state was seriously dismayed by Aquino. She placed ASEAN as a high priority in Philippine foreign policy, visiting Indonesia and Singapore before the US and Japan. ASEAN has since settled down to the state of vigilant calm which reigned before the Philippine crisis; a crisis which only served to illustrate the internal weakness of an organisation that is recognised to be one of the most united and active in the international arena.

⁶Straits Times 26 February 1986.

⁷ASEAN is made more vulnerable by the lack of economic and trade ties that each country has with other members. This aspect is unlikely to change in the 1980s. See van der Kroef, op.cit., p.65.

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