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THE “BUYING TIME” CONCEPT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Bilkent University 2024

THE “BUYING TIME” CONCEPT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:
SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN MALAYSIA,
SINGAPORE, AND INDONESIA, 1967–1975

A Ph.D. Dissertation

by
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Ankara
August 2024

To my parents



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The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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THE DEPARTMENT OF
HISTORY
İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
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By Widy Novantyo Susanto

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope
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ABSTRACT

THE “BUYING TIME” CONCEPT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE, AND INDONESIA, 1967–1975

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In 1967, the U.K. and in 1969, the U.S. announced plans to phase out their military presence in Southeast Asia. This dissertation examines the reactions of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) states—Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia—to the impending withdrawal of ANZUK (Australia, New Zealand, U.K.) and U.S. military forces from Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. It argues that by adopting the buying time concept—urging the U.S. and ANZUK to maintain their economic, military, and political presence in Southeast Asia to buy time to develop their economies—Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia upheld and legitimized a regional power structure dominated by the U.S. Throughout the Vietnam War, they pursued foreign policies advocating for extra-regional interference in Southeast Asia through economic and military assistance. They endorsed the FPDA (Five Power Defense Arrangements) to prevent Chinese and Soviet influence and competition in Southeast Asia while supporting U.S. military intervention and presence in Vietnam and Thailand. Consequently, with the exception of Malaysia, the U.S. war effort in Vietnam significantly contributed to the economic development of Singapore and Indonesia. In the cases of Singapore and Indonesia, the progress in development resulted from pro-U.S. political elites participating in a global economic network of multinational corporations and international financial institutions. This research

challenges the conventional view that Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia were non-aligned and neutral states in pursuit of regional autonomy. It provides an analysis that accounts for the historical agency of developing nations in Southeast Asia in bolstering a U.S.-led international order.

Keywords: ASEAN, USA, Vietnam, Development, Security



ÖZET

GÜNEYDOĞU ASYA'DA “ZAMAN KAZANMA” KONSEPTİ: MALEZYA,
SİNGAPUR VE ENDONEZYA'DA GÜVENLİK VE KALKINMA, 1967–1975

Susanto, Widy Novantyo

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Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Kenneth Weisbrode

Ağustos 2024

1967 yılında Birleşik Krallık ve 1969'da ise Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, Güneydoğu Asya'daki askeri varlıklarını kademeli olarak sona erdirmek istediklerini duyurdular. Bu tez çalışması, Vietnam Savaşı döneminde Güneydoğu Asya Ülkeleri Birliği (ASEAN) devletlerinin- Malezya, Singapur ve Endonezya – ANZUK (Avustralya, Yeni Zelanda, Birleşik Krallık) ve ABD askeri güçlerinin Güneydoğu Asya'dan yaklaşmakta olan çekilmelerine verdikleri tepkiyi ele alır. Özellikle, Malezya, Singapur ve Endonezya'nın zaman kazanma konseptini benimseyerek – yani kendi ekonomilerini geliştirmek için zaman kazanmak maksadıyla Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ve ANZUK'tan Güneydoğu Asya'daki ekonomik, askeri ve siyasi varlıklarını sürdürmelerini talep ederek – Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin egemen olduğu bir bölgesel güç yapısını yücelttiği ve meşrulaştırdığı savunulur. Vietnam Savaşı boyunca ASEAN devletleri ekonomik ve askeri destek yoluyla Güneydoğu Asya'ya bölge dışından müdahale yapılmasını savunan dış politikalar izlediler. Her ülke, Güneydoğu Asya'da Çin ve Sovyet etki ve rekabetini önlemek amacıyla FPDA'yı (Beş Güç Savunma Anlaşmaları) onaylarken aynı zamanda sırasıyla Vietnam ve Tayland'da ABD askeri müdahalesi ve varlığını desteklediler. Sonuç olarak Vietnam'daki ABD savaş faaliyetleri Malezya hariç olmak üzere Singapur ve Endonezya'nın ekonomik kalkınmasına önemli katkıda bulundu. Singapur ve Endonezya örneklerinde görüldüğü üzere kalkınma yolunda elde edilen ilerleme, çok uluslu şirketlerin ve uluslararası finans kuruluşlarının oluşturduğu küresel bir

ekonomik ağı etkin şekilde katılım sağlayan ABD yanlısı siyasi elitlerin faaliyetlerinin sonucudur. Bu sebeple araştırma, Malezya, Singapur ve Endonezya'nın bölgesel özerklik peşinde yansız ve tarafsız devletler olduğunu savunan geleneksel görüşe karşı çıkar. Aynı zamanda Güneydoğu Asya'daki gelişmekte olan milletlerin ABD önderliğindeki uluslararası düzene verdikleri desteğe ilişkin tarihsel öznelliklerine açıklama getiren bir inceleme sunar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ASEAN, ABD, Vietnam, Kalkınma, Güvenlik



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB – Asian Development Bank

AMDA – Anglo-Malaysian Defense Agreement

ANZUK – Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom

ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations

BAPPENAS – Ministry of National Development Planning

CPM – Communist Party of Malaya

CREST – CIA Records Search Tool

CSE – Committee of Security Experts

FPDA – Five Power Defense Arrangements

FRUS – Foreign Relations of the United States

HANKAM – Ministry of Defense and Security

IADS – Integrated Air Defense System

IGGI – Intergovernmental Group on Indonesia

IMF – International Monetary Fund

NAA – National Archives of Australia

PKI – Communist Party of Indonesia

SEACDT – Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty

SEATO – Southeast Asia Treaty Organization

UKNA – U.K. National Archives

USDDO – U.S. Declassified Documents Online

USNA – U.S. National Archives

WBGA – World Bank Group Archives

ZOPFAN – Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality



INTRODUCTION

Aims

In the late 1960s, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—comprising Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines—witnessed the United Kingdom and the United States announce their plans to phase out their military presence in Southeast Asia. In 1967/68, under Prime Minister Harold Wilson, the United Kingdom announced its intention to withdraw its military forces from Malaysia and Singapore by December 1971.¹ One of the motivations behind the British announcement was to convince Australia, New Zealand, and the United States to take greater responsibility for sharing the defense burden in the region.² In 1969, under President Richard Nixon, the United States announced the Nixon/Guam Doctrine, stating that it would reduce its direct military presence in East Asia while continuing to uphold its treaty obligations and maintaining a nuclear deterrent for its nuclear-threatened allies; however, the United States expected its allies to share a greater burden in the defense and security of the region.³ The United States primarily

¹ Andrea Benvenuti, “A Parting of the Ways: The British Military Withdrawal from Southeast Asia and Its Critical Impact on Anglo-Australian Relations, 1965–68,” *Contemporary British History* 20, no. 4 (605 575), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619460600612941>.

² Benvenuti, “A Parting of the Ways: The British Military Withdrawal from Southeast Asia and Its Critical Impact on Anglo-Australian Relations, 1965–68,” 585; Sue Thompson, *British Military Withdrawal and the Rise of Regional Cooperation in South-East Asia, 1964–73* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 14.

³ Widy Novantyo Susanto, “U.S.-Japanese Relations, ASEAN, and Economic Power in Southeast Asia, 1969–1981,” *Diplomatic History* 48, no. 2 (2024): 216–17, <https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhad102>.

wanted Japan to increase its economic and military responsibilities in East Asia.⁴ But it also encouraged the ANZUK nations to contribute to burden-sharing in the region. In his memoirs, Nixon wrote that some people had misunderstood the Guam Doctrine, perceiving it as a “new period of total U.S. withdrawal from Asia and other parts of the world.”⁵ Instead, the Guam Doctrine urged Asian countries to concentrate on regional cooperation and collective security and establish regional institutions that would enable the participation of the United States. However, the announcement of the U.S. military withdrawal from Vietnam in 1969 overshadowed this aspect of the Guam Doctrine.⁶ What the ASEAN members focused on were the military withdrawal announcements and the perceived prospect of a complete withdrawal of the United States and the ANZUK nations (Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom) from Asia. The purpose of this project is to trace the foreign policy positions of the ASEAN member states—specifically Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia—and their conceptualizations of the Southeast Asian regional order, particularly in terms of the linkage between the presence of extra-regional powers, regional stability, and economic development.

This dissertation examines how the so-called neutral and non-aligned ASEAN members—Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia—responded to the pending withdrawal of the ANZUK and U.S. military presence from Malaysia, Singapore, and the broader Indochina region during the Second Indochina War. It argues that Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia advocated for and legitimized the U.S. and ANZUK military, economic, and political presence in Southeast Asia as a means to stave off the spread of communism and to buy time for the ASEAN members to bolster their economic capabilities. By demanding that the United States and the ANZUK nations maintain their influence in Southeast Asia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia undermined and disregarded ASEAN’s fundamental founding principles of regional autonomy, neutrality, and non-alignment. The three ASEAN states undermined and disregarded such norms by prioritizing the continuation of U.S. power and influence in Southeast Asia. First, they sought to maintain indirect U.S. influence and interest

⁴ Sue Thompson, “The Nixon Doctrine and U.S. Policy on Regional Cooperation in Southeast Asia after the Second World War,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 23, no. 1 (2021): 143-44, https://doi.org/10.1162/jcws_a_00965.

⁵ Ibid., 126.

⁶ Thompson, “The Nixon Doctrine and U.S. Policy on Regional Cooperation in Southeast Asia after the Second World War,” 127.

in Southeast through military collaborations with the ANZUK nations. Second, they attempted to convince the United States to serve as a counterforce against the potential rise of China and the Soviet Union in Southeast Asia by advocating for a continued U.S. military presence in Vietnam and Thailand.

The U.S. war effort in Vietnam also contributed to the economic development of the ASEAN members to varying degrees. While Malaysia experienced economic growth, the impact of the U.S. war effort in Indochina on Malaysia's economy was minimal, as the United States did not incorporate Malaysia into its regional strategic considerations, which would have likely brought more foreign capital to the country. In contrast, Singapore directly benefited from the Vietnam War by becoming a center for U.S. and ANZUK naval ship repairs and a major petroleum hub, leading to significant developments in its petroleum and maritime industries. As for Indonesia, it indirectly benefitted from the U.S. war effort in Vietnam. The United States regarded Indonesia as strategically important to its struggle against communism in Indochina. Therefore, in collaboration with Indonesian officials, U.S. policymakers restructured Indonesia's economy and lobbied for massive transfers of foreign capital to foster development and uphold American regional strategic interests, resulting in substantial economic growth. Ultimately, by adopting the *buying time* concept, in rhetoric and practice—i.e., urging the United States to maintain its presence in Southeast Asia to buy them time to develop their economies—Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia upheld and legitimized a regional power structure dominated by the United States.

Historiography

This research engages with two sets of literature. The first set explores the United States and Southeast Asia relationship during the Cold War. This literature includes two subsets: the *buying time* thesis, which analyzes whether the U.S. war effort in Vietnam contributed to Southeast Asia's economic development, and the history of U.S. modernization in Cold War Southeast Asia. The second set of literature focuses on the history of ASEAN. The two categories for the ASEAN literature include ASEAN's organizational history and the national histories of Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia.

The literature on the buying time thesis and the history of U.S. modernization in Southeast Asia typically approach their topics from a temporal perspective. The literature on the buying time thesis primarily analyzes whether the U.S. war effort contributed to the economic development of the ASEAN states. The literature on U.S. modernization during the Cold War typically examines how the political elites conceptualized changes in economic progress over time by creating historical narratives suggesting that modernization necessitated political elite intervention, thereby legitimizing their power. In other words, the literature explores how modernization theory legitimized Southeast Asian regimes. This research delves into whether the Vietnam War contributed to the development of the three ASEAN states but also investigates how the ASEAN regimes legitimized the U.S.-led networks and power structures in Southeast Asia. Finally, this research delves into the literature on ASEAN's organizational history and the national histories of Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia by challenging the notion that the commonly accepted characteristics of these three countries—neutral, non-aligned, and an advocate for regional autonomy—did not apply during the Vietnam era.

This study contributes to the literature by adding a spatial dimension by analyzing the agency of the three ASEAN states in conceptualizing, justifying, and legitimizing the networks or power structures in Southeast Asia. networks, i.e., the roles of regional and extra-regional powers and institutions, and the extent to which these networks represented the broader power structure in Southeast Asia. The literature on ASEAN and the national histories of Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia often highlights their pursuit of non-aligned and neutral foreign policies. This study revises these arguments by emphasizing that during the Vietnam era, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia diverged from these principles, undermining ASEAN's core tenets.

Between 1965 and 1975, Southeast Asia transitioned from a turbulent and chaotic geopolitical region to one where it experienced a period of relative political and economic stability. By the time the United States Americanized the Vietnam War in 1965, the Southeast Asian region was struggling with poverty and internal and regional conflicts as the result, in part, of communist insurgencies. A decade later, there was a transformation in the region as Suharto had crushed the communist

movements in Indonesia. At the same time, the insurgencies in Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines were somewhat less of a threat to the region. The ASEAN countries put aside their territorial and ideological differences and turned to economic and security cooperation. In the 1970s, the economic situation in Southeast Asia also improved significantly, with average income levels in the ASEAN countries rising substantially over the decade following 1965.⁷

The relative political and economic progress amongst the ASEAN countries between the 1960s and 1970s provided justification in Walt W. Rostow's view to argue that the U.S. war effort in Vietnam helped buy time for the noncommunist countries in the region to achieve political stability and advance their economic conditions.

Decades after the end of the Vietnam War, Rostow, who was President Lyndon B. Johnson's National Security Advisor, argued that although the United States lost the war in Vietnam in the military sense, its intervention helped in winning the broader war in Southeast Asia by containing the spread of communism to the ASEAN countries. Rostow's emphasis was that the Vietnam War was not a "pointless war" since it helped bring about the broader region's stability and relative prosperity.⁸

Rostow's interpretation of the buying time thesis stems from his conceptualization of the modernization theory, which he framed in temporal terms. In *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, Rostow outlines a five-stage process for societal modernization. First is the "traditional society," characterized by an agriculture-focused economy. The second stage, "preconditions for take-off," marks a transitional period driven by internal or external factors, featuring advancements in agriculture and industry, infrastructure, and raw material investments. Third is the "take off" stage involving rapid industrial growth and innovation. In the fourth stage, "drive to maturity," a society can choose its production based on preference rather than necessity and efficiently apply advanced technology across a wide range of resources. The final stage, the "age of high mass consumption," has societies focusing on consumer goods, income growth, and the

⁷ Mattias Fibiger, "Buying Time? The Vietnam War and Southeast Asia," in *The Vietnam War in the Pacific World*, ed. Brian Cuddy and Fredrik Logevall (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2022), 231-32.

⁸ W. W. Rostow, "Vietnam and Asia," *Diplomatic History* 20, no. 3 (1996): 467-71, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.1996.tb00280.x>; W. W. Rostow, "The Case for the Vietnam War," *Parameters* 26, no. 4 (97 1996): 39-50.

development of a welfare state.⁹ As it related to Vietnam, Rostow viewed communism as a “disease of the transition to modernization” and North Vietnam and the Viet Cong as the “scavengers of the modernization process.”¹⁰ In other words, for Rostow, communism presented an obstacle to the passage of time required for a society to realize the five stages of modernization. Speaking retrospectively, Rostow applied the same argument to the rest of the Southeast Asian region, claiming that the United States, at a critical juncture in history (1965–75), needed to and ended up successfully providing the buffer against communism for ASEAN’s stability and economic growth.

Robert J. McMahon’s chapter titled *What difference did it make?* challenges the Vietnam revisionist arguments made by Rostow and opposes the claim that the U.S. war effort in Vietnam enabled the political and economic development of the ASEAN countries. McMahon rejects the connections between the U.S. presence in Vietnam and the political stability, the geostrategic equilibrium (emergence of ASEAN), and economic development among the ASEAN countries.¹¹ For instance, McMahon suggests that the political development and the rise of the Suharto government were purely due to domestic reasons and had “nothing to do with the United States, nor with the U.S. troop buildup to the north.”¹² On the other hand, Mattias Fibiger, in *The Nixon Doctrine and the Making of Authoritarianism in Island Southeast Asia* has shown that the question of American economic and military support and its effects on Southeast Asia’s political stability is more complex. Fibiger claims that the Nixon administration aimed to utilize economic and military aid to “reinforce authoritarian clients who could preserve anticommunist stability in the Third World.”¹³ Fibiger’s conclusion is that the U.S. political, economic, and military support provided immediate stability in Southeast Asia as it strengthened the authoritarian regimes in ASEAN. However, the region also experienced an

⁹ W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

¹⁰ David Milne, “‘Our Equivalent of Guerrilla Warfare’: Walt Rostow and the Bombing of North Vietnam, 1961-1968,” *The Journal of Military History* 71, no. 1 (2007): 202, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jmh.2007.0056>.

¹¹ Robert McMahon, “What Difference Did It Make? Assessing the Vietnam War’s Impact on Southeast Asia,” in *International Perspectives on Vietnam*, ed. Lloyd Gardner and Ted Gittinger (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999).

¹² McMahon, “What Difference Did It Make?,” 194-95.

¹³ Mattias Fibiger, “The Nixon Doctrine and the Making of Authoritarianism in Island Southeast Asia,” *Diplomatic History* 45, no. 5 (2021): 954–82, <https://doi.org/doi:10.1093/dh/dhabo65>.

“efflorescence of disloyal opposition movements, including communist, Islamist, and separatist insurgencies, in the mid-1970s.”¹⁴ In other words, the United States contributed to the stability of the political regimes in ASEAN in the short term, but in the long term, it also brought instability to the region by supporting such regimes.

Fibiger, in the article “Buying Time? The Vietnam War and Southeast Asia” expands on the question of whether the Vietnam War bought time for the economic development of Southeast Asia and whether the Vietnam War had an impact on the development of ASEAN as an organization. Fibiger argues that the U.S. war effort in Vietnam contributed to the expansion of military and economic aid to the “anti-communist states of Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines - an expansion that would have been unthinkable absent the war raging nearby.”¹⁵ In Indonesia, most U.S. and international economic aid helped fund Indonesia’s First Five Year Development Plan (1969–74), which helped bring about economic stability and build infrastructure. Singapore gained the most from the Vietnam War due to expanding its exports to South Vietnam, becoming a central hub for petroleum-related industries, which was important for U.S. military procurements related to Vietnam, becoming a tourist hub for American troops, and becoming a key port for U.S. naval ships. Malaysia gained the least in economic terms but did gain substantial military credits following the conclusion of the Vietnam War.¹⁶

When it came to the founding of ASEAN, McMahon claims that the emergence of the organization was the result of rejecting the American presence in Vietnam and an “Asian alternative to great power meddling and domination.”¹⁷ McMahon argues that the ASEAN aimed to reject great power influence in the region, and the development of ASEAN from its inception to the mid-1970s resulted from its members reflecting the trend that they preferred to solve regional problems in a regional manner. In short, McMahon rejects the notion that the Vietnam War helped create ASEAN.¹⁸ Fibiger, on the other hand, claims the opposite and argues that ASEAN’s Foreign Ministers in 1967 were “anxious” about the impending U.S. military withdrawal from the region and that they had a “shared fear of international

¹⁴ Fibiger, “The Nixon Doctrine and the Making of Authoritarianism in Island Southeast Asia,” 982.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 237.

¹⁶ Fibiger, “Buying Time? The Vietnam War and Southeast Asia,” 239-47.

¹⁷ McMahon, “What Difference Did It Make?,” 197.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 199.

abandonment, stimulated in part by the Vietnam War, [which] provided an impetus for the creation of ASEAN.”¹⁹ Fibiger claims that the motive for regional unity and cohesion was only one piece of ASEAN’s foreign policy. The Vietnam War was a major driver that brought about the sentiment amongst the ASEAN members that national and regional divisions brought about extra-regional intervention and that as a group they needed to ensure political and economic stability to prevent such an occurrence.²⁰

Like Rostow, McMahon and Fibiger conceptualize the buying time thesis temporally. As mentioned, McMahon’s focus is on the causality between the U.S. military presence in Vietnam and the political and economic stability of the ASEAN countries. He concentrates on the 1960s, specifically the period during the Johnson administration and the Americanization of the Vietnam War in 1965, as the critical juncture in analyzing whether there was a link between the American war effort and ASEAN’s stability and growth. McMahon concludes that there was no convincing evidence for a direct causal link. As McMahon does not examine the Nixon period, a time of substantial transfer of capital from the United States to the Southeast Asian region, his study lacks a complete picture of the economic realities of this specific period. Fibiger’s articles challenge McMahon’s analysis through an empirical study of the economic transformation of the Southeast Asian region beyond the 1960s to the mid-1970s. By broadening the timeframe to the 1970s, Fibiger presents a more detailed picture of ‘*what*’ precisely the United States bought time for and ‘*who*’ exactly the United States bought time for. As previously mentioned, the ‘*what*’ was the noncommunist countries’ political and economic stability. As for the question of ‘*who*’ the United States bought time for, it was the Suharto (Indonesia), Tunku Abdul Rahman/Abdul Razak Hussein (Malaysia), Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore), Thanom Kittikachorn (Thailand), and Ferdinand Marcos (the Philippines) regimes during the Vietnam era.

Although Rostow’s buying time thesis theoretically advocated for U.S. military and economic assistance to realize the stages of modernization, the modernization theory was less about actualizing the five stages process and more about legitimizing and

¹⁹ Fibiger, “The Nixon Doctrine and the Making of Authoritarianism in Island Southeast Asia,” 248-49.

²⁰ Ibid., 250.

bolstering the political power of the recipient governments. Nils Gilman, in *Modernization Theory Never Dies*, argues that modernization theory was neither “an accurate empirical description of the historical process of economic development in specific countries” nor a “useful simplification for understanding what was happening in poor countries,” but rather a way for political elites to advance a “metahistorical narrative that was both easy for the masses to understand and satisfying to elites as an affirmation of the historical inevitability and moral righteousness of their own role in economic and national development.”²¹ Put differently, modernization theory was a narrative promoted by political elites, intellectuals, and technocrats to persuade the general public that those in power were the essential leaders capable of driving the nation toward economic prosperity. This narrative served to legitimize the authority of these political elites in the eyes of the public.

Bradley R. Simpson, in *Economists with Guns*, provides the Suharto regime as an example of the modernization theory serving to legitimize the standing government. Simpson argues that the Suharto regime “pursued a strategy of what might be termed military modernization, in which the armed forces asserted for themselves a dominant political role legitimized by their commitment to economic and political development.”²² Simpson explains that international forces like the United States, Western governments, international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and philanthropic organizations contributed to Indonesia's legitimacy by providing military and/or economic assistance. This support helped “legitimize the growing political and economic role of the military in the development process.”²³ Fibiger, in *Suharto's Cold War*, takes the argument further and argues that between 1965 and 1975, despite persisting poverty in rural areas outside of Java and in the urban regions of Java, Suharto successfully gained political legitimacy amongst the populace as Indonesia saw economic growth with the help of foreign aid throughout the decade and

²¹ Nils Gilman, “Modernization Theory Never Dies,” *History of Political Economy* 50 (2018): 133–51, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00182702-7033896>.

²² Bradley R. Simpson, *Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and U.S.-Indonesian Relations, 1960–68* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008), 3.

²³ *Ibid.*, 4.

reconstructed the agricultural, industrial, and commodity sectors.²⁴ Essentially, whether the developing countries actualized Rostow's five-step process of modernization was irrelevant. The objective of the United States and the recipients of military and economic assistance was to ensure the staying political power of the U.S.-friendly elites in the developing countries. Suharto's New Order government happened to pursue economic policies that helped further legitimize it in the domestic and international realm.

The literature above primarily approaches the buying time thesis from a temporal perspective. The studies either focus on how actors and states conceptualized or experienced changes in economic conditions over time. During the Vietnam War, Rostow conceptualized buying time in connection with a need for developing countries to go through stages of change from tradition to modernity with the assistance of the United States. Speaking retrospectively, Rostow understood buying time as a realized process where Southeast Asia improved its economic conditions in conjunction with U.S. intervention. McMahon examines the buying time thesis by concentrating on a critical juncture in history with the Americanization of the Vietnam War in 1965. McMahon evaluates whether the succeeding events, i.e., the political and economic changes of the ASEAN countries, in actuality, occurred due to the U.S. intervention in Vietnam. Gilman, Fibiger, and Simpson analyze how the Indonesian elites created and conceptualized a historical narrative that argued that modernization could only be achieved through elite participation and planning, thereby further justifying these actors' political power.

This dissertation examines the buying time thesis also from a spatial framework as it focuses on how the political actors from Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia conceptualized regional cooperation and upheld the power dynamics in Southeast Asia. Specifically, it concentrates on the spatial history of the buying time thesis by considering how the political elites from Southeast Asia conceptualized regional connections, networks, and entanglements. This research borrows from a global history approach that examines how "regional circumstances created the conditions under which it became possible for Western powers to expand their reach into East

²⁴ Mattias Fibiger, *Suharto's Cold War: Indonesia, Southeast Asia, and the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 190-91.

Asia.”²⁵ This study investigates the agency of the political actors in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia in constructing the political, economic, and military regional order in non-communist Southeast Asia during the Vietnam era. The global history approach to regional space focuses on how networks were a part of “broader power structures” and that networks were “made [...], created and upheld by the people who operate[d] them.”²⁶ In other words, by connections, networks, and entanglements, this study refers to the question of how the political actors in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia attempted to shape the Southeast Asian political, economic, and military regional order in relation to the role of internal (ASEAN members) as well as extra-regional powers (the United States and ANZUK). The political leaders in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia each had a say in the extent to which regional and extra-regional cooperation was necessary to buy time to develop their economies and military capabilities. Ultimately, these three ASEAN countries each had agency in shaping and enabling a power structure in Southeast Asia that advocated for an extensive U.S. and ANZUK security and economic role.

The origins of the buying time rhetoric in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia trace back to the mid-1960s with the start of the U.S. military intervention in Vietnam. In Singapore, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew was the most prominent figure publicly and privately advocating for the buying time thesis throughout and after the Vietnam War. The beginnings of Singapore’s buying time rhetoric occurred in 1966 when Prime Minister Lee stated to a group of university students that the United States was buying time for Southeast Asia and that the countries in the region had to take action to develop as the Americans could not “buy time forever” and that if Singapore did nothing during this period, it would “deserve to perish.”²⁷ In Indonesia’s case, the earliest indication of buying time rhetoric happened around late 1966 when General Suharto and Foreign Minister Adam Malik had told U.S. officials that the American intervention in Vietnam had allowed Indonesia to crush the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) in 1965. Foreign Minister Malik stated that a U.S. military withdrawal and a communist victory in Vietnam would be a threat to Indonesia as it was facing an economic emergency and was not capable of providing

²⁵ Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 120.

²⁶ Conrad, *What Is Global History?*, 127-28

²⁷ Quoted in Ang Cheng Guan, *Reassessing Lee Kuan Yew’s Strategic Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2023), 58; Rostow, “The Case for the Vietnam War,” 39–50.

food to its population, which threatened instability in the country.²⁸ As for Malaysia, Abdul Razak Hussein, who served as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense under Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman and later became Prime Minister in 1970, reflected on the U.S. intervention in Vietnam in 1965 during a 1967 speech. Razak viewed the U.S. deployment in 1965 as a pivotal and positive development that transformed Southeast Asia. He regarded the intervention as a hope for a new era where the Southeast Asian nations felt protected from external threats. For Razak, the intervention provided an opportunity to foster regional economic development.²⁹

This research investigates how Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia continued to employ the buying time thesis throughout the Vietnam War. The buying time thesis shaped how these three countries approached regional cooperation and their conceptualizations of extra-regional intervention during the Vietnam era, which ultimately puts into question the validity of the notion of regional autonomy. For scholars of ASEAN, such as Amitav Acharya, regional autonomy was a principle and norm where the priority for ASEAN's members was to employ "regional solutions to regional problems."³⁰ In other words, ASEAN's objective was to create an environment where the ASEAN members were the primary actors in managing the regional order. Its members were to concentrate on regional cooperation so that it could prevent extra-regional influence and intervention and conduct their work without other powers "acting as overseers of regional affairs."³¹ A closer look at the foreign policies of Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia during the Vietnam War reveals that the norm of regional autonomy was more of a statement of intent rather than actual policy. Contradicting the norm of regional autonomy, the priority for these three nations during the Vietnam era was to maintain a regional order heavily subsidized by the economic and military aid of the United States and the ANZUK

²⁸ Memo, Vice President to the President, September 25, 1966, Doc. CK2349052333, U.S. Declassified Documents Online (hereafter USDDO), 2.

²⁹ "Speech by the Hon'ble Deputy Prime Minister as Address to the Veterans Conference on 8th April 1967," in Ucapan-Ucapan Tun Haji Abdul Razak Bin Hussein, 1966 [Speeches by Tun Haji Abdul Razak Bin Hussein, 1966], Arkib Negara Malaysia/Jabatan Perdana Menteri [National Archives of Malaysia/Prime Minister's Department, n.d.], 119.

³⁰ Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 49.

³¹ Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia*, 50.

nations. Essentially, these three nations called on the extra-regional powers to continue as the “overseers” of the region.

The literature on ASEAN has the shortcoming of misidentifying how the ASEAN nations viewed neutrality and regional autonomy within the context of the Vietnam War. In 1971, ASEAN declared the Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), aiming for regional autonomy and recognizing every state’s “right of every state, large or small, to lead its national existence free from outside interference in its internal affairs as this interference will adversely affect its freedom, independence and integrity.”³² The literature on ZOPFAN accurately notes that neutrality and regional autonomy were ideals that ASEAN hoped to achieve eventually in the future. For instance, Kusuma Snitwongse in *Thirty Years of ASEAN* described ZOPFAN as an “objective not meant to be immediately implemented, particularly as regards the exclusion of external powers.”³³ Similarly, Alice Ba in *The ASEAN Regional Forum* notes that “the Cold War division of Southeast Asia also contradicted the ZOPFAN ideal.”³⁴ Acharya’s interpretation of ZOPFAN suggests a division among ASEAN countries: Indonesia and Malaysia prioritized regional autonomy and neutrality, while Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines wanted to maintain informal and formal security links with extra-regional powers.³⁵ This study revises this interpretation, arguing that Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore shared similar conceptions of neutrality and regional autonomy, viewing them as a desirable objective but impractical given their close proximity to the regional conflict in Indochina. Again, ZOPFAN was a statement of intent rather than an actual policy put into practice. Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia neglected these norms when engaging with regional and extra-regional powers during the Vietnam era.

³² ASEAN, “Joint Press Statement Special ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting to Issue the Declaration of Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality” (The Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore, November 27, 1971), <https://cil.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/1971-Zone-of-Peace-Freedom-and-Neutrality-Declaration-1-1.pdf>.

³³ Kusuma Snitwongse, “Thirty Years of ASEAN: Achievements through Political Cooperation,” *The Pacific Review* 11, no. 2 (1998): 186, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512749808719252>.

³⁴ Alice Ba, “The ASEAN Regional Forum: Maintaining the Regional Idea in Southeast Asia,” *International Journal* 52, no. 4 (1997): 650, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40203246>.

³⁵ Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia*, 55.

The literature on ASEAN often neglects the Vietnam War (Second Indochina War) as a significant factor in ASEAN's decision-making, typically favoring analysis of the Cambodian conflict (Third Indochina War) starting in 1978. For example, Acharya omits mention of the Vietnam War and instead focuses on the Cambodian conflict's challenge to ASEAN's norms of neutrality, regional autonomy, and non-interference in Southeast Asian affairs. Acharya concludes that ASEAN's actions during the 1978-1989 conflict came "at the expense of its norm of providing regional solutions to regional problems."³⁶ Similarly, Alice Ba, in *(Re)Negotiating East and Southeast Asia*, emphasizes the Vietnam invasion of Cambodia in 1978 as the major conflict testing ASEAN's norms, describing it as a "critical test of ASEAN unity" and noting how "divergent preferences and perceptions, combined with unilateral actions, all proved highly fragmenting to a still-nascent ASEAN."³⁷ Ba, like Acharya, does not contextualize ASEAN's conceptualizations of regional autonomy, neutrality, and non-interference within the context of the Vietnam War. The reasons for this scholarly neglect of the Vietnam War as a significant era for testing ASEAN's norms remain unclear. This dissertation does not attempt to investigate the links between the Second and Third Indochina Wars when it came to ASEAN policies regarding such norms. However, since scholars of ASEAN analyze the organization temporally, in terms of its evolution over time, examining the origins of ASEAN countries compromising their norms during the Vietnam War could be a productive endeavor. Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia were, in fact, united during the Vietnam era in disregarding regional autonomy, neutrality, and non-interference in their foreign policies.

The buying time thesis calls into question the accuracy of the national histories of Malaysia and its adherence to regional autonomy, neutrality, and non-alignment. Ooi Keat Gin in *Malaysia and the Cold War Era* makes a distinction between the Tunku Abdul Rahman (1957-70) and Tun Abdul Razak (1970-76) administrations. Gin argues that Rahman was pro-Western, while Razak's foreign policy priority was to have a neutral and non-aligned Malaysia.³⁸ Similarly, Cheng-Chwee Kuik states that

³⁶ Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia*, 79-96.

³⁷ Alice D. Ba, *(Re)Negotiating East and Southeast Asia: Region, Regionalism, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009), 98.

³⁸ Ooi Keat Gin, "Malaysia and the Cold War: The Longue Durée Approach," in *Malaysia and the Cold War Era*, ed. Ooi Keat Gin (London: Routledge, 2020), 263.

as Prime Minister, Razak abandoned the “country’s long-standing pro-West stance, and [replaced] it with a posture of non-alignment and regional neutralization.”³⁹ The concept of neutralization was a proposal put forward by Malaysia formally at the Non-Aligned conference in Lusaka, Zambia, in 1970. Neutralization called on the ASEAN members to seek explicit guarantees from the three great powers, the United States, the Soviet Union, and China, to ensure they would not bring their competition to Southeast Asia and respect the region’s neutrality. The neutralization proposal also called on the ASEAN members to pursue policies of non-aggression and noninterference while avoiding entanglements in great power rivalries.⁴⁰ The pursuit of receiving great power guarantees for the neutrality of Southeast Asia was never set in motion by the ASEAN members. Besides being an unrealistic foreign policy, due to it essentially demanding great powers to give up their influence in the region, Prime Minister Razak was contradictory in his foreign policies. Razak called for the neutralization of Southeast Asia but, at the same time, in private, requested the United States and ANZUK to maintain their economic, military, and political influence in the region. This research revises the accepted view amongst scholars of Malaysia that Razak’s foreign policy was a departure from his predecessor by arguing that Razak did not commit to the ideas of regional autonomy and neutrality during the Vietnam War.

The literature about Singapore typically takes the position that the city-state was only neutral and non-aligned in name and not in practice. For instance, in *Singapore’s Foreign Policy*, Michael Leifer states that Singapore’s non-alignment and neutral positions were “declaratory” and that Singapore had no problems pursuing a “cooperative and lucrative relationship with both the USA and the government of South Vietnam during the late 1960s.”⁴¹ Ang Cheng Guan in *Singapore and the Vietnam War* also outlines how, after 1966, Prime Minister Lee was pro-American and how he supported the U.S. war effort and hoped that the Americans would continue to “hold the line” in Vietnam.⁴² The exception amongst

³⁹ Cheng-Chwee Kuik, “Malaysia–China Relations 1: Three Enduring Themes,” in *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia*, ed. Meredith Weiss (London: Routledge, 2014), 419.

⁴⁰ Shaun Narine, “ASEAN and the Management of Regional Security,” *Pacific Affairs* 71, no. 2 (1998): 198, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2760976>.

⁴¹ Michael Leifer, *Singapore’s Foreign Policy: Coping with Vulnerability* (London: Routledge, 2000), 35.

⁴² Ang Cheng Guan, “Singapore and the Vietnam War,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40, no. 2 (2009): 363–64, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463409000186>.

Singapore historians is Daniel Wei Boon Chua, who, in *US-Singapore Relations, 1965–1975*, describes the city-state as following a “strategic non-alignment” policy.⁴³ Although Chua describes Singapore as strategically non-aligned, this is a misnomer as Chua also concedes that “Singapore’s claims of neutralism [were] highly questionable.”⁴⁴ This dissertation expands on the issue of Singapore’s “non-aligned credentials” and argues that its engagement with the United States and the ANZUK nations as it related to the Soviet Union, China, Vietnam, and Thailand shows that it did not adhere to ASEAN’s norms.⁴⁵

The buying time thesis also calls into question the history of Indonesia’s neutral and non-aligned foreign policy during the Vietnam era. Dewi Fortuna Anwar in *Indonesia in ASEAN* states that the “search for a greater degree of regional autonomy by reducing the roles of external powers in regulating the regional order has been at the heart of Indonesia’s preoccupation in ASEAN from its inception.”⁴⁶ Anwar also argues that regional autonomy had “remained unfulfilled” due to differences among the ASEAN members in their perceptions of defense arrangements.⁴⁷ Marty Natalegawa, Indonesia’s Foreign Minister between 2009-14, similarly argues that Indonesia and Malaysia were primarily the ones that “spoke of neutrality” while the other member states, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines, “largely followed pro-West foreign policy orientations.”⁴⁸ Moreover, Natalegawa states that through its “independent and active (*bebas aktif*)” foreign policy, Indonesia took a non-aligned position during the Cold War as it was against joining formal security agreements.⁴⁹ This study questions the notion amongst Indonesian historians that Indonesia was neutral, non-aligned, and pursued a foreign policy for regional autonomy. Instead, it argues that its engagement with the United States and the ANZUK nations shows that it disregarded these concepts when it came to the U.S. military presence in Vietnam and Thailand and its engagement with China. While Indonesia may have

⁴³ Daniel Wei Boon Chua, *US-Singapore Relations, 1965–1975: Strategic Non-Alignment in the Cold War* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2017).

⁴⁴ Chua, *US-Singapore Relations*, 261.

⁴⁵ Wei Boon Chua, “Intimacy at a Distance: A History of United States-Singapore Foreign Relations from 1965 to 1975” (The Australian National University, 2014), 15.

⁴⁶ Dewi Fortuna Anwar, *Indonesia in ASEAN: Foreign Policy and Regionalism* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1994), 174.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Marty Natalegawa, *Does ASEAN Matter? A View From Within* (Singapore: ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2018), 48.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

had an “independent and active” foreign policy and rejected joining formal military agreements, it was not against seeing the continuation of existing security arrangements that helped maintain U.S. and ANZUK power in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War.

This project prioritizes the similarities among Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia regarding the buying time thesis and the role of the United States and ANZUK in Southeast Asia. This research does not compare and contrast the differences in foreign policy among these three nations. Instead, it illustrates how Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia similarly approached the ANZUK and U.S. presence in Vietnam, advocating for continued influence in Southeast Asia. It also demonstrates their similar approaches toward China, Vietnam, and Thailand concerning the need for ongoing U.S. engagement and dominance in the region. Additionally, it shows how the U.S. war effort in Vietnam affected the economic development of each country. With the exception of Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore faced significant economic improvements during the immediate period of the Vietnam War. The analysis of differences, however, concerns the varying outcomes of the U.S. war effort on economic development in these three countries rather than their perspectives of foreign policy. In summary, this research offers and prioritizes a cumulative understanding of the similarities in the foreign policies of Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia during the Vietnam War.

Primary Sources

This study will analyze archival documents from the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom, along with published primary sources from Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore. By examining these sources, the research aims to understand how these three ASEAN countries conceptualized the buying time concept and investigate the extent to which the U.S. war effort in Vietnam contributed to their economic development. This research primarily relies on the pronouncements and correspondence of senior government officials from the three ASEAN countries, as well as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. It focuses on how the high-level decision-makers in the three ASEAN countries understood and engaged with the buying time thesis rather than on how the broader public or legislative bodies in these countries debated or conceptualized the issue.

While sources such as legislative debates, public opinion polls, and media reports could provide alternative perspectives on the Vietnam War and U.S.-Southeast Asian engagement, this study aims to offer a detailed understanding of how leaders and senior officials in the ASEAN countries perceived the buying time concept, U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia, and the impact on economic development during the Vietnam War.

The relevant U.S. archival records to this dissertation are located in the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) at College Park, Maryland. One of the collections I consulted was the *Subject Files, 1965–1974*, which are a part of the *General Records of the Department of State* (Record Group 59) and consist of documents related to Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia during the Vietnam era. Another collection I consulted at NARA was the *Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974*, which are a part of the *Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State* (Record Group 84) and includes documents of the U.S. Embassy in Indonesia during the Vietnam War. I also referred to digital collections such as the *U.S. Declassified Documents Online*, the *Foreign Relations of the United States*, and the *CIA Records Search Tool* to supplement the archival sources at NARA. I also consulted the *World Bank Group Archives Oral History Program* and the *Records of the Office of the President* located at the World Bank Group Archives.

The Australian archival records I consulted for this study are digitally available at the National Archives of Australia. The documents I refer to come from the recording agencies such as the *Department of External Affairs [II]*, *Central Office/Department of Foreign Affairs, Central Office* (Series number: A1838), the *Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet* (Series number: A1209), the *Australian Embassy, Republic of Indonesia [Djakarta/Jakarta]* (Series number A4359), *Department of Air, Central Office* (Series number: A703) and *Australian High Commission, Singapore* (Series number: A13883).

As for the British records, I consulted the *Foreign Office Files for Southeast Asia, 1963–1980*, a part of the Adam Matthew digital database, which houses documents from the British National Archives at Kew. The documents I refer to come from the

FCO 24 and FCO 15 class papers, which are a part of the module titled *Section II: Foundations of Economic Growth and Industrialisation, 1967–1980*.

On the Malaysian side, I consulted the collections titled *Speeches by Tun Haji Abdul Razak Bin Hussein (Ucapan-Ucapan Tun Haji Abdul Razak Bin Hussein)*, covering the years from 1962 to 1973 and compiled by the National Archives of Malaysia/Prime Minister's Department (*Arkib Negara Malaysia/Jabatan Perdana Menteri*). I also referred to the memoirs of Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. As for the Indonesian collections, I referred to published primary sources from the *Department of Defense and Security (Departemen Pertahanan Keamanan)* and the writings of Indonesia's technocrats working in Suharto's government known as the Berkeley Mafia.

As the documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia remain inaccessible, this dissertation has limitations in presenting the direct foreign policy viewpoints of the leaders from Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, the American, British, and Australian sources still provide valuable insights into how the states people from Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia conceptualized the buying time concept during the Vietnam era. By cross-checking the American, British, and Australian archives, I gained insight into how the leaders from Southeast Asia consistently conveyed a pro-U.S./ANZUK foreign policy bias in discussions with their Western counterparts during the Vietnam War.

Research Limitations

This study excludes the cases of Thailand and the Philippines from its analysis despite their significant roles as key U.S. allies during the Vietnam War. The first rationale for their exclusion lies in this study's deliberate focus on the so-called neutral and non-aligned countries within ASEAN during the Cold War. Unlike Thailand and the Philippines, the remaining ASEAN members were not participants in bilateral alliances with the United States, nor were they members of the U.S.-led collective defense organization, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). Second, while this research primarily relies on English-language archival documents from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia to reconstruct the foreign policy perspectives of Malaysian, Singaporean, and Indonesian leaders, it seeks to

achieve a balanced analysis by incorporating available official government publications in the languages of these countries, i.e. Bahasa Melayu, English, and Bahasa Indonesia. Conducting a comprehensive analysis of Thailand and the Philippines would require access to Thai and Filipino/Tagalog sources, which fall outside the researcher's linguistic capabilities. Future studies could build upon this research by incorporating archival materials from Thailand in Thai and the Philippines in Filipino/Tagalog, as well as in English, particularly by researchers with the necessary linguistic capabilities and access to such sources.

The exclusion of Thailand from this study does not diminish its relevance in examining its relationship with the buying time thesis. Thailand played a significant supporting role in the U.S. war effort in Indochina, particularly through hosting air bases utilized by the United States for bombing missions against North Vietnam and Laos.⁵⁰ At the same time, Thailand's leaders, especially Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman (1959–71), perceived ASEAN as a vehicle for fostering “regional integration” with the aim of establishing a “Southeast Asian Community” that was politically, economically, and socially stable.⁵¹ Moreover, the United States provided Thailand with substantial economic aid throughout the Cold War. In the 1950s, U.S. economic assistance did not fall below \$26 million. By the late 1960s, the United States continued to provide aid in the tens of millions, facilitated more than \$100 million in loans by the World Bank, and became Thailand's top investor in the private sector.⁵² Researchers interested in further exploring the U.S.-Thai relationship could benefit from examining the extent to which Thai leaders perceived a continued U.S. presence in Southeast Asia as essential for stabilizing the political and economic affairs of ASEAN member states. This investigation could offer valuable insights into how the leaders in Thailand regarded the U.S. presence in Southeast Asia as a key factor in promoting regional stability. Future studies can also explore the extent to which Thailand's leaders strategically accommodated a

⁵⁰ Arne Kislenko, “A Not So Silent Partner: Thailand's Role in Covert Operations, Counter-Insurgency, and the Wars in Indochina,” *Journal of Conflict Studies* 42, no. 1 (2004), <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/view/292>.

⁵¹ Kei Koga, “The Process of ASEAN's Institutional Consolidation in 1968-1976: Theoretical Implications for Changes of Third-World Security Oriented Institution,” *RSIS Working Paper* 234, no. 12 (2012): 16.

⁵² Benjamin Zawacki, *Thailand: Shifting Ground between the US and a Rising China* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2017), 27, 35-36.

continued U.S. presence in Southeast Asia and examine the impact of U.S. economic involvement on Thailand's economic development during the Vietnam War.

Excluding the Philippines from this research also does not indicate that it is an irrelevant case study in analyzing its relevance to the buying time thesis. The Philippines, like Thailand, played a crucial role in the Vietnam war by hosting U.S. bases such as the Clark Air Base and Subic Naval Base, which were instrumental in providing military support during the war.⁵³ As for the position of Filipino leaders towards ASEAN, in particular President Ferdinand Marcos (1965–86), regarded ASEAN as a vital institution for promoting economic development and enhancing cooperation among member states.⁵⁴ Additionally, the United States also provided the Marcos regime with tens of millions in economic aid.⁵⁵ Similar to Thailand, future archival-based research could investigate how Filipino leaders advocated for a continued U.S. presence in Southeast Asia and their perceptions of its role in ensuring political and economic stability. Such research could explore how the U.S. presence during the Vietnam War contributed to the economic development of the Philippines.

Structure

This dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. Each chapter follows the same themes. The first section in each chapter focuses on the relationship between an ASEAN member and ANZUK. The second section of each chapter explores how the ASEAN member framed its foreign policies toward China, Vietnam, Cambodia (in Indonesia's case), and Thailand. The third section of each chapter analyzes the extent to which the U.S. war effort in Indochina contributed to the economic development of said ASEAN member.

Chapter 1: Malaysia argues that Malaysia disregarded the ASEAN concepts of regional autonomy, neutrality, and non-alignment as its foreign policy priority was the call on the United States and ANZUK nations to maintain their economic,

⁵³ Teresa S. Encarnacion Tadem, "The Emergence of Filipino Technocrats as Cold War 'Pawns,'" *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 50, no. 4 (2020): 533, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2019.1694961>.

⁵⁴ Koga, "The Process of ASEAN's Institutional Consolidation in 1968-1976," 16.

⁵⁵ Fibiger, "The Nixon Doctrine and the Making of Authoritarianism in Island Southeast Asia," 968-69.

military, and political presence in the Southeast Asian region so that they could help Malaysia buy time to develop its military and economic capabilities. As for the question of whether the U.S. war effort in Vietnam contributed to the economic development of Malaysia, I argue that it did not, as the United States did not regard Malaysia as a vital country for its strategic regional interests and, therefore, the U.S. government did not expand its political and economic engagement with Malaysia during the Vietnam era. Although the United States did not prioritize Malaysia in its foreign policy, Malaysia actively supported the buying time thesis. The Malaysians saw the U.S. presence in Southeast Asia, especially in Vietnam and Thailand, as crucial for regional stability. They also considered U.S. economic engagement, particularly economic assistance and investment, vital for Malaysia's national development.

Chapter 2: Singapore argues that Singapore, like Malaysia, called on the United States and ANZUK to maintain their presence in Southeast Asia to buy time for developing its economy and defenses. By pursuing this foreign policy, Singapore contradicted ASEAN's core principles of regional autonomy, neutrality, and non-alignment. However, unlike Malaysia, Singapore benefited significantly from the Second Indochina War, experiencing massive economic growth due to the U.S. war effort in Vietnam. Singapore also contributed to the U.S. war effort in Vietnam as it was a regional petroleum hub and welcomed U.S. and ANZUK naval ships in its docking facilities. The Second Indochina War directly contributed to Singapore's economic development.

Chapter 3: Indonesia argues that Indonesia, like Malaysia and Singapore, adopted a foreign policy advocating for the continued presence of the United States and ANZUK nations in Southeast Asia to buy time to develop its military and economic capabilities. Again, Indonesia's foreign policy marked a departure from its traditional stance of non-alignment, neutrality, and regional autonomy. During the Vietnam era, Indonesia preferred a regional order that consisted of ongoing U.S. and ANZUK influence. This chapter also argues that Indonesia indirectly benefited from the Vietnam War. Though not a direct participant in the war, Indonesia was crucial to U.S. strategic interests in maintaining a non-communist Southeast Asia, in case Indochina fell. Therefore, throughout the Vietnam era, Indonesia benefited from a

U.S.-led international order where American policymakers, in conjunction with Indonesian officials, lobbied for the transfer of vast sums of capital from developed nations and multilateral institutions to Indonesia. The U.S. war effort in Vietnam indirectly caused significant advances in Indonesia's economic development.

The conclusion reiterates the argument that during the Vietnam War, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia shaped their foreign policies to create a regional space for U.S. hegemony in Southeast Asia. The cases of these three ASEAN states reveal that their primary motivation was to leverage U.S. diplomatic, economic, and military power to buy time for national economic development and ensure regional stability. However, this approach conflicted with what ASEAN scholars typically view as their foreign policy objectives, i.e., non-alignment, neutrality, and regional autonomy. By embracing the buying time concept, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia effectively sidelined these core ASEAN norms, prioritizing instead the creation of a regional space for the United States to maintain its power and influence over Southeast Asia.

CHAPTER 1: MALAYSIA

1.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how the Malaysian leadership called on the United States and the ANZUK nations to maintain their political, economic, and military presence in the Southeast Asian region so that they could buy time for Malaysia to improve its economic and defensive capabilities. It argues that the buying time rhetoric that Malaysia had adopted resulted in a foreign policy that undermined the ASEAN conceptions of regional autonomy, neutrality, and non-alignment as Malaysia ultimately authorized extra-regional intervention of Malaysian-Singaporean defensive affairs and was in support of the U.S. war effort in Indochina. As previously mentioned, Malaysia introduced the concept of neutralization at the 1970 Non-Aligned Conference in Lusaka, Zambia. The neutralization proposal urged ASEAN members to secure explicit commitments from the United States, the Soviet Union, and China, ensuring that these great powers would refrain from extending their rivalries into Southeast Asia and respect the region's neutrality. The neutralization concept also emphasized the importance of ASEAN countries adopting policies of non-aggression and non-interference toward each other and steering clear of involvement in great power conflicts.⁵⁶ In other words, neutralization aimed to create an environment where there was no great power presence in Southeast Asia. Finally, this chapter argues that despite Malaysia's support for the U.S. military presence in Indochina and its calls for Western powers to buy time to assist in its economic and defense capabilities, the U.S. presence in Vietnam and, broadly, Southeast Asia did not contribute to Malaysia's economic

⁵⁶ Narine, "ASEAN and the Management of Regional Security," 198.

advances. The American leadership showed little interest in deepening political ties with Malaysia or incorporating Malaysia into its broader strategic Cold War plans, and, therefore, the United States had little impact on Malaysia's economic development during the Vietnam era.

1.2 Malaysia and ANZUK

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak, Malaysia did not pursue a foreign policy of regional autonomy. Instead, it encouraged the military presence of the ANZUK nations, resulting in extra-regional powers intervening in the region's security affairs. The Malaysian leadership viewed neutralization as a long-term objective rather than an immediate priority. Rather than actively pursuing a foreign policy aimed at regional autonomy and neutrality, Malaysia's leaders expressed support for neutralization only in rhetoric. They repeatedly stated their intent to pursue neutralization in the future, yet they refrained from specifying a concrete timeline for its implementation. Instead, Malaysia advocated for the continued ANZUK military presence in Southeast Asia in the immediate term. Malaysia saw value in supporting the Five Power Defense Arrangements (FPDA) as its goal was to enhance its defensive capabilities, particularly to build an air force. 1971 Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, and Singapore established the Five Power Defense Arrangements (FPDA). The FPDA was a consultative arrangement, and the members agreed to the following: "In the event of any form of armed attack externally organized or supported or the threat of such attack against Malaysia and Singapore, their Governments would immediately consult together for the purpose of deciding what measures should be taken jointly or separately in relation to such attack or threat."⁵⁷

Malaysia's decision to disregard regional autonomy created an environment where extra-regional powers like Australia could dictate how military cooperation would be conducted. In other words, Malaysia's decision to overlook regional autonomy allowed extra-regional powers like Australia to shape the framework for military cooperation. Malaysia ceded this influence to external powers rather than taking the

⁵⁷ Andrea Benvenuti and Moreen Dee, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements and the Reappraisal of the British and Australian Policy Interests in Southeast Asia, 1970–75," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 4, no. 1 (2010): 115, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463409990270>.

initiative to foster regional collaboration on security issues. Malaysia and Singapore each prioritized the FPDA to improve their own national defense capabilities rather than to use it to foster cooperation between themselves. As Malaysia and Singapore were unwilling to cooperate, the task of bringing them together fell to the ANZUK nations, who conducted air defense exercises under the FPDA framework. Therefore, cooperation between Malaysia and Singapore resulted primarily from ANZUK efforts rather than as a regional initiative. The FPDA's existence also brought with it the indirect intervention of the United States in Southeast Asian affairs. The United States was involved in dictating the military purchases of Malaysia and Singapore in order to ensure their continued cooperation under the FPDA. The United States also indirectly influenced the region by encouraging the ANZUK nations to take the lead in developing the defensive capabilities of Malaysia and Singapore. It viewed the ANZUK nations as an interrelated and integral part of Southeast Asia's security landscape.

Differentiating between Malaysia's immediate and long-term foreign policy objectives reveals how the Malaysian leadership was willing to abandon the idea of regional autonomy during the Vietnam era. In 1971, Prime Minister Razak addressed the Malaysian Parliament, stating that although neutralization was the desired long-term solution for Southeast Asia, Malaysia, in the meantime, needed to strengthen its defensive capabilities against potential dangers. For Razak, the FPDA was necessary as it allowed Malaysia to turn to its Western allies in the case of an external threat. At the same time, Razak argued that before there could be an international consensus on neutralization, the Southeast Asian countries first needed to get their houses in order, resolve their conflicts, and start cooperating. Razak saw this process as necessary before achieving neutralization, which he considered the "best permanent solution to ensure the security and stability of Southeast Asia."⁵⁸ Although neutralization was the ultimate long-term objective, Razak's foreign policy approach saw the need for Malaysia to continue its security ties with its ANZUK allies in the immediate period while also calling for intra-regional cooperation. Razak's approach indicated a compromise where it sacrificed a degree of autonomy by allowing the

⁵⁸ Siaran Akhbar, July 26, 1971, Malaysian Foreign Policy (Folder 2), FCO 24/1162, U.K. National Archives (hereafter UKNA); Siaran Akhbar, September 13, 1971, Malaysian Foreign Policy (Folder 2), FCO 24/1162, UKNA.

potential interference of extra-regional powers in Southeast Asian affairs in exchange for protection against possible threats.

The Malaysian leadership considered the FPDA a necessary but temporary arrangement that needed to continue until the great powers agreed to guarantee the neutrality of the Southeast Asian region. For instance, in interactions with Australian officials in 1972, Malaysia's Chief of Defense Forces expressed that Australian defense assistance, and the presence of Australian forces were necessary until the neutralization of Southeast Asia. Prime Minister Razak had not wanted to see the FPDA to be "abruptly terminated."⁵⁹ Malaysia had given the Australians a clear signal that it was not demanding that foreign troops leave the Southeast Asian region.⁶⁰ For the Malaysian leadership, there would only be a necessity for the dissolution of the FPDA in the event that great powers agreed to provide guarantees of neutrality towards Southeast Asia. The Malaysians argued that once it achieved great power guarantees, there could no longer be military arrangements with extra-regional powers as it would contradict its neutral foreign policy stance.⁶¹ Malaysia's views towards the FPDA and neutralization reflected a foreign policy that prioritized collaboration with ANZUK for national security over the goal of achieving immediate regional autonomy.

Malaysia's support towards the FPDA showcased how there was not necessarily a sharp transition from that of a pro-Western country to a non-aligned nation that sought the regional autonomy of Southeast Asia. The existing discourse on Malaysia and ZOPFAN obscures the significance of the FPDA to Malaysian foreign policy. For example, scholars have typically distinguished the Tunku Abdul Rahman (1957–70) and Tun Abdul Razak (1970–76) administrations by describing the former as pro-Western and the latter as neutral. According to this view, the Rahman administration was Western-oriented due to Malaysia's economic and military reliance on the United Kingdom. In contrast, the Razak administration departed from such a course. It looked for new strategies to ensure Malaysia's safety due to losing

⁵⁹ Cablegram, AHC Kuala Lumpur to DFA, March 15, 1972, Five Power Defence Arrangements for Malaysia and Singapore, 1971 Policy, A1209, 1971/9495, National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA), 133.

⁶⁰ Australians Needed: Malaysia, April 11, 1972, Five Power Defence Arrangements for Malaysia and Singapore, 1971 Policy, A1209, 1971/9495, NAA, 56.

⁶¹ Cablegram, DFA to Australian Embassy Tokyo, June 6, 1972, Five power arrangements - Australian domestic attitude to the five power arrangements, A1838, 696/1/26/1 PART 1, NAA, 21-23.

its security guarantor with the announcement of the British withdrawal.⁶² In actuality, Malaysian officials expressed that as they saw neutralization as a future-intended objective, they were not calling for the sudden end of the FPDA or the military bases in Southeast Asia until there was a consensus amongst ASEAN and the great powers for a zone of neutrality.⁶³ In other words, Malaysia under Razak had remained in the Western camp while also aspiring for eventual neutrality in Southeast Asia.

Malaysia's disposition to have the ANZUK nations assist in its security through air and naval support was an example of its pro-Western tilt in its foreign policy. In 1969, Australia agreed to station 42 Mirage aircraft in the Butterworth airbase in Malaysia, and 8 in the Tengah airbase in Singapore. At the time, Australia and New Zealand had also decided to "maintain a naval ship in the area at all times for the purpose of protection and not merely for purposes of training."⁶⁴ In 1970, Razak conveyed to his ANZUK partners that a significant priority for Malaysia was the development of its air defenses. The Malaysian leadership supported the idea of maintaining an arrangement where its ANZUK allies resumed naval support to supplement the Australian fighter jets in Malaysia.⁶⁵ As part of the final FPDA agreement in 1971, Australia, Britain, and New Zealand each agreed to commit air and naval units to Malaysia and Singapore.⁶⁶ Although the Razak government had also called for the neutralization of Southeast Asia, it was not yet ready to give up the military support that came with engaging with the ANZUK nations as part of the FPDA.

The ANZUK presence in Southeast Asia allowed the Malaysian government to buy time to continue developing its defenses through training and assistance from its

⁶² Ooi Keat Gin, "Malaysia and the Cold War," 263; Elina Noor and T. N. Qistina, "Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Malaysian Foreign Policy," *Asian Security* 13, no. 3 (2017): 200–219, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2017.1354568>.

⁶³ Australian High Commission Singapore, October 4, 1972, Singapore ANZUK (Australia New Zealand United Kingdom) Five Power - general, A13883, 213/1/7A PART 1, NAA, 100.

⁶⁴ Policy Statements on Australian Military Presence in Malaysia/Singapore, February 25, British withdrawal - Five power arrangements, 1969, A1838, 696/1/9 PART 11, NAA, 140.

⁶⁵ Cablegram, Department of External Affairs to AHC London, June 24, 1970, British withdrawal - Five power Arrangements, A1838, 696/1/9 PART 11, NAA, 8; Some Aspects of the Malaysian Approach to Five Power Arrangements, December 17, 1970, British withdrawal - Five power Arrangements, A1838, 696/1/9 PART 11, NAA, 244.

⁶⁶ Benvenuti, "The Heath Government and British Defence Policy in Southeast Asia at the End of Empire (1970–71)," 71.

partners, primarily the Australians. Although Malaysia viewed the FPDA as a temporary arrangement that would cease to exist in the event of neutralization, it still wanted to have the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) remain in Butterworth until the Malaysian Air Force could build up its expertise.⁶⁷ By 1970, Australia had provided Malaysia with Sabre aircraft and was planning to step away from a “protective or garrison role [...] to one of training and technical assistance.”⁶⁸ As for the United Kingdom, even though it expressed to Malaysia that it would attempt to have its personnel available for technical training, it preferred to take a backseat and allow Australia to take the leading role in assisting the Malaysians.⁶⁹ There was value for Malaysia to continue its membership in the FPDA as it could leverage the ANZUK nations’ expertise, particularly the Australians, in strengthening its Air Force capabilities. Had Malaysia decided to commit to only neutralization and not the FPDA in parallel, there was the potential of signaling to its allies that Malaysia was not interested in cooperating with them in defensive matters.

Malaysia’s neglect of regional autonomy exemplified how it considered the FPDA a vital mechanism for maintaining its defense and stability. Previous studies have typically understated the importance of the FPDA to its members by pointing out that it was merely a “consultative arrangement backed by a small air defense force [and] ground force component.”⁷⁰ Others have given more credit to the FPDA by stating that ANZUK’s presence provided “psychological reassurance/deterrence” against potential communist threats and regional neighbors such as Indonesia. In other words, although there were no concrete security assurances, the agreement to consult in the event of an attack implied that an aggressor would face uncertainty regarding whether its actions would provoke a joint response from all five

⁶⁷ Cablegram, DFA to AHC Singapore, March 3, 1972, Five power arrangements - Australian domestic attitude to the five power arrangements, A1838, 696/1/26/1 PART 1, NAA, 103.

⁶⁸ J.R. Rowland to K.C.B. Shann, November 4, 1970, British withdrawal - Five power arrangements, A1838, 696/1/9 PART 16, NAA, 375.

⁶⁹ Source: J.K. Hickman to Wilford, November 18, 1971, Defence Assistance to Malaysia by United Kingdom, FCO 24/1178, UKNA; Training Assistance to Malaysia, Draft Defensive Brief for Defence Secretary, n.d., UKNA.

⁷⁰ Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 52.

members.⁷¹ Razak saw merit in the FPDA's psychological assurance as he considered ANZUK's presence to contribute to Malaysia's defense, stability, and confidence, which otherwise, in his view, would not necessarily exist.⁷² Put differently, Malaysia's perspective on the FPDA emphasized its value beyond mere consultation. It perceived ANZUK's presence as a credible deterrent to potential adversaries and as having a stabilizing element in Southeast Asia in the immediate period due to the ongoing air and land engagement between Malaysia and ANZUK.

An implication of Malaysia's decision to emphasize the importance of the FPDA and relegate regional autonomy was that it enabled extra-regional powers to interfere in Southeast Asian defensive affairs. For instance, Australian officials in 1972 acknowledged that the FPDA allowed the ANZUK nations to exert influence on Malaysia regarding the development of its air defenses. As part of the FPDA, the RAAF had stationed 32 Mirage aircraft in Malaysia's Butterworth Air Base. Australia justified its presence based on the notion that the aircraft prevented Malaysia from the "compulsion to spend heavily on sophisticated weaponry."⁷³ From Australia's perspective, by placing limits on Malaysia's independent efforts to modernize its defenses, Australia was disincentivizing Singapore and Indonesia from responding in a hastily manner where both saw a need to purchase new aircraft in direct response to a Malaysian defense build-up.⁷⁴ Rather than a move towards regional autonomy – where Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia would discuss defensive purchases and matters internally – Australia became an overseer of such issues, claiming that its presence was necessary for stability in Southeast Asia and to avoid an arms race between the three countries.

⁷¹ Andrea Benvenuti and David Martin Jones, "With Friends Like These: Australia, the United States, and Southeast Asian Détente," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 21, no. 2 (2019): 33, https://doi.org/10.1162/jcws_a_00876; Ralf Emmers, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements and Defense Diplomacy in Southeast Asia," *Asian Security* 8, no. 3 (2012): 274, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2012.723921>.

⁷² Cablegram, Department of External Affairs to AHC Kuala Lumpur, May 22, 1970, British withdrawal - Five power Arrangements, A1838, 696/1/9 PART 11, NAA, 76; General Discussion on the Working of Five Power Defence Arrangements, Singapore ANZUK (Australia New Zealand United Kingdom) Five Power - general, A13883, 213/1/7A PART 1, September 19, 1972, NAA, 121.

⁷³ Defence Committee, The Five Power Arrangements and ANZUK, April 4, 1972, Five Power Defence Arrangements for Malaysia and Singapore, 1971 Policy, A1209, 1971/9495, NAA, 41-42, 46-47.

⁷⁴ Defence: South-East Asia's View - Part 2, February 9, 1972, Five Power Defence Arrangements for Malaysia and Singapore, 1971 Policy, A1209, 1971/9495, NAA, 164.

In the early 1970s, Malaysia was still far from being able to participate in or encourage others to accept a regional autonomous Southeast Asia as it was highly suspicious of its neighbors, specifically Singapore. There was merit in Australian concerns about a potential arms race between Malaysia and Singapore. In 1970, Singapore was in talks with the United States to purchase 24 Patton tanks from the United States. The United States stipulated that Singapore had to inform Malaysia about these purchases.⁷⁵ In contact with Malaysian officials, the Australians were getting the impression that Malaysia was troubled with Singapore's moves to expand its offensive capabilities by ordering tanks, strike aircraft, and artillery.⁷⁶ In 1971, Tan Sri Zainal Abidin Sulong, Malaysia's Deputy Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explicitly told the Australian High Commissioner to Malaysia that the Malaysians would possibly need to prepare itself in response to Singapore acquiring tanks as he regarded it as posing an implied offensive threat towards Johor, located at the south of the Malay peninsula.⁷⁷ If Malaysia had indeed been committed to the realization of the neutralization of Southeast Asia, Malaysia's suspicions towards Singapore's military intentions would not have helped this goal. Instead, there was the danger of increasing conflict and instability due to such distrust.

The mutual distrust between Malaysia and Singapore illustrated how both nations prioritized the development of their defense capabilities independently rather than facilitating bilateral communication and engagement to address shared concerns. Both countries saw "two Four Power arrangements (itself plus the ANZUK countries) rather than a single Five Power system" and preferred to have "external powers tacitly, if not explicitly, become selectively and preferentially committed to itself at the expense of the other."⁷⁸ Some Malaysian officials even had expressed to the Australians and New Zealanders that there were two quadripartite relations and

⁷⁵ Purchase of Patton Tanks, July 14, 1970, South East Asia Intra Regional Relations - Singapore - Malaysia, A1838, 3006/10/4 PART 18, NAA, 291.

⁷⁶ Cablegram, AHC Kuala Lumpur to DFA, April 25, 1971, South East Asia Intra Regional Relations - Singapore - Malaysia, A1838, 3006/10/4 PART 19, NAA, 186.

⁷⁷ [No Document Title], July 7, 1971, South East Asia Intra Regional Relations - Singapore - Malaysia, A1838, 3006/10/4 PART 19, NAA, 121.

⁷⁸ Defence Committee, The Five Power Arrangements and ANZUK, April 4, 1972, Five Power Defence arrangements for Malaysia and Singapore, 1971 policy, A1209, 1971/9495, NAA, 42.

that the defense of Malaysia and Singapore was not indivisible.⁷⁹ Singapore, too, distrusted its neighbor. One reason for Singapore's arms build-up was to prepare itself in case certain political groups in Malaysia came into power that disliked and would take military actions against the existing leadership in Singapore.⁸⁰ After separating from Malaysia in 1965, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew aimed to expand the Singapore Armed Forces capabilities to deter Malaysia from attacking Singapore. Additionally, for Lee, the ANZUK presence "would be a deterrent even without a defense treaty."⁸¹ The priority for Malaysia and Singapore was to utilize the presence of the extra-regional actors in ways that would privilege their desires and needs rather than facilitating bilateral cooperation and engagement to address shared concerns within the context of the FPDA.

As Malaysia and Singapore deeply distrusted each other, facilitating cooperation mainly fell on the Australians. Australian Prime Minister William McMahon (1971-72) held the view that Malaysia and Singapore, in the long run, needed to "look after themselves" and that they needed to start "cooperating between themselves and coordinating their activities."⁸² As a start, McMahon recommended having joint military exercises. However, getting the Malaysians and Singaporeans to cooperate was challenging. For instance, Malaysia rejected the idea of having Singapore's Armed Forces train on Malaysian soil.⁸³ According to one Malaysian general, by joining in jungle warfare training, Singapore could take advantage and use its forces to conduct operations against Malaysia.⁸⁴ As a result, Singapore turned to bilateral cooperation with Australia to train its forces there.⁸⁵ By late 1972, there were mixed

⁷⁹ Chua, Daniel Wei Boon. "America's Role in the Five Power Defence Arrangements: Anglo-American Power Transition in South-East Asia, 1967–1971." *International History Review* 39, no. 4 (2017): 617. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2016.1241952>; Five-Power Arrangements and the ANZUK Force, March 2, 1972, Singapore ANZUK (Australia New Zealand United Kingdom) Five Power - general, A13883, 213/1/7A PART 1, NAA, 379; Report on a call on General Ja'afar Chief of Staff to CAFS Malaysia, February 9, 1972, Singapore ANZUK (Australia New Zealand United Kingdom) Five Power - general, A13883, 213/1/7A PART 1, NAA, 395.

⁸⁰ Zubaidah Rahim, *Singapore in the Malay World* (London: Routledge, 2009), 89.

⁸¹ Lee Kuan Yew, *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story: 1965-2000* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), 19.

⁸² Lord Carrington's Visit, July 31, 1970, British withdrawal - Five power arrangements, A1838, 696/1/9 PART 16, NAA, 17.

⁸³ Ang Cheng Guan, "Malaysia, Singapore, and the Road to the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), July 1970–November 1971," *War & Society* 30, no. 3 (2011): 207–25, <https://doi.org/10.1179/204243411X13123630864543>.

⁸⁴ Cablegram, AHC Kuala Lumpur to DFA, February 26, 1972, South East Asia Intra Regional Relations - Singapore - Malaysia, A1838, 3006/10/4 PART 20, NAA, 121.

⁸⁵ Guan, "Malaysia, Singapore, and the Road to the Five Power Defence Arrangements," 224.

results in encouraging cooperation between Malaysia and Singapore. According to Australian reports, joint naval exercises had started as part of the FPDA with Malaysian and Singaporean ships and aircraft working together. However, there was no success in ground force cooperation.⁸⁶ Although the Australians were intent on promoting cooperation between Malaysia and Singapore, they could not completely get the two parties to trust each other.

One area where the ANZUK nations successfully contributed to Malaysia and Singapore's collaboration was air defense. On September 1, 1971, the members of the FPDA established the Integrated Air Defense System (IADS) to defend the Malaysian and Singaporean airspace.⁸⁷ The IADS's headquarters were in the Butterworth airbase in Malaysia but were placed under the control of the Australians to prevent suspicions between Malaysia and Singapore. Starting in 1972, the FPDA held annual air defense exercises, while periodic naval and land exercises only started a decade later.⁸⁸ Australia considered the IADS the "strongest card" in terms of inducing Malaysia and Singapore to work together. It viewed the IADS as a valuable tool in pressuring both to "consult the other about purchases of sophisticated equipment."⁸⁹ By the time the IADS was in operation, the Australians were optimistic as the framework helped the Malaysians retain its naval base in Woodlands, Singapore. At the same time, the Singaporeans had access to the weapons facilities at the Kuantan Air Base in Malaysia.⁹⁰ Australia's Department of Defense considered the IADS the most "successful embodiment of the Five Power concept" and wanted Australia to continue as the commander of the framework.⁹¹ As the extra-regional power, Australia was the driving force in encouraging Malaysia and Singapore to start communicating on defense matters.

⁸⁶ Minute by the Defence Committee at a meeting held on Thursday, April 13, 1972, Five Power Defence arrangements for Malaysia and Singapore, 1971 policy, A1209, 1971/9495, NAA, 28.

⁸⁷ Tim Huxley, "Singapore and Malaysia: A Precarious Balance?," *The Pacific Review* 4, no. 3 (n.d.): 204–13, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512749108718919>.

⁸⁸ Damon Bristow, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements: Southeast Asia's Unknown Regional Security Organization," *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 27, no. 1 (2005): 5–6; Ralf Emmers, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements and Defense Diplomacy in Southeast Asia," 274.

⁸⁹ Source: J.R. Rowland to K.C.O. Shann November 4, 1970, British withdrawal - Five power Arrangements, A1838, 696/1/9 PART 16, NAA, 376.

⁹⁰ Defence Committee, The Five Power Arrangements and ANZUK, April 4, 1972, Five Power Defence arrangements for Malaysia and Singapore, 1971 policy, A1209, 1971/9495, NAA, 42.

⁹¹ Integrated Air Defence System, November 13, 1972, Joint Air Defence. Malaysia and Singapore, A703, 564/7/60 PART 7, NAA, 234.

The IADS demonstrates how extra-regional forces, rather than the internal or regional forces of Southeast Asia, drove cooperation between Malaysia and Singapore. Past studies have described the FPDA as a mechanism for confidence-building between Malaysia and Singapore.⁹² The central idea of the FPDA was the indivisibility of Malaysia's and Singapore's defense.⁹³ In other words, the thinking was that concentrating on the security of only one country at the expense of the other was a futile endeavor and that having the two countries engage in defense cooperation would help bring regional stability.⁹⁴ Leading up to the signing of the FPDA in 1971, scholars have noted how Malaysia and Singapore accepted the notion that their security was indivisible.⁹⁵ However, distinctions where exactly Malaysia and Singapore accepted or rejected indivisibility need determination. As previously mentioned, the Malaysians distrusted the Singaporeans regarding exercises involving ground forces but accepted collaboration on air defense. The indivisibility of Malaysia and Singapore's security was a work in progress that needed to be attained rather than something that all members of the FPDA accepted from the outset. If regional autonomy called for cooperation between Southeast Asian countries, Malaysia and Singapore did not initiate the efforts when it specifically came to defensive matters. Malaysia was reluctant to cooperate with Singapore, leaving extra-regional powers to take on the burden.

The existence of the FPDA also brought about an environment in Southeast Asia whereby a great power – the United States – became a major driving force in preventing the intensification of adversarial relations between Malaysia and Singapore. In 1969, U.S. officials received word that the McDonnell Douglas Corporation was promoting its F-4 aircraft while the Northrup Corporation was promoting its F-5 aircraft in Southeast Asia.⁹⁶ Singapore was interested in purchasing the F-4 aircraft. In 1970, one American official observed that Singapore

⁹² Leifer, Michael. *Singapore's Foreign Policy: Coping with Vulnerability*. London: Routledge, 2000, 64.

⁹³ Guan, "Malaysia, Singapore, and the Road to the Five Power Defence Arrangements," 219.

⁹⁴ Ralf Emmers, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements and Defense Diplomacy in Southeast Asia," 278.

⁹⁵ Guan, "Malaysia, Singapore, and the Road to the Five Power Defence Arrangements," 218-19; Chua, "America's Role in the Five Power Defence Arrangements: Anglo-American Power Transition in South-East Asia, 1967–1971," 617.

⁹⁶ Memo, G. McMurtrie Godley to Philip J. Farley, June 10, 1969, box 4, DEF 19 Military Assistance, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, U.S. National Archives (hereafter USNA).

seemed “provincial in their attitude” towards establishing the IADS. The official went on to express that the American concern was that the purchase would “throw off development of the infant Five Power IADS” and that the U.S. intention was to avoid an arms race in Southeast Asia.⁹⁷ Malaysia wanted the F-5 aircraft. The United States ended up blocking Singapore from purchasing the F-4. The United States feared that Singapore buying a “sophisticated” aircraft would cause the IADS to fall apart and thought that Malaysia and Singapore purchasing the same aircraft would “mesh nicely with the integrated air defense arrangement.”⁹⁸ Using its influence to intervene in military purchases that could potentially undermine the IADS, the United States prevented adding another point of contention between Malaysia and Singapore.

The U.S. objective was to have Malaysia and Singapore communicate with each other regarding military purchases while ensuring that it did not sell weapons that would cause an adverse reaction by others in Southeast Asia. For instance, by 1972, U.S. officials had stated that Singapore not having the F-4 was “good for both the stability of the region and [for U.S.] relations with the other countries there.”⁹⁹ The American official was referring to how Singapore buying the F-4 would hurt U.S. relations with Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. In addition to considering the sale of weapons within the context of how other countries would react, the United States also took the position that Southeast Asian countries needed to discuss purchases with other governments in either the FPDA or ASEAN.¹⁰⁰ The U.S. rationale was that Malaysia and Singapore would not tolerate the other if there were a significant increase in U.S. military assistance or sales to either. Taking Malaysia into consideration, the United States aimed to ensure that it did not present an image where it had a particular commitment to Singapore that was “separate and distinct from the security of the region.”¹⁰¹ Like the ANZUK nations, the United States was

⁹⁷ F-4E MOD for Singapore and Malaysia, December 22, 1970, box 7, DEF 19 Military Assistance, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

⁹⁸ Chua, “America’s Role in the Five Power Defence Arrangements,” 628-29.

⁹⁹ British Complaint About Sale of Skyhawks, February 11, 1972, box 10, Memoranda, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA; Singaporean Interest in F-4 Aircraft, August 18, 1972, box 10, Memoranda, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

¹⁰⁰ Memorandum for the Members, NDPC, November 17, 1972, box 11, DEF 19 Army, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

¹⁰¹ Memorandum for Interagency Singapore Study Group, April 17, 1972, box 10, POL Policy Study (Singapore), Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

referring to how it viewed the security of Malaysia and Singapore as indivisible and how it depended on the two countries engaging with each other.

Other than providing Malaysia with military equipment as a show of direct interest towards Malaysia, the United States aimed to indirectly bring about Malaysian confidence regarding its security by showing that it wanted to maintain its military commitments with other nations in Southeast Asia. According to one U.S. policy analysis risk assessment, although there was no formal defense treaty between the United States and Malaysia, the U.S. strategy was to declare to Malaysia its intent to “honor treaty commitments” and convey the message that by maintaining a military presence in the area, the United States would bring “security and stability to the whole of [Southeast Asia], including Malaysia.”¹⁰² The United States was referring to its formal military commitments to the Philippines and Thailand. U.S. policymakers were concerned that Malaysia was starting to find the Western countries unreliable due to the gradual American military withdrawal from Vietnam and the ending of the Anglo-Malaysian Defense Agreement (AMDA). The British in 1957 had signed the AMDA, a security alliance, with Australia, New Zealand, Malaya, and Singapore to guarantee the defense of the Malaya region.¹⁰³ The U.S. reasoning was that so long as Malaysia saw the United States genuinely committed to and interested in its partnerships and alliances in Southeast Asia, Malaysia would be confident in its security.¹⁰⁴ The United States attempted to show Malaysia there was still value in retaining military arrangements with the West.

The United States rejected neutralization as it encouraged regional cooperation but stopped short of supporting the idea that Southeast Asia should pursue great power guarantees for neutrality. The United States considered the concept of neutralization impractical, unrealistic, and unattainable.¹⁰⁵ When corresponding with Malaysian officials, the United States seemingly gave the impression that it was open to neutralization in the future. For example, U.S. officials argued that although

¹⁰² Para - Malaysia, 1973, box 11, POL 2/3 PARA Malaysia, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

¹⁰³ Kin Wah Chin, *The Defence of Malaysia and Singapore: The Transformation of a Security System 1957–1971* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1-7.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Para - Malaysia, 1973, box 11, POL 2/3 PARA Malaysia, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA (21); Ted Heavner to Green, June 15, 1972, box 10, POL 8 Non-Alignment (Neutralization in SEA), Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

neutralization was a “worthy long-term objective,” it was not the right time as the “inner strength of the nations of Southeast Asia” was an “essential precondition” for great power guarantees. The Americans insisted that since the nations in Indochina were still in a state of war, there were too many unresolved issues to make neutralization possible.¹⁰⁶ Although the United States had seemingly given the message that neutralization may occur in the future, in reality, the focus was to prevent Southeast Asian policies that undermined American military arrangements in the region. The United States considered the FPDA and U.S. military treaties in Southeast Asia as connected. Therefore, the United States wanted to “keep the FPDA viable.”¹⁰⁷ From the American perspective, if Malaysia were to fully pursue neutralization and convince others to do the same, they would view the FPDA as obsolete, alongside other U.S. military commitments in Southeast Asia.

To ensure the FPDA’s survival, the United States pushed to have the ANZUK nations continue engaging with Malaysia and Singapore. The United States wanted to see a continued British presence in Southeast Asia. The United States considered the United Kingdom the “nucleus around which indigenous Malaysia and Singapore forces and the contributions of Australia and New Zealand have operated.”¹⁰⁸ In other words, the Americans viewed the British as central in maintaining Malaysia and Singapore’s stability and economic standing. The United States also viewed Australia as vital to the region. The intention was to have the Australians “exert a useful influence in promoting cooperation between Singapore and Malaysia.”¹⁰⁹ As long as the ANZUK nations participated in the FPDA, the Americans viewed the arrangements as significantly contributing to the “security of the lower tier of Asia.”¹¹⁰ Although the United States was not a member of the FPDA, it saw a need

¹⁰⁶ China; Law of Sea; Rubber; Neutralization, March 31, 1972, box 10, Memorandum of Conversation, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

¹⁰⁷ Memo, Ted Heavner to Green, June 15, 1972, box 9, Background & Briefing, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA; Para - Malaysia, 1973, box 11, POL 2/3 PARA Malaysia, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

¹⁰⁸ Memo, Robert S. Lindquist to Samuel D. Berger, January 15, 1968, box 2, British Withdrawal from Singapore and Malaysia, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

¹⁰⁹ Memo, William P. Bundy to The Secretary, March 7, 1968, box 2, British Withdrawal from Singapore and Malaysia (1 of 2), Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

¹¹⁰ Para - Malaysia, 1973, box 11, POL 2/3 PARA Malaysia, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

to put pressure on its allies to ensure that the FPDA would continue functioning in Southeast Asia.

The United States' engagement with Malaysia, Singapore, and the ANZUK nations illustrated how it wanted the Southeast Asian countries to step up their efforts to improve their defensive capabilities and to have its ANZUK allies share the military burden in the region. However, the United States wanted its partners and allies to do so on its terms. For instance, in the same breath U.S. policymakers were describing the FPDA as an example of how "Asians [were] looking to their own security needs with their own resources," it was also stating that a "vigorous Australian role" would help bring stability to the region."¹¹¹ The United States wanted Malaysia and Singapore to initiate cooperation with each other but, at the same time, did not want it to come to a point where it would leave out Western powers, as envisioned with neutralization. Additionally, U.S. policymakers considered ANZUK taking the lead in Malaysia and Singapore as fostering "true regional development."¹¹² In other words, the U.S. conception of regionalism in Southeast Asia blurred the distinctions between regional and extra-regional powers. In the American mind, pressure from what the ASEAN states would consider to be extra-regional powers, i.e. ANZUK, was necessary to induce Malaysia and Singapore to cooperate. To an extent, the United States viewed the ANZUK nations as part and an extension of Southeast Asia.

1.3 Malaysia, China, and the Second Indochina War

Malaysia's stance towards China, Vietnam, and Thailand further demonstrated that regional autonomy and neutrality were not foreign policy priorities. Malaysia consistently emphasized that neutralization was a future goal rather than an immediate concern, particularly in its approach to China. Initially, Malaysia hesitated to establish formal diplomatic relations with China in the early 1970s due to distrust over China's support for communist movements in Malaysia. Instead, Malaysia focused on informal economic relations, hoping to position itself favorably for future normalization of relations. When Malaysia finally decided to approach

¹¹¹ Memo, East Asia and the Pacific, n.d., box 10, CHRON Background and Briefing Kuala Lumpur, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

¹¹² Memorandum for Interagency Singapore Study Group, April 27, 1972, box 10, POL Policy Study (Singapore), Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

China for normalization, its motivation was domestic, specifically to win elections, rather than to encourage a regional ASEAN effort to secure China's guarantee for the neutralization of Southeast Asia. Regarding Vietnam, the Malaysian leadership supported the U.S. war effort and called for the United States to maintain its military presence in Indochina, fearing that the fall of South Vietnam would lead to insurgencies in Malaysia. Additionally, Malaysia hosted British training schools for foreign military personnel, including South Vietnamese military and police officers, in support of the American war effort. As for Thailand, the Razak administration urged the United States to continue providing economic and political assistance to Bangkok as it collaborated with Thailand at its northern border against insurgencies. Malaysia sought U.S. support for Thailand due to its goal of eliminating communist movements at the border.

Malaysia's interactions with China in the early 1970s exemplified how it did not regard regional autonomy as a priority as it viewed neutralization, the pursuit of gaining great power guarantees for regional neutrality, as a long-term objective it hoped to achieve later in the future. For instance, Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister Ismail Abdul Rahman expressed to his fellow members in the parliament that Malaysia had never declared that neutralization was to be applied immediately. Instead, what Malaysia needed to do, according to Rahman, was to take steps in preparation for the neutralization of Southeast Asia by approaching China.¹¹³ One step the Razak administration took was to support China's membership in the United Nations. The Malaysian Foreign Ministry held the position that an isolated China would only increase its aggression towards other countries. Malaysia also supported a One-China policy, effectively endorsing the removal of Taiwan from the United Nations.¹¹⁴ In October 1971, China officially became a United Nations member. Malaysia's plans were to build political goodwill with China with the hope that it would eventually endorse the neutralization of the Southeast Asian region.

Malaysia sought to strengthen relations with China to adapt to a changing international landscape where it expected China to play a more assertive role, driven by transformations in power dynamics among Japan, the Soviet Union, and the

¹¹³ Siaran Akhbar, September 13, 1971, Malaysian Foreign Policy (Folder 2), FCO/24/1162, UKNA.

¹¹⁴ Abdul Razak Baginda, *China–Malaysia Relations and Foreign Policy* (London: Routledge, 2016), 99-103.

United States. Prime Minister Razak presumed that China would have to adjust its policies based on an economically rising Japan. He also saw the U.S.-China détente as China attempting to safeguard its borders against the Soviet Union. With a more assertive China, Razak was also concerned that the Soviet Union and Japan would increase its distrust towards China. The worry was that Malaysia would become entangled in potential conflicts among these major powers.¹¹⁵ Malaysia also anticipated China's assertiveness going beyond East Asia. Speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, Deputy Prime Minister Rahman stated that China's presence in Southeast Asia was an "undeniable" reality and that Malaysia needed to "demonstrate to China that it [was] not in her interest to be hostile in Southeast Asia but to be friendly and to cooperate [...]"¹¹⁶ In the long term, Malaysia wanted to safeguard itself against major power disputes through the neutralization of Southeast Asia. In the immediate period, Malaysia desired cordial ties with China in anticipation of its increasing influence in Southeast Asia.

Although Malaysia lobbied for China to become a member of the United Nations, it delayed formal diplomatic relations with China due to its suspicion of ongoing Chinese support for communist activities in Malaysia. Under former Prime Minister Rahman, the leadership accused the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) as having connections with the PRC. In 1969, Malaysia had experienced race riots between the Malay and Chinese populations. With no substantial evidence, the Malaysian government blamed the communists for initiating the riots and were convinced that they had the backing of China.¹¹⁷ The Razak administration continued the distrust towards China. For instance, in January 1971, Prime Minister Razak stated that Malaysia was not ready for official relations with China as China was still "carrying out subversion."¹¹⁸ Despite the negative outlook, Malaysia still wanted to improve its relations with China. In communications with Australian officials, the Malaysians conveyed that great power guarantees for neutralization appeared to be unrealistic. Nevertheless, Malaysia wanted to develop economic ties cautiously with China

¹¹⁵ Siaran Akhbar, September 13, 1971, Malaysian Foreign Policy (Folder 2), FCO/24/1162, UKNA.

¹¹⁶ Malaysia's Foreign Policy Under the New Razak Government, August 2, 1971, Malaysian Foreign Policy (Folder 2), FCO/24/1162, UKNA.

¹¹⁷ Baginda, *China-Malaysia Relations and Foreign Policy*, 68-73.

¹¹⁸ Brewer to Appleyard, February 9, 1971, Political relations between Malaysia and China (Folder 1), FCO 24/164, UKNA.

instead of continuing a contentious relationship.¹¹⁹ Malaysia hesitated to embrace China diplomatically and acknowledged that neutralization was an unattainable goal at this particular juncture. Regardless, Malaysia decided to take a step toward building trust with China through economic relations.

Malaysia's policy of prioritizing trade relations over immediate diplomatic recognition of China underscored its intention to buy time and improve its political leverage in future diplomatic negotiations with China. Between 1971 and 1972, Malaysia aimed to put itself in the best possible position through trade talks regarding halting Chinese support for communist movements within Malaysia. According to British reports, during a Chinese trade mission visit to Malaysia in 1971, Prime Minister Razak was rumored to have questioned the visiting delegation about China's support towards the CPM and suggested that Beijing put out a statement denying its backing of the party.¹²⁰ Malaysia's stance for the time being was that it would conduct its relations with China on the economic level and leave official recognition to a "later date" as it hoped the relationship would manifest into one where China would recognize Malaysia's sovereignty, territories, and would not interfere in its internal affairs.¹²¹ Malaysia attempted to do what one U.S. foreign policy report referred to as postponing diplomatic relations to "minimize the subversive effect" in the country by engaging with Chinese officials.¹²² Malaysia expected and desired improved political relations with China. However, it wanted to convey that diplomatic recognition was contingent upon China officially and publicly ceasing its support toward communism in Malaysia.

By 1973, Malaysia showed signs that it did not have faith in the pursuit of regional autonomy as it focused on individual actions when progressing relations with China. In 1972, Malaysia announced to its ASEAN partners that it would consult them when it came to China.¹²³ Studies on ASEAN typically refer to such dialogue

¹¹⁹ Cablegram, AHC Kuala Lumpur to Department of Foreign Affairs, December 23, 1970, British withdrawal - Five power Arrangements, A1838, 696/1/9 PART 16, NAA. (257-58)

¹²⁰ HC Kuala Lumpur to FCO, September 15, 1971, Economic relations between Malaysia and China, FCO 24/1173, UKNA.

¹²¹ Siaran Akhbar, July 16, 1971, Malaysian foreign policy (Folder 2), FCO 24/1162, UKNA.

¹²² Malaysia's Foreign Policy Under the New Razak Government, August 2, 1971, Malaysian Foreign Policy (Folder 2), FCO/24/1162, UKNA.

¹²³ Cabinet Joint Intelligence Committee, November 20, 1972, Political relations between Malaysia and China (Folder 2), FCO 24/1445, UKNA; Dewan Rakyat, Jawapan Bertulis, December 11, 1972, Political relations between Malaysia and China (Folder 2), FCO 24/1445, UKNA.

between the members as following a process of consultation (*musyawarah*) and consensus (*mufakat*). In essence, this so-called process of consultation and consensus was an ASEAN negotiation method to strengthen regional cooperation amongst its members and come to a common decision or policy stance on a particular issue.¹²⁴ The idea that ASEAN consultation led to or was a form of regional cooperation is misleading. In 1973, Malaysia followed a unilateral path, taking further steps towards formally recognizing China despite other ASEAN members agreeing they would not establish ties with China that year. Malaysia did not want to be restricted by an ASEAN timeline and decided to no longer share its decisions about timing with the rest of the members.¹²⁵ Moreover, Malaysia's decision to approach China was the result of Prime Minister Razak's goal of wanting to win over the votes of the Malaysian Chinese population in the upcoming elections in 1974.¹²⁶ Malaysia ended up normalizing relations with China in May 1974. Malaysia's decision to pursue unilateral recognition of China exemplified how it did not find neutralization, which required a regional effort, as a viable foreign policy.

Malaysia's priority of unilateral decision-making over regional cooperation was a common theme among all members of the ASEAN grouping. All five members approached the China question according to their national interests. Malaysia had hit a roadblock with the rest of the ASEAN members as they rejected the idea of pursuing great power guarantees for regional neutrality. Indonesia was against neutralization as it did not want Chinese influence in Southeast Asia. Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines discarded neutralization as they saw the U.S. presence as essential to their security.¹²⁷ What all five ASEAN members had in common was the idea that they did not want to "sacrifice sovereignty or independence to a

¹²⁴ Acharya has described the consultation and consensus process as a method where the ASEAN members go through informal negotiations prior to an official meeting to explore areas of agreement with a particular issue. The idea was to follow a non-confrontational process that would not leave members publicly isolated or embarrassed while portraying a united front. The ASEAN members would reach a consensus once a majority agreed on a particular issue. If one member found itself in the minority, the consensus would still stand as long as the decision did not impact the member negatively. The proponents of this analysis conceptualize this process as a tool for advancing regional cooperation in Southeast Asia. See Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia*, 65-66.

¹²⁵ Baginda, *China-Malaysia Relations and Foreign Policy*, 140-42.

¹²⁶ Baginda, *China-Malaysia Relations and Foreign Policy*, 132.

¹²⁷ Laura Southgate, "ASEAN: Still the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality?," *Political Science* 73, no. 1 (2021): 31-47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00323187.2021.1967762>.

supranational body.”¹²⁸ In other words, ASEAN was unwilling to collectively engage with China, revealing a lack of incentive to confront a regional issue in a regional manner. While Malaysia still expressed hopes for future great power guarantees in its public rhetoric, it was no different than the other ASEAN nations in terms of having a disinclination towards a coordinated effort to engaging with China.

The second instance of Malaysia relegating regional autonomy and neutrality was in relation to the Vietnam War, as it requested the United States to prolong its military presence in the region. According to correspondences between the U.S. Ambassador to Malaysia, Jack Wilson Lydman, and the U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia, Francis J. Galbraith, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia had a “general feeling of insecurity” about the military withdrawal from Vietnam, misinterpreting the Nixon Doctrine as meaning that the United States was entirely pulling out of Southeast Asia leaving them “highly vulnerable in [an] uncertain future.”¹²⁹ During a visit to Malaysia by U.S. Vice President Spiro Agnew in February 1973, Prime Minister Razak stated that there was a necessity for a U.S. presence in the region for the foreseeable future. Razak estimated that the region would need around three to four more years of a U.S. presence until the realization of neutralization.¹³⁰ In hindsight, the extended timeline of three to four years for a continued American presence in the region to buy time for the neutrality of Southeast Asia was unrealistic. As previously mentioned, the United States and China did not support the concept. In a contradictory manner, Malaysia was abandoning the idea of regional autonomy to achieve regional autonomy.

A closer look at the contradictory nature of Malaysian foreign policy towards Vietnam shows that Malaysia’s priority was to encourage the presence of the United States in Southeast Asia, even after the conclusion of the Vietnam War. According to an assessment by U.S. officials, Malaysia was unlikely to place all of its bets on its relationship with the ANZUK nations as it considered the British an “unreliable

¹²⁸ Shaun Narine, *Explaining ASEAN: Regionalism in Southeast Asia* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 33.

¹²⁹ Telegram, U.S. Embassy Kuala Lumpur to U.S. Embassy Jakarta, February 25, 1970, box 1, Chiefs of Mission Conference 1970, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA.

¹³⁰ Ang Cheng Guan, *Southeast Asia and the Vietnam War* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2010), 93.

protector” following the gradual military withdrawal starting in 1967.¹³¹ However, Malaysia also saw value in a continued relationship with the ANZUK nations. The American officials presumed that Malaysia wanted indirect access to the United States, with ANZUK taking a “proxy role in Southeast Asia.”¹³² This way, Malaysia would maintain its non-aligned credentials without establishing formal defense relations with the United States. Malaysia expected the Americans to provide indirect “over-the-horizon protection” through the United States’ link to ANZUK and the FPDA.¹³³ Malaysia’s goal was to have the United States maintain its influence in Southeast Asia directly through a military presence and indirectly through its connections to the ANZUK nations.

Under Tunku Rahman’s administration in the 1960s, Razak held the position of Minister of Defense in addition to Deputy Prime Minister and supported the U.S. military effort in Vietnam, contradicting Malaysia’s supposed neutrality. In 1966, Razak openly stated that he considered Northern Vietnam as the aggressor against South Vietnam with the “abundantly clear” intention that North Vietnam’s policy was to “re-united Vietnam under a communist regime, through the use of force.”¹³⁴ Razak viewed the U.S. involvement in Vietnam as a crucial turning point for Southeast Asia. Reflecting on 1965, Razak expressed that the situation in the region looked dire, with North Vietnam close to seizing Saigon. However, Razak considered the U.S. deployment in 1965 a significant and positive event that altered the scenario. In Razak’s view, the intervention brought about “a tangible hope for a new era to dawn throughout [Southeast Asia]” and that it would help the countries “feel secure from external aggression.”¹³⁵ For Razak, the intervention was also an opportunity to allow for the “massive task of reconstructing” Southeast Asian

¹³¹ Memo, The Pacific Powers and the Strait of Malacca, October 22, 1970, doc. CIA-RDP79R00967A000300010016-1, CIA Records Search Tool (hereafter CREST).

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Malaysia’s Foreign Policy Under the New Razak Government, August 2, 1971, Malaysian foreign policy (Folder 2), FCO 24/1162, UKNA.

¹³⁴ “Address by the Deputy Prime Minister to Council of Foreign and International Affairs of Thailand in Bangkok on 1st August 1966”, in *Ucapan-Ucapan Tun Haji Abdul Razak Bin Hussein*, 1966 [Speeches by Tun Haji Abdul Razak Bin Hussein, 1966], *Arkib Negara Malaysia/Jabatan Perdana Menteri* [National Archives of Malaysia/Prime Minister’s Department, n.d.], 202.

¹³⁵ “Speech by the Hon’ble Deputy Prime Minister as Address to the Veterans Conference on 8th April 1967,” in *Ucapan-Ucapan Tun Haji Abdul Razak Bin Hussein*, 1966 [Speeches by Tun Haji Abdul Razak Bin Hussein, 1966], *Arkib Negara Malaysia/Jabatan Perdana Menteri* [National Archives of Malaysia/Prime Minister’s Department, n.d.], 119.

countries “in an atmosphere of growing trust, confidence, and cooperation.”¹³⁶ In other words, Razak supported the U.S. intervention as he considered it a contributing factor in allowing the countries in the region to develop.

Throughout the 1960s, Malaysia supported the U.S. war effort in Vietnam by hosting facilities for jungle warfare training for military personnel from foreign countries. Starting in 1961, soldiers from South Vietnam attended the British-operated Jungle Warfare School in Johor, Malaysia, to train in counterinsurgency operations.¹³⁷ Annually, the British trained around 300 troops from South Vietnam.¹³⁸ The British also trained soldiers from the United States, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines.¹³⁹ The Malaysian government authorized British and American personnel in the facilities. U.S. officials informed Malaysia’s Ministry of Defense, headed by Razak, about the number of personnel attending courses and training at the Jungle Warfare School.¹⁴⁰ For instance, in 1966, the Malaysian Foreign Ministry authorized the training of U.S. Army personnel for dog-tracker training. However, Malaysia required the British and Americans not to publicize the agreement.¹⁴¹ The British and Americans made a concerted effort to avoid advertising the training. In 1967, three American dog handlers wearing British Army fatigues had accidentally drowned in a river. Military officials sent the bodies from Malaysia to Saigon to disguise the deaths as a Vietnam War casualty.¹⁴² By keeping the training activities in Malaysia secret, the British and the Americans avoided tarnishing Malaysia’s non-aligned and neutral image.

In the 1960s, Malaysia also contributed to the war effort in Vietnam by training police officers from South Vietnam.¹⁴³ Annually, around 650 South Vietnamese

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Pamela Sodhy, “The Malaysian Connection in the Vietnam War,” *ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute* 9, no. 1 (1987): 42.

¹³⁸ Source: Vietnam, Invitation to Jungle Warfare School Instructors, November 17, 1967, Training of US and South Vietnamese forces at UK jungle warfare school in Malaysia (Folder 1), FCO 15/785, UKNA.

¹³⁹ Source: James Boyden, Esq., MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence for the Army, January 25, 1968, Training of US and South Vietnamese forces at UK jungle warfare school in Malaysia (Folder 1), FCO 15/785, UKNA.

¹⁴⁰ Jungle Warfare Training - Kota Tinggi, June 2, 1967, Training of US and South Vietnamese forces at UK jungle warfare school in Malaysia (Folder 1), FCO 15/785, UKNA.

¹⁴¹ CU 206/66, September 29, 1966, Training of US and South Vietnamese forces at UK jungle warfare school in Malaysia (Folder 1), FCO 15/785, UKNA.

¹⁴² Priority Kuala Lumpur to Commonwealth Office, Telno 551, June 6, 1967, Training of US and South Vietnamese forces at UK jungle warfare school in Malaysia (Folder 1), FCO 15/785, UKNA.

¹⁴³ Guan, Ang Cheng. *Southeast Asia and the Vietnam War*. London: Routledge, 2010, 5.

police officers trained in Malaysia.¹⁴⁴ Police training was a joint effort between Malaysia and the ANZUK nations where officials from each country had representatives in the Police Training Committee to define the objectives and direction of the program.¹⁴⁵ The training of South Vietnamese police included jungle warfare, intelligence, riot control, and police administration.¹⁴⁶ British officials considered the training of South Vietnamese police officers to be a success. In 1968, the British reported that the Vietnamese police authorities had informed them that they were pleased with the Malaysian courses. One example was the suppression of the Buddhist Uprising of 1966 in South Vietnam. British officials had documented that the Vietnamese police helped stop the uprising based on the lessons learned in Malaysia and as a result were preparing a “manual of instructions on riot drill based largely on Malaysian practice.”¹⁴⁷ Historians have noted that the Buddhist uprisings nearly caused the collapse of the South Vietnamese government. However, with the help of police, marines, and paratroopers, the government successfully repelled the movement.¹⁴⁸ If South Vietnam was indeed on the verge of collapse due to the uprisings, Malaysia had somewhat played a role in preventing it by training the South Vietnamese police force.

Malaysia’s anxieties about the outcome of the Vietnam War played a significant role in its decision to relegate regional autonomy and neutrality to a lower status in its foreign policy priorities. As Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Defense, Razak repeatedly stressed that if the United States left Vietnam, Malaysia “would be imperiled.”¹⁴⁹ Referring to the domino theory, Razak stated that if the Americans pulled out, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand, with whom Malaysia shared a border,

¹⁴⁴ Visit to South East Asia by L.P.R. Browning, March 14, 1967, Police training (Folder 1), FCO 15/787, UKNA.

¹⁴⁵ Priority Kuala Lumpur to Commonwealth, Tel. No. 1141, November 14, 1967, Police training (Folder 2), FCO 15/788, UKNA.

¹⁴⁶ Visit to South Vietnam by L.P.R. Browning - 4th to 7th November 1967, Police training (Folder 2), FCO 15/788, UKNA.

¹⁴⁷ Police Training, June 10, 1968, Police training (Folder 3), FCO 15/789, UKNA.

¹⁴⁸ The Buddhist Uprising occurred between March and June of 1966. Buddhists led a series of protests and unrest against the U.S.-backed South Vietnamese government headed by Prime Minister Nguyễn Cao Kỳ (1965-1967). The Buddhists were protesting against the American-backed repressive state of South Vietnam. See Robert J. Topmiller, *The Lotus Unleashed: The Buddhist Peace Movement in South Vietnam, 1964-1966* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2002), 126-29.

¹⁴⁹ Report, Compilation of States of Support for U.S. Policy in Vietnam by Asian Leaders, August 31, 1967, Gale Document No. CK2349101730, USSDO, 37.

would fall to communism.¹⁵⁰ In 1972, British officials reported that the Malaysians were concerned that the collapse of the South Vietnamese government would lead to significant arms shipments to the Communist Terrorist Organization (CTO), a part of the CPM.¹⁵¹ The Federation of Malaya (1948-63), the predecessor state to Malaysia, in 1952 had designated the term “Communist Terrorist Organization (CTO)” to communist insurgents.¹⁵² Speaking to American officials in 1972, Malaysia’s Deputy Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Zainal Sulong, stated that the pursuit of the neutralization concept needed to be postponed until there was a resolution to the Vietnam War.¹⁵³ By the time Saigon fell in 1975, Razak reiterated the warning that the victory by Hanoi would inspire Malaysian communists and that there was the danger of weapons falling into the hands of these groups at the northern border.¹⁵⁴ Put differently, Malaysia wanted to wait and see how the Vietnam War would conclude. Malaysia was invested in seeing a South Vietnamese government survive and was focused on immediate security concerns and less on the long-term planning for regional autonomy and neutrality.

The third example of Malaysia sidelining the concept of regional autonomy and neutrality occurred in the context of the U.S. military presence in Thailand, where it requested the Americans to remain so that it could continue buy time to strengthen itself against communist insurgencies. Following the fall of South Vietnam in 1975, Prime Minister Razak met with Philip C. Habib, the U.S. Assistance Secretary of

¹⁵⁰ R.D. Clift to David, October 15, 1969, Malaysia and South East Asia Security Policy, FCO 24/532, UKNA.

¹⁵¹ Malaysian Attitudes to the Vietnam War, June 16, 1972, Political relations between Malaysia and China (Folder 3), TNA FCO 24/1747, UKNA.

¹⁵² Karl Hack, *The Malayan Emergency: Revolution and Counterinsurgency at the End of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 2.

¹⁵³ Memo, Tour d’Horizon, February 22, 1972, POL 1 General Policy and Background, box 10, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

¹⁵⁴ “Ucapan Perdana Menteri Di Persidangan Panglima-Panglima Angkatan Tentara Di Kementerian Pertahanan, Kuala Lumpur Pada 3HB April, 1975 [Prime Minister’s Speech at the Conference of Armed Forces Commanders at the Ministry of Defence, Kuala Lumpur on April 3, 1975],” in *Ucapan-Ucapan Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1975, Jilid I* [Speeches by Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1975, Volume I], *Arkib Negara Malaysia/Jabatan Perdana Menteri* [National Archives of Malaysia/Prime Minister’s Department, 1980], 101-102; “Ucapan Presiden UMNO Merangkap Perdana Menteri Malaysia Di Perhimpunan Agung UMNO Yang Ke Dua Puluh Enam Di Dewan Nirwana, Hotel Hilton, Kuala Lumpur Pada 21HB Jun, 1975” [Speech by the UMNO President and Prime Minister of Malaysia at the Twenty-Sixth UMNO General Assembly at the Nirwana Hall, Hilton Hotel, Kuala Lumpur on June 21, 1975],” in *Ucapan-Ucapan Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1975, Jilid I* [Speeches by Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1975, Volume I], *Arkib Negara Malaysia/Jabatan Perdana Menteri* [National Archives of Malaysia/Prime Minister’s Department, 1980], 226-27.

State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and stated that Thailand was the “first line of defense” in Southeast Asia and recommended that the United States assure Thailand of its continued assistance and support.¹⁵⁵ This recommendation stemmed from Razak’s fear that Hanoi’s victory would embolden the communists in Malaysia. Razak went on to explain that Malaysia’s focus had been on its economic development and that there was the potential that it would have to divert more resources to a military build-up instead. Razak explained that if it were to also focus on the military, it would need American assistance for its counterinsurgency efforts.¹⁵⁶ Malaysia’s appeal for continued U.S. presence and support in Thailand illustrated the following. Malaysia’s primary focus was on immediate threats at its border and the ability to gain the necessary time to strengthen itself through economic development. At the same time, it wanted the United States to assist in deterring insurgencies.

Prime Minister Razak’s appeal to the United States for assistance in suppressing communist insurgencies was consistent with his long-standing foreign policy rhetoric, which emphasized the persistent threat communists posed along the Thai-Malaysian border.¹⁵⁷ As Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Defense in the 1960s, Razak constantly stressed how Malaysia was in a state of danger due to the existence of communist groups. For instance, in 1962, Razak warned his people that the objective of the communists was to “infiltrate” Malaysia’s institutions, such as political parties, trade unions, and schools.¹⁵⁸ Throughout 1967, Razak warned that the communists in the Thai-Malaysian border would cause “chaos” in the country and proclaimed that Malaysia would cooperate with the Thai government to “eliminate” the communists.¹⁵⁹ Since the early 1960s, the Communist Party of

¹⁵⁵ Cable, Secretary of State Washington D.C. to U.S. Embassy Kuala Lumpur, May 6, 1975, doc. CK2349643861, USDDO.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Weichong Ong, “Between Safe Havens in Cross-Border Insurgency: Malaysia, Thailand and the Second Emergency (1952–89),” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 31, no. 6 (2019): 1349–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2019.1698176>.

¹⁵⁸ “Speech by the Deputy Prime Minister Welcoming the Peace Corps Volunteers to Malaya at the National Operation Room, Kuala Lumpur on 12th January 1962,” in *Ucapan-Ucapan Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1962* [Speeches by Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1962], *Arkib Negara Malaysia/Jabatan Perdana Menteri* [National Archives of Malaysia/Prime Minister’s Department], 1978), 5-6.

¹⁵⁹ “Ucapan Timbalan Perdana Menteri Ketika Mencadangkan Kepala Bekalan S. 16 Bagi Kementerian Pertahanan Untuk Tahun 1967 Di Dewan Rakyat Pada 3 Februari 1967 [Speech by the Deputy Prime Minister Recommending the Head of Logistics S. 16 for the Ministry of Defense for the Year 1967 in the House of Representatives on February 3, 1967],” in *Ucapan-Ucapan Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1967* [Speeches by Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1967], *Arkib Negara*

Malaysia had been entrenched in Southern Thailand, conducting insurgencies in Malaysia. By the time Razak was Prime Minister in 1970, the party had around 2,000 combatants, supported by the Malayan Communist Youth League, which numbered 3,000 to 6,000 members. Although not successful, by 1974, the Communist Party of Malaysia had intensified its insurgencies in an effort to establish a more permanent presence within Malaysia's borders.¹⁶⁰ Razak's unwavering stance against communism remained a defining feature of his political career. The fear of threats along the Thai-Malaysian border consistently occupied a central position in Razak's foreign policy agenda.

Prime Minister Razak's perception of communism as an existential threat to Malaysia prompted the leadership to maintain a cooperative relationship with Thailand to combat the insurgency. In March 1970, Malaysia and Thailand signed a border agreement that authorized both countries to conduct joint operations by crossing each other's borders up to five miles for three days. In 1971, Malaysia and Thailand conducted Operation Loyalty in Perak, Malaysia. This operation aimed to sever ties between villages and the CPM through a "hearts and minds" campaign, which included providing land for food processing and increasing state engagement with community leaders. The aim was to bring about a more substantial governmental presence in rural areas where the state did not have much influence.¹⁶¹ Razak deemed the operation as a success. However, his speeches typically came with a warning about the need for the population to remain vigilant about the continuing threat of insurgency towards the government and warned people not to be "deceived" by the communists who would only bring "poverty, violence, and destruction."¹⁶² In response to this persistent and ongoing issue, Malaysia considered

Malaysia/Jabatan Perdana Menteri [National Archives of Malaysia/Prime Minister's Department], n.d.), 48.

¹⁶⁰ Weichong Ong, "Between Safe Havens in Cross-Border Insurgency: Malaysia, Thailand and the Second Emergency (1952–89)," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 31, no. 6 (2019): 1349–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2019.1698176>; Weichong Ong, *Malaysia's Defeat of Armed Communism: The Second Emergency, 1968-1989* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2015), 54.

¹⁶¹ Ong, *Malaysia's Defeat of Armed Communism*, 118-20.

¹⁶² "Perutusan Aidil-Fitri Oleh Perdana Menteri Melalui Radio/TV Malaysia Pada 18HB November, 1971 [Eid al-Fitr Message By The Prime Minister by Means of Malaysian Radio/TV On November 18, 1971]," in *Ucapan-Ucapan Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1971* [Speeches by Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1971], *Arkib Negara Malaysia/Jabatan Perdana Menteri* [National Archives of Malaysia/Prime Minister's Department], 1976), 503.

bilateral cooperation with Thailand a vital tool for its aspirations of “lasting peace and security” in the region.¹⁶³

Malaysia’s bilateral cooperation with Thailand did not indicate that it attempted to influence the Thai leadership to accommodate its ambition to see the neutralization policy come to life in Southeast Asia. For example, in 1973, Prime Minister Razak addressed a parliament member’s question regarding his stance on the U.S. military bases in Thailand and the Philippines and whether Malaysia tried convincing the rest of ASEAN to pursue the neutralization concept. Razak appeared to have dodged the question by stating the need for periodic reassessment of foreign military bases and neutrality in Southeast Asia.¹⁶⁴ Here, Razak seemed to have repeated the idea that Southeast Asia’s neutrality was a goal for the future. The parliament member also asked Razak about his stance on Prime Minister Lee’s visit to Thailand, urging the United States to remain despite withdrawing from Vietnam. Razak sidestepped the question by stating that Thailand and Singapore had signed the 1971 ZOPFAN declaration and that they desired a “peaceful, free and neutral” Southeast Asia.¹⁶⁵ As previously mentioned, the 1971 ZOPFAN declaration differed from Malaysia’s plan to persuade great powers to ensure Southeast Asia’s neutrality. By 1973, there were no signs that Malaysia was trying to convince its neighboring countries to engage with the great powers to accept regional neutrality or pressure them to reject U.S. presence in their territories.

For Malaysia, the urgency lay in the country's economic development, and it considered the bilateral relations with Thailand to contribute to this aim. Prime Minister Razak specifically perceived Malaysia and Thailand as having the common objective of eliminating communist subversion so that they could modernize their societies.¹⁶⁶ In 1973, Prime Minister Razak attended a bridge opening ceremony at

¹⁶³ “Ucapan Perdana Menteri, Di Upacara Perasmian Jambatan Sungai Golok, Kelantan Pada 21HB Mei, 1973 [Prime Minister’s Speech at the Inauguration Ceremony of the Golok River Bridge, Kelantan on May 21, 1973],” in *Ucapan-Ucapan Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1973* [Speeches by Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1973], *Arkib Negara Malaysia/Jabatan Perdana Menteri* [National Archives of Malaysia/Prime Minister’s Department], 1977), 163.

¹⁶⁴ *Penyata Rasmi, Dewan Rakyat, Parlimen Ketiga, Penggal Parlimen Kedua* [Official Report, House of Representatives, Third Parliament, Second Session], January 31, 1973, *Portal Rasmi Parlimen Malaysia* [Official Portal of Parliament of Malaysia], 6311-12.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ “Speech by the Prime Minister at the Official Dinner in Honour of the Prime Minister of Thailand, at Parliament House on 14th June 1971,” in *Ucapan-Ucapan Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1971*

the Golok River, located at the Malaysia-Thailand border. Razak stated that the coordinated efforts between the two countries to build infrastructure would be vital for social and economic development as it would integrate different parts of the country and safeguard the “security of the nation.”¹⁶⁷ Similar to Operation Loyalty in 1971, Razak's speech was in reference to the idea of having a visible government presence and influence through development initiatives to root out communists in areas where the government did not necessarily have complete control. Prime Minister Razak declared the communists as treacherous groups who were intimidating and harassing the population to “hamper and undermine [Malaysia’s] development plans and programs.”¹⁶⁸ For Razak, cooperation between Malaysia and Thailand was vital to “eradicate this menace” so that the attention could be “better devoted to the tasks of national development.”¹⁶⁹ In other words, Malaysia considered Thailand’s assistance necessary to help it achieve its economic development goals.

Malaysia’s foreign policy of sidelining regional neutrality when it came to Thailand was also partly due to the functional (or non-functional) characteristics of ASEAN as an organization. Malaysia followed a path of flexibility that ASEAN as an organization had enabled since its inception in 1967. For instance, ASEAN’s Bangkok Declaration of 1967 stated that “all foreign bases are temporary and remain only with the expressed concurrence of the countries concerned [...]” The phrase “temporary” was ambiguous because it did not provide an exact timeline and did not have legal significance, leaving the member states to interpret the term freely and shape their foreign policies as they wished. Similarly, the 1971 ZOPFAN declaration had no legal bearing and was merely a statement of intent with no concrete proposal

(Speeches by Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1971), *Arkib Negara Malaysia/Jabatan Perdana Menteri* [National Archives of Malaysia/Prime Minister’s Department], 1976), 202-204.

¹⁶⁷ “Speech by the Prime Minister, at the Opening of the Conference on Road Engineering in Asia and Australia, at Federal Hotel, Kuala Lumpur on 10th June 1973,” in *Ucapan-Ucapan Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1973* [Speeches by Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1973], *Arkib Negara Malaysia/Jabatan Perdana Menteri* [National Archives of Malaysia/Prime Minister’s Department], 1977), 176-77.

¹⁶⁸ “Speech by Prime Minister at the Dinner in Honour of His Excellency Mr. Kukrit Pramoj, Prime Minister of Thailand at Hilton Hotel, Kuala Lumpur on 9th June, 1975,” in *Ucapan-Ucapan Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1975* [Speeches by Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1975], *Arkib Negara Malaysia/Jabatan Perdana Menteri* [National Archives of Malaysia/Prime Minister’s Department], 1980), 200.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

on how a zone of neutrality was to be achieved.¹⁷⁰ Razak's position was that until there was a neutral zone guaranteed by the three great powers, he was not against foreign forces in Southeast Asia.¹⁷¹ Malaysia was not following a strict foreign policy advocating for immediate regional neutrality, autonomy, and non-alignment. Regional autonomy remained a political rhetoric and an ambition for the future. Malaysia instead focused on working with and advocating for a U.S.-supported Thailand that, in turn, supported Malaysia's national aspirations of eliminating communists.

1.4 Malaysia's Economic Development

In the early 1970s, Malaysia introduced an economic development plan that would eventually reduce poverty rates and increase the ownership of corporations amongst the Malay population. However, the significant advances in Malaysia's economy were not the byproduct of the U.S. war effort in Vietnam, as the United States was unwilling to deepen its political relations with Malaysia and did not see a necessity in incorporating Malaysia into its broader regional strategic Cold War considerations. While the Vietnam War did not encourage the Americans to develop closer ties with the Malaysians, the war did lead to Malaysia having an interest in expanding its relations with the United States due to an increase in American engagement with the rest of the region as well as the impending British disengagement from Malaysia and Singapore. As a result, the Malaysian leadership was proactive in attracting U.S. private investment into the country, which it managed to do successfully despite U.S. governmental uninterest in the country. Moreover, while the Americans did not want to increase political engagement with Malaysia, the British maintained relative economic influence despite its military disengagement from the region. Overall, U.S. efforts to buy time for Malaysia did not drive Malaysia's economic advances during the Vietnam era.

Following the race riots in 1969, the Malaysian government introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP) or the Second Malaysia Plan in 1971 to restructure the economy and reduce foreign corporate ownership while also encouraging the influx

¹⁷⁰ Heiner Hanggi, *ASEAN and the ZOPFAN Concept* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1991), 19-20.

¹⁷¹ "No Threat To Malaysia," *The Straits Times*, February 15, 1973.

of foreign private investment.¹⁷² The NEP aimed to eradicate poverty and redistribute wealth to the Malay population by decreasing the share of foreign ownership.¹⁷³ The NEP aimed to reduce foreign ownership by 30 percent over the next two decades by bolstering Malay entrepreneurs and elites. While the NEP primarily sought to transfer wealth from British ownership to the Malay people, these policies also affected Malaysian Chinese population.¹⁷⁴ Although the NEP appeared to embody a “protectionist ideology,” other than increasing the ownership of the Malay in corporations, its goal was to simultaneously increase foreign investment as it intended to “pursue a liberal economic policy by offering favorable conditions to export-led and import-substitution industries.”¹⁷⁵ In other words, the Malaysian government committed to an “open free enterprise economy.”¹⁷⁶ They aimed to make foreign investment a major driver of economic development while also ensuring that the Malay elite and entrepreneurial class primarily benefited from this plan.

Prime Minister Razak was proactive in calling for his government to encourage foreign investment. Razak’s goal was to create an environment where investors would be convinced of Malaysia’s stability while also guaranteeing that their contributions would bring benefits to both parties.¹⁷⁷ Razak saw value in foreign capital as he argued that it would help with Malaysia’s industrialization. He viewed an increased flow of foreign investment as evidence of international confidence in Malaysia’s investment climate and political stability, especially following the domestic turmoil in 1969. Razak’s stance was that Malaysia required the acquisition of technical skills. He highlighted that foreign investment not only brought in capital

¹⁷² Edmund Terence Gomez, “Governance, Affirmative Action and Enterprise Development: Ownership and Control of Corporate,” in *State of Malaysia*, ed. Edmund Terence Gomez (London: Routledge, 2004), 157-60.

¹⁷³ Fiona Yap, “Malaysia,” in *The Southeast Asia Handbook*, ed. Patrick Heenan and Monique Lamontagne (New York: Routledge, 2001), 63-64.

¹⁷⁴ Meredith L. Weiss, “Legacies of the Cold War in Malaysia: Anything but Communism,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 50, no. 4 (2020): 519–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2019.1709128>.

¹⁷⁵ Shakila Yacob, *The United States and the Malaysian Economy* (London: Routledge, 2008), 155.

¹⁷⁶ Kuala Lumpur Despatch of 16 August 1971, The Second Malaysia Plan Summary, August 16, 1971, Second development plan for Malaysia, 1971-1975, FCO 24/1172, UKNA.

¹⁷⁷ “Ucapan Perdana Menteri, di upacara merasmikan pembukaan syarikat Telecommunication Manufacturers, di Shah Alam pada 18HB MAC, 1971 [[The Prime Minister's Speech at the Ceremony of the Opening of the Telecommunication Manufacturers Company in Shah Alam on March 18, 1971],” in *Ucapan-Ucapan Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1971* [Speeches by Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1971], *Arkib Negara Malaysia/Jabatan Perdana Menteri* [National Archives of Malaysia/Prime Minister’s Department], 1976), 111.

but also facilitated the much-needed transfer of skills and technological know-how. For the Prime Minister, joint ventures with local partners in Malaysia were the way to go for the transfer of technical knowledge and managerial skills as it would ensure the proper training of Malaysians in modern industrial techniques. Razak noted that Malaysia's "liberal attitude" to foreign capital was beneficial for Malaysia's industrial development.¹⁷⁸ Razak was at the forefront of advocating for foreign investment in Malaysia and championing its role in driving the nation's economic growth and industrial transformation.

The Malaysian government's primary focus for foreign capital was the United States. For instance, in 1971, Deputy Prime Minister Ismail Abdul Rahman noted that American policy towards Malaysia had been somewhat marginal compared to its other priorities in Asia. Rahman expressed that the Malaysian government viewed the United States as an "important friendly country" and hoped to "obtain increasing investments, tourist income, technical, and other assistance."¹⁷⁹ Deputy Prime Minister Rahman was referring to the economic aid the United States provided to Malaysia, which was relatively insignificant at \$2.5 million annually, with most funds directed to the Peace Corps. However, during the Nixon and Ford administrations, the U.S. increased its military assistance to Malaysia beginning in December 1971, providing \$60 million in military aid. The U.S. military assistance for Malaysia aimed to repurpose surplus equipment from Vietnam for development projects, including land reclamation and the construction of ports.¹⁸⁰ The Malaysian government desired a closer economic relationship with the United States to help it build a more robust economy and ensure a stable Malaysia in Southeast Asia.

Prime Minister Razak personally lobbied for U.S. business investment in Malaysia, emphasizing the potential benefits for investors. In a business luncheon in New York in 1971, Razak stated that he welcomed U.S. investment and argued that the prospect of ensuring successful industrial ventures could come with the combination of U.S.

¹⁷⁸ "Speech by the Prime Minister at the Official Opening of Carlsberg Brewery (M) Berhad at Shah Alam, Selangor on 15th April 1972," in *Ucapan-Ucapan Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1972* [Speeches by Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1972], *Arkib Negara Malaysia/Jabatan Perdana Menteri* [National Archives of Malaysia/Prime Minister's Department], 1977), 90-91.

¹⁷⁹ Malaysia's Foreign Policy Under the New Razak Government, August 2, 1971, Malaysian foreign policy (Folder 2), FCO 24/1162, UKNA.

¹⁸⁰ Fibiger, "The Nixon Doctrine and the Making of Authoritarianism in Island Southeast Asia," 989-90.

technology and the availability of Malaysia's human resources and abundant natural resources. To convince the businesspeople, Razak highlighted that there was already a growing U.S. presence in Malaysia with corporations such as Esso Standard, which was a part of Standard Oil Corporation. Esso Standard had invested in a petroleum refinery plant and an ammonia plant in Malaysia. Another American company was General Motors, which had its car assembly plant in Malaysia. Razak also expressed how Malaysia would offer investment incentives such as special tax holidays for some companies, which would provide up to eight years of tax relief to encourage the establishment of labor-intensive industries. Razak urged American firms to consider Malaysia as a destination for private capital for their offshore operations and emphasized that the country's low-cost labor and availability of land could potentially mitigate their production expenses.¹⁸¹ Prime Minister Razak's outreach to the U.S. business community aimed to support the NEP by emphasizing the need for foreign entities to promote Malaysia's industrialization.

In the early 1970s, the Malaysian government actively pursued U.S. foreign investment to bolster its development agenda. The Second Malaysia Plan (1971-75) had set an ambitious target, expecting an influx of around \$450 million in foreign private capital over five years. In 1972, To set this goal in motion, the Minister of Trade and Industry, Khir Johari, led what American policymakers described as a "precedent-setting" investment mission to the United States by setting up a permanent investment office in New York City, which would be responsible for the coordination of promotional activities in the United States and assist American companies that were willing to invest in Malaysia.¹⁸² Malaysia's investment mission in 1972 spanned 28 days, where Malaysian officials engaged with over 50 American corporations across 13 different cities. Malaysia's outreach yielded some results, with initial investments amounting to over \$6.5 million. By the end of 1972, American investments in Malaysia surpassed \$250 million. U.S. policymakers had a positive outlook toward investment in Malaysia, stating that its stability in finance, pricing, governance, abundant raw materials, and well-developed infrastructure

¹⁸¹ "Speech by the Prime Minister at a Business Luncheon in New York on 5th October 1971," in *Ucapan-Ucapan Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1971* [Speeches by Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1971], *Arkib Negara Malaysia/Jabatan Perdana Menteri* [National Archives of Malaysia/Prime Minister's Department], 1976), 442-50.

¹⁸² Private Foreign Investment in Malaysia, March 1, 1973, box 10, FN 9 Foreign Investment Malaysia, Subject Files, 1965-1974, RG 59, USNA.

bolstered its appeal to foreign investors. They also noted that the country's labor-intensive, export-oriented industry focus and potential opportunities in import substitution manufacturing and agriculture-based sectors further enhanced its attractiveness.¹⁸³ Malaysia's investment promotion efforts in the 1970s yielded some results as it moved closer to its goal of enhanced economic cooperation with the United States.

A concrete example of Malaysia benefiting from U.S. investment was evident in the electronics sector, which Prime Minister Razak prioritized as key to industrial development. Razak emphasized Malaysia's advantages to American companies, citing issues of space and labor shortages in other countries. He argued for Malaysia's infrastructure capabilities, including robust roads, railways, and reliable utilities. Designating electronics as a priority industry, Razak's government also offered to provide substantial tax incentives to electronic companies by providing a tax exemption of up to ten years.¹⁸⁴ During Malaysia's 1972 investment mission, a significant portion of the \$6.5 million new investment was toward the electronics and timber processing industries.¹⁸⁵ Malaysia's incentives and benefits to U.S. corporations contributed to their expansion in Malaysia. In addition to the electronics sector, the expansion of American companies broadly involved in the manufacturing sector, such as telecommunications, car assembly, and heavy industries such as iron and steel. Some of the major electronic companies present in Malaysia included Hewlett-Packard, Intel, Monsanto Electronics, Motorola, and Texas Instruments. Malaysia's engagement with the United States in the early 1970s had transformed it from an agrarian economy to an important hub for semiconductor production by the 1980s.¹⁸⁶

The growing presence of U.S. corporations in Malaysia reflected the country's adaptation to a regional change during the Vietnam era where the United States was becoming the dominant power in Southeast Asia, coinciding with a decline in British

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ "Speech by the Prime Minister at a Business Luncheon in New York on 5th October 1971," in *Ucapan-Ucapan Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1971* [Speeches by Tun Haji Razak Bin Hussein 1971], *Arkib Negara Malaysia/Jabatan Perdana Menteri* [National Archives of Malaysia/Prime Minister's Department], 1976), 442-50.

¹⁸⁵ Private Investment in Malaysia, March 1, 1973, box 10, FN 9 Foreign Investment Malaysia, Subject Files, 1965-1974, RG 59, USNA.

¹⁸⁶ Yacob, *The United States and the Malaysian Economy*, 155.

influence. Ever since the end of the Second World War, British predominance over Malaysia and Singapore intertwined with the emergence of American power in the Pacific. By the time the British announced that they were going to withdraw from their military bases in Southeast Asia, U.S. power had greatly expanded further into the region. In the late 1960s, Malaysia and Singapore turned to the United States as the primary overseer of the region and adjusted their economic and security policies in alignment with the U.S.-led regional order. Thus, the countries in Southeast Asia navigated an environment of “U.S.-British shared predominance into American hegemony.”¹⁸⁷ Malaysia’s openness towards U.S. private capital was an indication of the Razak government looking towards to a regional landscape where the United States would emerge as the primary source of economic opportunities.

A Malaysian-U.S. relationship that primarily concentrated on the private sector also mirrored the policies of the U.S. mission to Kuala Lumpur. For instance, in a speech in 1973, U.S. Ambassador Lydman emphasized that there recently had been a shift from economic assistance by government-led missions to non-governmental involvement in investment and trade. Lydman argued that ongoing change was a positive development and anticipated its continued growth. Although he acknowledged that private business efforts could not entirely replace governmental economic assistance, he noted that the American private sector would be important in fostering national stability in Southeast Asia. As a proponent of the private sector, Lydman argued that Southeast Asia's much-needed “catalytic economic assistance” should “in large part be provided by private industry.”¹⁸⁸ Lydman advocated for a partnership between U.S. foreign missions and the business community to work together in developing countries.

Although the United States emerged as the eventual dominant power in Southeast Asia, the notion of shared predominance between the United States and Britain persisted during the early 1970s as the United Kingdom sought to safeguard its private investments in Malaysia. According to a British 1972 policy paper, U.K. firms held a significant presence in Malaysia, contributing 21 percent of total new

¹⁸⁷ Wen-Qing Ngoei, “British Neocolonialism in Malaya and Singapore, and U.S. Empire in the Pacific,” in *The Vietnam War in the Pacific World*, ed. Brian Cuddy and Fredrik Logevall (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2022), 27.

¹⁸⁸ The Relevance of Southeast Asia, May 26, 1973, box 11, POL 7-1 Ambassador Lydman Malaysia, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

foreign investment since 1968. This compared to 26 percent from Singapore-based firms (with a substantial portion made by subsidiaries of British firms), 19 percent from U.S.-based firms, and 12 percent from Japanese firms.¹⁸⁹ The 1972 policy paper underscored that the British had a “significant economic stake” in Malaysia and that they, therefore, desired to see stability in the Southeast Asian region. The paper also argued that the purpose of the FPDA was to ensure this stability alongside its partners, Australia and New Zealand.¹⁹⁰ British policymakers asserted that the FPDA boosted investor confidence from other countries and fostered a climate conducive to economic growth.¹⁹¹ Even with the British military disengagement from Malaysia and Singapore, the United Kingdom continued to have a vested interest in protecting private capital in the region.

The United Kingdom saw a necessity in supporting Malaysia’s NEP (Second Malaysia Plan) in the name of profits and regional stability. British policymakers mainly agreed that the NEP, if successfully implemented, had the potential to contribute significantly to the stability of the country. Therefore, the British were convinced that they should show support for the NEP as it would have provided them with opportunities to expand their commercial and investment interests. Their conclusion was that Malaysia would be a “worthwhile recipient” of economic aid.¹⁹² Whether the economic aid came from the British or not, the policymakers held the stance that it was in the United Kingdom’s interest to maintain a stable and developing Malaysia.¹⁹³ Additionally, British policymakers considered linking economic aid to private investment by suggesting that the assistance could encourage U.K. private investment in assisting priority development projects related to infrastructure. One example was an option to facilitate private investment for the construction of roads in Johore and other less-developed areas in the country.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁹ Malaysia: The Commercial Case for Capital Aid, Country policy paper of Malaysia and future aid for Malaysia, June 1972, FCO 24/1451, UKNA.

¹⁹⁰ Amendments to Draft Malaysia Country Policy Paper 1972, n.d., Country Policy Paper and aid for Malaysia (Folder 1), FCO 24/1761, UKNA.

¹⁹¹ Defence Committee, The Five Power Arrangements and ANZUK, April 4, 1972, Five Power Defence arrangements for Malaysia and Singapore, 1971 policy, A1209, 1971/9495, NAA.

¹⁹² The Second Malaysia Plan, October 8, 1971, Second development plan for Malaysia, 1971-1975, FCO 24/1172, UKNA.

¹⁹³ Country Policy Paper, n.d., MALAYSIA Country policy paper of Malaysia and future aid for Malaysia, FCO 24/1451, UKNA.

¹⁹⁴ Malaysia Country Policy Paper, 1972, Country policy paper of Malaysia and future aid for Malaysia, FCO 24/1451, UKNA.

Overall, the UK closely tied its support for Malaysia's NEP to safeguard its economic interests and promote national and regional stability.

British policymakers regarded economic aid as a helpful counterinsurgency tool. The policymakers linked preserving stability in Malaysia with channeling aid for Malaysia's counterinsurgency campaign and its Second Malaysia Plan. To protect British investments, the United Kingdom provided Malaysia with economic aid for development and defense purposes. Between 1968 and 1973, the United Kingdom extended GBP 25 million in "Special Aid" to Malaysia for these purposes, along with substantial military assistance, including training for Malaysian servicemen in Britain. This aid package was also partly in relation to the British military withdrawal to show that the United Kingdom still had a stake in Malaysia's defense and development.¹⁹⁵ Essentially, British economic aid had the attempted dual purpose of providing security against insurgencies and fostering economic development.

Although there would not be continuing economic aid in the magnitude of the Special Aid, the UK emphasized the importance of targeted economic assistance on carefully selected projects in the country's less developed areas after 1974. The policymakers argued that regional inequalities and unemployment persisted despite Malaysia's overall economic growth and access to global capital markets. The British policymakers stressed that with the existence of a tense communal environment and threats of insurgency, it was in their interest to provide Malaysia with focused economic aid.¹⁹⁶ In a domestic environment where British politicians were debating about the availability and limitations of economic resources for developing countries, several policymakers justified continuing targeted assistance beyond the Special Aid period by emphasizing that it aligned with their interests of bolstering Malaysian stability, which they hoped would protect existing investments

¹⁹⁵ Policies Which Contribute to Stability, n.d., Malaysian foreign policy (Folder 2), FCO 24/1162, UKNA; Loan Service Personnel in Malaysia, June 9, 1972, Loan Service Agreements between UK and Malaysia (Folder 2), FCO 24/1454, UKNA.

¹⁹⁶ Amendments to Draft Malaysia Country Policy Paper 1972, n.d., Country Policy Paper and aid for Malaysia (Folder 1), FCO 24/1761, UKNA.

and also foster conditions that would eventually bring in new private investments from other British investors.¹⁹⁷

The United Kingdom worked in tandem with the United States as they had the same objective in safeguarding their economic and security interests in the Southeast Asian region. Both nations supported and bolstered the Malaysian regime. The British objective was to ensure a stable Malaysian government that was capable of protecting its economic incentives. The United Kingdom and the United States viewed Malaysia as a partner that could be useful in their broader anti-communist coalition in Southeast Asia. The strategy of “prosecuting the Cold War” in Malaysia was thus an international effort.¹⁹⁸ And one major priority was to protect private capital. Despite the major British military withdrawal from the region, there was a continuation of a shared goal of sharing power over Malaysia with the United Kingdom, which focused on investments and economic assistance, and the United States on private capital. The British continued to attempt to maintain its influence over Malaysia with its Special Aid. Such an arrangement was consistent with the U.S. view of the FPDA, where it wanted the ANZUK nations to share the burden and take the lead in ensuring the stability of Malaysia.

An important reason why the United States wanted the British (and ANZUK in general) to take the lead in Malaysia was that Malaysia was not a top priority for the Americans in Southeast Asia, indicating that the Vietnam War did not draw the two countries closer to each other despite Malaysian support towards the U.S. war effort in Indochina. According to a 1973 U.S. policy analysis and resource allocation paper, the interests of the United States in Malaysia were “limited and none [were] vital.”¹⁹⁹ For the United States, Malaysia was a country that was self-sufficient and did not need economic assistance, as it argued that Malaysia was receiving “adequate assistance from international agencies and other developed countries and is enjoying satisfactory if not spectacular economic growth.”²⁰⁰ The policy paper went on to state that the United States did not expect to increase its economic assistance in the

¹⁹⁷ Amendments to Draft Malaysia Country Policy Paper 1972, n.d., Country Policy Paper and aid for Malaysia (Folder 1), FCO 24/1761, UKNA.

¹⁹⁸ Weiss, “Legacies of the Cold War in Malaysia,” 524-25

¹⁹⁹ PARA Malaysia, 1973, box 11, POL 2.3 PARA - Malaysia, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

near future and that it did not “anticipate that the [United States would] need to seek a more intimate political relationship with that country.”²⁰¹ In short, while the United States and Malaysia experienced increasing private sector engagement, they did not develop closer political relations during the Vietnam era.

Instead of providing Malaysia with bilateral economic assistance, the United States encouraged the Malaysian leadership to turn to multilateral and private institutions. For instance, in the mid-1960s, Eugene R. Black, the former President of the World Bank (1949-62) and Advisor on Southeast Asia Economic and Social Development to President Lyndon B. Johnson recommended then Deputy Prime Minister Razak to approach the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the World Bank, and other developed countries in Europe for loans to help develop Malaysia's economy. Although Razak, during this period, had requested a bilateral economic assistance program between the United States and Malaysia, the American policymakers rejected the Deputy Prime Minister's proposal.²⁰² By 1973, Malaysia's engagement with the United States for foreign economic development assistance primarily came from private institutions such as the Ford Foundation, Asia Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation's Agricultural Development Council, and the International Executive Service Corps. The exception was the Peace Corps, which was part of the U.S. government that provided more than 300 volunteers annually to Malaysia in fields such as education, health, and agriculture.²⁰³ Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, the United States was not interested in expanding political government-to-government relations with Malaysia.

The U.S. political uninterest translated into its overall economic relations with Malaysia in the early 1970s. For instance, by 1972, Japan had become Malaysia's leading trading partner, with Singapore coming in second, the United States third, and the British fourth. Malaysia was the leading producer of natural rubber and tin,

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Record of Meeting Between Hon'ble Deputy Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak and Mr. Eugene R. Black, President Johnson's Adviser on Southeast Asia Economic and Social Development, November 6, 1966, box 1, POL 7 Visits Meetings, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA; Vice President's Asian Trip, October 21, 1967, box 1, POL 7 Vice President's Asian Trip, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

²⁰³ PARA Malaysia, 1973, box 11, POL 2.3 PARA - Malaysia, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

but for the United States, these products fell “short of being of vital importance.”²⁰⁴ In terms of the largest foreign investors in Malaysia, the British came in first, with the United States and Singapore “practically tied” in second place with American firms operating in the petroleum, forests, mining, and agriculture sectors.²⁰⁵ Although the United States was not Malaysia’s leading trading and investment partner in the early 1970s, this changed in the decade following the Vietnam War. By then, the U.S. had become Malaysia’s largest trading partner and had surpassed the British as the top foreign investor.²⁰⁶ The eventual expansion of U.S. economic presence in Malaysia resulted from Malaysia’s openness to foreign investors under the New Economic Policy (NEP). In other words, during the Vietnam era, the United States held greater significance for Malaysia than Malaysia did for the United States.

The NEP had a significant impact on Malaysia’s economy. However, the advances Malaysia made in its economy were unrelated to the broader U.S. regional war effort, as the United States was not interested in incorporating Malaysia into its strategic considerations. Malaysia’s NEP, which the Razak government introduced in 1971, was effective as it significantly reduced poverty rates over the next two decades and increased Malay ownership in corporations. By 1990, the poverty rate in Malaysia had decreased from 49.3 percent in 1970 to 16.7 percent. As for Malay ownership in companies, the ratio between the Malay population and those of foreign citizenship was roughly equal by 1990 in comparison to a 2.4 to 63.3 ratio Malay to foreigner ratio in 1970.²⁰⁷ Although the NEP effectively reduced poverty and increased Malay presence in corporations while encouraging foreign investment, Malaysia’s advancement was unrelated to the Vietnam War. Malaysia’s economic networks involving private foundations and nations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Singapore, and Japan were not directly or indirectly shaped by the Vietnam War. Moreover, Malaysia’s economic partnerships were also not the byproduct of Malaysia being included in the United States’ broader regional strategic considerations in relation to the Vietnam War and regional security. Essentially, the Vietnam War caused Malaysia to desire closer economic relations with the United

²⁰⁴ Report, Malaysia Handbook, January 1, 1972, doc. CIA-RDP79-0891A001100010001-0, CREST.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Yacob, *The United States and the Malaysian Economy*, 154-63.

²⁰⁷ Faridah Jamaludin, “Malaysia’s New Economic Policy: Has It Been a Success?,” in *Boundaries of Clan and Color: Transnational Comparisons of Inter-Group Disparity*, ed. William Darity and Ashwini Deshpande (London: Routledge, 2003).

States due to increasing American engagement with the Southeast Asian region and disengagement by the British. However, for the United States, the Vietnam War did not encourage it to mobilize its efforts to develop closer ties with the Malaysians, unlike it did with Singapore and Indonesia, as will be examined in the subsequent chapters.

3.5 Conclusion

The neutralization concept was an important component of the buying time thesis in terms of its direct contradiction to the idea that extra-regional powers were to have influence and power in the Southeast Asian region. Malaysia's leaders focused on encouraging the FPDA, which brought about ANZUK's presence and influence over security matters related to the cooperation between Malaysia and Singapore.

Malaysia also considered the ANZUK presence to bring about indirect U.S. interest in Southeast Asian affairs. The idea of neutralization, which called on the non-influence and non-intervention of extra-regional powers, highlighted the necessity of regional countries such as Malaysia and Singapore to determine their own course of security collaboration. However, Malaysia's leaders deliberately focused on the buying time thesis, i.e., providing the space for U.S. influence and presence vis-à-vis ANZUK in Southeast Asia. Similarly, Malaysia's foreign policies towards China, Vietnam, and Thailand indicate that it relegated the neutralization, which called for regional autonomy and neutrality, and instead concentrated on lobbying for the United States to remain in the Southeast Asian region. In its foreign policy towards China, Malaysia's domestic politics played a major role in its desire to normalize relations rather than a necessity to push forward the neutralization agenda. In Thailand and Vietnam's case, Malaysia contradicted the notion of neutralization by encouraging the United States to remain in these two countries. Malaysia's perception was that if the United States stayed in Thailand and Vietnam, it would provide the time to bring political stability to the country and develop its economy.

The U.S. presence in Vietnam and Thailand, however, did not necessarily help Malaysia to buy time to develop its economy. The United States was politically indifferent to the Malaysian leadership as it did not consider Malaysia a vital Southeast Asian country that could improve U.S. strategic interests in the region and the broader Pacific. The improvements in Malaysia's economic conditions following

Prime Minister Razak's introduction of the NEP in 1971 were unrelated to the Vietnam War and the battle against communism in Southeast Asia. In other words, Malaysia would have improved its economic conditions and significantly reduced poverty in the 1970s regardless of whether the United States had militarily intervened in Vietnam. The growing influx of foreign investment into Malaysia was also unrelated to the Vietnam War as the U.S. government did not appear to make a concerted effort to mobilize private capital with the objective that a capitalist Malaysia would help the United States maintain influence over Southeast Asia during a time of strategic defeats in Indochina. In essence, the Second Indochina War did not contribute to Malaysia's economic development.

The U.S. role in the Vietnam War, however, did have the effect of solidifying Malaysia, under the leadership of Prime Minister Razak, as a nation that supported U.S. hegemony in Southeast Asia through direct and indirect influence. The Vietnam era was a distinct time in Malaysia's history when it conceptualized Southeast Asia as a space that necessitated the power of extra-regional powers' influence for Malaysia to achieve its economic development goals. The Vietnam War brought on fears of abandonment amongst the Malaysian leadership as it regarded the United States and ANZUK nations as crucial powers that prevented the rest of the Southeast Asian region from falling to communism. During the Vietnam era, Malaysia attempted to shape a regional order that maintained Western influence as it considered such a presence to bring economic and military benefits. The direct economic benefits of the U.S. presence in Southeast Asia were minimal for Malaysia as it did not receive substantial economic assistance. While Malaysia may not have benefitted from the Second Indochina War, what Malaysia's foreign policies show during the Vietnam era is that it contributed to further politically legitimizing the United States as the hegemon in Southeast Asia, which it eventually benefitted from in the long run.

When considering Malaysia alongside Singapore and Indonesia, Malaysia stands out as an outlier due to the limited economic benefits it gained from the U.S. involvement in the Second Indochina War. Although the Vietnam War may not have directly influenced Malaysia's economic development, this does not diminish the importance of the buying time thesis in shaping Malaysia's foreign policy. Malaysia

adopted the buying time thesis in rhetoric and practice, as shown by its support for a significant U.S. presence in Southeast Asia. This difference in U.S. engagement resulted in less immediate economic impact for Malaysia compared to its regional counterparts, Singapore and Indonesia. The United States did not prioritize Malaysia to the same extent in terms of encouraging multinational firms, multinational organizations, and U.S. foreign assistance to drive its economic growth. The key takeaway, however, is that Malaysia remained committed to the buying time thesis, recognizing the idea, like Singapore and Indonesia, that the strategic importance of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia would bring about and maintain regional stability.



CHAPTER 2: SINGAPORE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores how Singapore, like Malaysia, demanded that the United States and ANZUK maintain their presence in Southeast Asia to buy time to strengthen Singapore's economy and defenses. It argues that Singapore, too, disregarded ASEAN principles of regional autonomy, neutrality, and non-alignment, as its leadership deemed the role of extra-regional powers, particularly the United States and ANZUK, essential for fostering national stability and regional security against external and internal communist influence. This chapter also asserts that Singapore immensely benefited from the Vietnam War, directly contributing to the U.S. war effort as a major petroleum hub and naval base for U.S. and ANZUK ships. Singapore's support for the U.S. military presence in Indochina and its demands for the United States and ANZUK to buy time for the city-state significantly contributed to the rapid growth of Singapore's economy. The American leadership showed a dedicated political and economic interest in Singapore, considering it a strategic port connecting the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The Vietnam War was a direct catalyst for Singapore's economic development.

2.2 Singapore and ANZUK

Singapore did not adhere to the concepts of non-alignment or regional autonomy, as its interactions with the ANZUK nations and the United States indicated that its preference was to have extra-regional powers maintain an active interest and role in Southeast Asia's political, military, and economic affairs. Singapore's objective was to ensure that the British and American military announcements of withdrawals from Malaysia and Singapore, and Indochina, respectively, would not lead to a complete

abandonment of Singapore. Singapore's foreign policy focused on conveying to its Western partners that if ANZUK and the United States left, there would be a power vacuum filled by the Soviet Union. Singapore found the FPDA to be especially valuable in terms of its psychological deterrence, strengthening its defenses, and maintaining an indirect U.S. interest in the region by extension of the American security treaty with Australia and New Zealand. Moreover, Singapore drew in the United States by inviting Soviet naval vessels to visit the city-state. In response, ANZUK and the United States increased their naval presence in Singapore's facilities to keep the Soviet Union out. Overall, Singapore was an active participant in bolstering U.S. dominance in Southeast Asia.

Singapore's foreign policy centered on maintaining the continued existence of FPDA to prevent a power vacuum in Southeast Asia that could invite Soviet intervention. In 1970, Prime Minister Lee criticized the British for creating a power vacuum in the Indian Ocean with their withdrawal, stating that there were now more "tensions and difficulties" as other powers were convinced they had the "capacity to fill up the vacuum," thinking that they could "play a more significant role with a bigger naval potential."²⁰⁸ Singapore's Foreign Minister Sinnathamby Rajaratnam described Britain's departure from the Indian Ocean as the "worst thing they had done in 1968" and argued that the Soviet Union immediately moved in to fill the vacuum.²⁰⁹ Singapore's goal was to prevent the same from happening in Southeast Asia. In 1972, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam's Australian Labor Party came to power, and by 1973, announced plans to disengage from Malaysia and Singapore by gradually withdrawing its troops by 1976.²¹⁰ Rajaratnam was not critical of Australia's intention to withdraw but wanted to ensure the FPDA remained intact. He argued that the FPDA was symbolic in maintaining stability as the Soviet Union and China recognized its existence. Rajaratnam was convinced that FPDA's mere existence, even without Australian troops, would deter the Soviet Union from attempting to

²⁰⁸ Meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Governments, December 4, 1970, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 2, NAA, 44.

²⁰⁹ Cablegram, AHC Singapore to DFA, March 13, 1972, Five power arrangements - Australian domestic attitude to the five power arrangements, 696/1/26/1 PART 1, NAA, 101

²¹⁰ Andrea Benvenuti and David Martin Jones, "Engaging Southeast Asia? Labor's Regional Mythology and Australia's Military Withdrawal from Singapore and Malaysia, 1972-1973," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 12, no. 4 (2010): 32-62, https://doi.org/10.1162/JCWS_a_00047.

move into Southeast Asia.²¹¹ For Singapore, the FPDA brought about “confidence and enhanced stability by filling what would otherwise be a vacuum with friendly forces rather than by new and perhaps bigger powers.”²¹² In other words, Singapore aimed for continuity in regional power dynamics, with the familiar ANZUK nations maintaining their role as guarantors of regional security.

Singapore also viewed the FPDA as a valuable mechanism for drawing in the interest and engagement of the United States in Southeast Asian affairs. For instance, in talks with New Zealand officials, Singapore expressed that the FPDA helped the United States maintain an indirect presence in Southeast Asia.²¹³ Singapore’s leaders were referring to the Australia, New Zealand, and United States (ANZUS) Security Treaty established in 1951. In principle, the ANZUS Treaty called for consultation among its members whenever the “territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened in the Pacific.”²¹⁴ In public interviews in 1973, Foreign Minister Rajaratnam expressed how he saw a connection between the FPDA and the ANZUS Treaty. For example, when asked whether he considered the FPDA a “tripwire to bring in the United States in through ANZUS,” Rajaratnam replied that the FPDA helped maintain U.S. interest in the region. Basically, for Rajaratnam, the United States was plugged in and interlocked with the FPDA by way of connection to Australia and New Zealand, which were parties to the ANZUS Treaty. Rajaratnam was outspoken about the position that “[Singapore wanted] an American presence.”²¹⁵ Therefore, Singapore’s perception of the link between FPDA and ANZUS explains how its concentration was neither on non-alignment nor regional autonomy.

²¹¹ Cablegram, AHC Singapore to DFA, March 13, 1972, Five power arrangements - Australian domestic attitude to the five power arrangements, 696/1/26/1 PART 1, NAA, 101; Cablegram, DFA to AHC Singapore, September 28, 1972, Five power arrangements - Australian domestic attitude to the five power arrangements, 696/1/26/1 PART 1, NAA, 16-17.

²¹² Singapore: Foreign Policy, January 9, 1974, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 6, NAA, 227.

²¹³ Cablegram Singapore to Canberra, July 25, 1974, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 6, NAA, 174.

²¹⁴ Thomas K. Robb and David James Gill, “The ANZUS Treaty during the Cold War,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 17, no. 4 (2015): 109–57.

²¹⁵ Monday Conference - 105, November 12, 1973, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 5, NAA, 51-52; Interview 9 November Prior to Rajaratnam's Departure for Australia, November 9, 1973, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 5, NAA, 67-69.

A clear example of how Singapore's priority was not on regional autonomy and neutrality was Prime Minister Lee's proposal of having a joint naval presence consisting of the United States, Australia, and Japan operating in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In 1973, Lee visited Tokyo and made a press announcement proposing a joint naval task force to counterbalance the Soviet naval presence in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. When asked whether Lee considered the Soviet Union naval force as a threat, Lee replied that it would be a problem if it were the "predominant or the exclusive task force in the area" and argued that with the joint American, Australian, Japanese, and possibly "Western European" presence, a "certain amount of equilibrium" could be maintained.²¹⁶ In the late 1960s, the Soviet Union had expanded its presence in the Indian Ocean. Its naval squadron deployment in the Indian Ocean rose from a daily average of 3 ships in 1968 to 29 by 1974.²¹⁷ For Rajaratnam, the Soviet Union's maritime expansion would continue "to be felt in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia" as he argued that the Soviet ambition was to become a major "force in the Pacific."²¹⁸ He expressed that smaller countries could not stop the Soviet Union from developing its naval strength and, therefore, stated that it was up to the United States, Australia, Japan, and Western Europe to "counter it."²¹⁹ Rajaratnam also argued that the joint naval force would allow Southeast Asian countries to buy time to build their naval strength.²²⁰ The joint naval task force never came into existence. Singapore was adamant that it did not want to see the Soviet Union become the dominant maritime power in the region.

An important reason why Singapore did not want to see a dominant Soviet Union presence was due to fears that it would bring Sino-Soviet competition into Southeast Asia. In a conversation between Foreign Minister Rajaratnam and Australian Prime Minister Whitlam in 1973, Rajaratnam stated that although there was detente between the United States and the Soviet Union and the United States and China,

²¹⁶ Lee Kuan Yew's Press Conference in Tokyo, May 18, 1973, Political relations between Singapore and Japan, FCO 24/1785, UKNA; Lee's Visit to Japan, n.d., Political relations between Singapore and Japan, FCO 24/1785, UKNA.

²¹⁷ Bruce W. Watson, "The Indian Ocean, 1968–1980," in *Red Navy at Sea: Soviet Naval Operations on the High Seas, 1956–1980* (London: Routledge, 1982); Alexander O. Ghebhardt, "Soviet and U.S. Interests in the Indian Ocean," *Asian Survey* 15, no. 8 (1975): 672–83.

²¹⁸ Text of Speech by Mr. S. Rajaratnam, May 18, 1970, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 2, NAA.

²¹⁹ Lee Kuan Yew's Proposal for a Joint Naval Task Force in Southeast Asia, May 25, 1973, Political relations between Singapore and Japan, FCO 24/1785, UKNA.

²²⁰ Ibid.

there was still intense friction between the Soviet Union and China.²²¹ Known as the Sino-Soviet Split, between 1956 and 1966, the Soviet Union and China's relationship had gone into turmoil, leading to the collapse of the alliance they had signed in 1950.²²² By 1969, China and the Soviet Union experienced border clashes at the disputed Zhenbao Island.²²³ The Sino-Soviet split had broader effects as both countries competed for influence in the Afro-Asian world throughout the Cold War.²²⁴ Singapore feared that without an American presence in Southeast Asia, it would be caught up in the Sino-Soviet rivalry and would have to choose between the two countries.²²⁵ Singapore considered the ANZUK and the U.S. naval presence in Southeast Asia as convenient excuses to signal to the Soviet Union that Singapore was committed to the West and there was no power vacuum in the region.²²⁶ For Singapore, the Soviet Union was not an alternative to American and ANZUK absence in Southeast Asia. While Singapore perceived the United States and ANZUK as forces for stability, it considered the Soviet Union a power that would invite conflict into the region.

Singapore did not find the Malaysian concept of neutralization realistic or the right time to pursue such a foreign policy. Prime Minister Lee did not find neutralization feasible, and for him, the reality was that the great powers were in competition over Southeast Asia, making it unlikely the United States, China, and the Soviet Union would guarantee the region's neutrality.²²⁷ Lee wanted a maritime environment where the ANZUK nations and the United States continued "sailing these waters long after Vietnam [well into the 1980s]."²²⁸ Rajaratnam viewed neutralization as a

²²¹ Record of Conversation Between the Prime Minister and The foreign Minister of Singapore, Mr. S. Rajaratnam, November 15, 1973, China - Relations with Singapore, A1838, 3107/40/109 PART 3, NAA.

²²² Lorenz M. Lüthi, "The Sino-Soviet Split and Its Consequences," in *The Routledge Handbook of the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2014), 74–85.

²²³ Lorenz M. Lüthi, "Restoring Chaos to History: Sino-Soviet-American Relations, 1969," *China Quarterly* 210 (2012): 378–97.

²²⁴ Lüthi, "The Sino-Soviet Split and Its Consequences," 81–83.

²²⁵ The Outlook for Southeast Asia - The View From Singapore, n.d., Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 6, NAA, 37; Singapore: Foreign Policy, November 1973, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 5, 76.

²²⁶ Cablegram Singapore to Canberra, July 25, 1974, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 6, NAA, 174; Remarks of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew to the National Press Club, April 7, 1975, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 6, NAA, 118.

²²⁷ Singapore and the People's Republic of China, June 4, 1971, Communist China - Economic - Relations with Singapore, A1838, 766/3/40 PART 1, NAA, 57.

²²⁸ Telegram, Canberra to FCO, March 29, 1971, Use of dockyard facilities of Singapore by Soviet Union (Folder 2), FCO 24/1218, UKNA.

“long-term concept” with an unclear timeline. Instead, Singapore considered the 1970s an interim period where it needed to establish a security environment that prevented a power vacuum in Southeast Asia.²²⁹ By 1974, Singapore’s leadership saw a necessity for another five to six years for Southeast Asian countries to strengthen their military and economic capabilities after the end of the Vietnam War. During this time of uncertainty, Singapore was concerned that the Soviet Union would attempt to look for an opening to intervene in Southeast Asia. Therefore, Singapore wanted to ensure that such an opportunity would not exist by maintaining the existing regional power structure in the region.²³⁰ Moreover, Lee asserted that China would not accept the neutralization of Southeast Asia once it had built up its “blue water fleet” and could “police the straits of Southeast Asia, the South China Sea, and the Indian Ocean.”²³¹ For Singapore, too many obstacles and priorities prevented the neutralization policy from coming into existence.

Singapore’s views towards regional security in relation to the roles of the United States, ANZUK, the Soviet Union, and China show that the terms non-aligned and neutral do not apply to Singapore’s foreign policy. Other studies have described the relationship between Singapore and the United States as an “interplay of the American policy of containment and Singapore’s preservation of an image of non-alignment.”²³² In other words, there was a contrast between the two countries where Singapore was careful to portray an image of non-alignment and the United States, in contrast, focused on containing communism in Southeast Asia. According to this view, Singapore avoided “actions or statements which would appear to line [Singapore] up politically on the side of any major power or bloc.”²³³ However, as shown in the previous passages, Singapore framed its policies with containing Soviet and Chinese communism in mind. It was explicit, both privately and publicly, about how it wanted to maintain the regional structure in Southeast Asia, which favored

²²⁹ Monday Conference - 105, November 12, 1973, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 5, Communist China - Economic - Relations with Singapore, A1838, 766/3/40 PART 1, NAA, 50-51.

²³⁰ Cablegram Singapore to Canberra, July 25, 1974, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 6, NAA, 174.

²³¹ Prime Minister Attends Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference, August 8, 1973, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 5, NAA, 117; The Bulletin, August 18, 1973, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 5, NAA, 118.

²³² Chua, *US-Singapore Relations*, 20.

²³³ Chua, *US-Singapore Relations*, 58.

the United States and ANZUK. Singapore wanted players it was familiar with and was outspoken in its view that the other major powers would potentially bring instability to the region. Therefore, it would be apt to retire the terms non-alignment and neutral when referring to Singapore in the Vietnam era.

An important episode in Singapore's history was its invitation to the Soviet Union to use its naval facilities, suggesting a non-aligned foreign policy. However, Singapore's invitation aimed to incentivize and ensure a continued American and ANZUK naval presence in Singapore, at the expense of the Soviet Union. During a 1970 visit to Moscow, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew stated that he was open to servicing Soviet warships and agreed to welcome Russian visits to investigate Singapore's facilities.²³⁴ In 1968, Singapore had gained full ownership of a British naval dockyard in the northern part of the island and converted it into a commercial shipyard known as Sembawang Shipyard.²³⁵ In 1971, a Soviet naval vessel visited the Sembawang shipyard for maintenance, where U.S. and ANZUK warships were also located.²³⁶ However, Lee expressed he did not want a Russian base, preferring the "modest" ANZUK forces, but was willing to accommodate the Soviets if Australian withdrawal led to the "collapse of the [FPDA]."²³⁷ Foreign Minister Rajaratnam noted that the Soviet Union showed no signs of retreating from the Pacific and hoped the U.S. exit from Vietnam would not herald a broader withdrawal from Asia, emphasizing that the American presence was in the "long-term interests of small Asian countries like Singapore."²³⁸ By declaring its openness to servicing Soviet naval vessels, Singapore sought to incentivize the Americans and ANZUK

²³⁴ Memorandum for Interagency Singapore Study Group, April 27, 1972, box 10, POL Policy Study (Singapore), Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA; Memo, Visit of Singapore Prime Minister, Australian Embassy Moscow, October 2, 1970, USSR Relations with Singapore, A10136, 225/16 PART 1, NAA, 290; Annex A, December 10, 1971, Use of dockyard facilities of Singapore by Soviet Union (Folder 4), FCO 24/1220, UKNA.

²³⁵ Loh Kah Seng, "The British Military Withdrawal from Singapore and the Anatomy of a Catalyst," in *Singapore in Global History*, ed. Derek Heng and Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 201–5.

²³⁶ Daniel Wei Boon Chua, "Becoming a 'Good Nixon Doctrine Country': Political Relations between the United States and Singapore during the Nixon Presidency," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 60, no. 4 (2014): 538, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajph.12074>

²³⁷ Telegram, HC Singapore to FCO, March 23, 1971, Use of dockyard facilities of Singapore by Soviet Union (Folder 2), FCO 24/1218, UKNA; "Russians May Come," *The Straits Times*, September 8, 1972.

²³⁸ Text of Speech by Mr. S. Rajaratnam, May 18, 1970, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 2, NAA, 91.

forces to maintain their presence, highlighting the potential power vacuum and the necessity to accommodate the Soviet Union if these forces left.

Singapore preferred a Western presence because it viewed the FPDA as providing an opportunity to concentrate on economic development while improving its military capabilities. This goal was Singapore's priority, indicating that the invitation to the Soviet Union for naval repairs was a risk Singapore took to test the temperature on where ANZUK stood on the FPDA. In Lee's view, Australia and New Zealand's presence had "enhanced the prospects for stability [and promoted] economic growth," which he considered to be significant to a country's capability to "withstand external and internal pressure or manipulation."²³⁹ In other words, for Singapore, the FPDA bought time for it to build its economy, which in turn helped prevent the spread of communism.²⁴⁰ In 1972, Foreign Minister Rajaratnam stated that Singapore needed another five years to build its Air Force and Navy, and therefore expressed to the Australians that even if Australian troops left, he wanted to see the FPDA consultations and military assistance continue.²⁴¹ Singapore considered the existence of the FPDA vital as it regarded the organization as allowing Singapore to defend itself against external attacks while preventing internal communist subversion.

Singapore was in effect attempting to assess how ANZUK would react to a Soviet naval presence in Sembawang. Its foremost priority was to induce the ANZUK nations to continue its commitment to Singapore as it regarded the FPDA as possessing political value in terms of deterrence against potential adversaries. Singapore's leaders considered the FPDA more of a "political framework" than a military alliance.²⁴² Like Malaysia, Singapore's leadership considered the FPDA as having a "psychological impact" or deterrent value and argued that the presence of ANZUK forces had prevented a power vacuum from developing after the significant

²³⁹ Some Statements by Malaysian and Singaporean Leaders of Stationing of Australian Troops in Malaysia/Singapore, February 26, 1969, Five power arrangements - Australian domestic attitude to the five power arrangements, A1838, 696/1/26/1 PART 1, NAA, 142.

²⁴⁰ Record of Conversation, January 7, 1970, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 2, NAA, 111.

²⁴¹ Cablegram, AHC Singapore to DFA, March 13, 1972, Five power arrangements - Australian domestic attitude to the five power arrangements, 696/1/26/1 PART 1, NAA, 101-102.

²⁴² Singapore - Foreign Policy, January 9, 1971, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, Series No. A1838, Control Symbol 3024/7/1 PART 6, NAA, 227.

British military withdrawal from Malaysia and Singapore in 1971.²⁴³ For Singapore, the political value primarily existed due to the ANZUK naval and air contributions.²⁴⁴ Put differently, Singapore regarded the FPDA as contributing to political stability and a sense of confidence. Given that Singapore placed importance on maintaining cordial relations with the ANZUK nations to encourage their continued political, military, and economic engagement, it was unlikely that Singapore's actual intention was to authorize the Soviet Union unfettered access to its naval facilities.

Singapore's temperature check paid off as the ANZUK nations responded diplomatically, expressing that they wanted to see the FPDA survive to maintain stability in the Southeast Asian region. For instance, the British policy was to emphasize to Singapore that "Five-Power cohesion" would be weakened with a Soviet naval presence in Singapore.²⁴⁵ The British argued that the Soviet Union in Sembawang would have a "damaging effect on the ability of the Allied Forces in Singapore to fulfill their defensive role."²⁴⁶ The fear for ANZUK was that with Soviet naval vessels operating in the Sembawang facility, the Russians would potentially gain intelligence on ANZUK's sensitive equipment. The ANZUK forces made the case that the Soviet Union's access to the naval base would impair the efficiency of sea and air training amongst the members of the FPDA.²⁴⁷ ANZUK's response to Singapore showed how all parties were actually on the same page when it came to the necessity of maintaining the naval and air components of the FPDA when it came to the issue of security in Southeast Asia. Singapore confirmed that ANZUK was still interested in the FPDA.

Singapore's openness towards ANZUK and the United States contributed to extra-regional powers dictating the parameters of how Sembawang was to be utilized

²⁴³ ANZUK Builds a New Equilibrium, n.d., Singapore ANZUK (Australia New Zealand United Kingdom) Five Power - general, A13883, 213/1/7A PART 1, NAA, 397.

²⁴⁴ Cablegram, AHC to DFA, April 16, 1971, Five power arrangements - Ministerial conference 1971 3rd meeting, A1838, 696/1/10/2 PART 1, NAA, 22.

²⁴⁵ Telegram, FCO to HC Singapore, January 6, 1971, Use of dockyard facilities of Singapore by Soviet Union (Folder 1), FCO 24/1217, UKNA.

²⁴⁶ Facilities for Soviet Vessels in Singapore, February 5, 1971, Use of dockyard facilities of Singapore by Soviet Union (Folder 1), FCO 24/1217, UKNA.

²⁴⁷ Soviet Bloc Ships in Singapore - Security Implications, n.d., Use of dockyard facilities of Singapore by Soviet Union (Folder 4), FCO 24/1220, UKNA; Telegram, FCO to Canberra, February 16, 1971, Use of dockyard facilities of Singapore by Soviet Union (Folder 1), FCO 24/1217, UKNA.

despite Singapore gaining full ownership of the facility. The Australians preferred to completely ban Soviet naval vessels from Singapore.²⁴⁸ However, the British position was to ban all Soviet naval and intelligence-gathering vessels from Sembawang and the northern part of the island while allowing the Russians to visit Singapore's naval facilities in the south. ANZUK also expected Singapore to provide them with advance notification of communist naval vessel visits to the city-state.²⁴⁹ Singapore's leaders accepted the British proposal and agreed to restrict all Soviet naval, intelligence, and merchant vessels from the northern part of the island, specifically Sembawang. Foreign Minister Rajaratnam also told British officials that the Singapore government had no intention of making any moves that would jeopardize the FPDA.²⁵⁰ With the acceptance of ANZUK's conditions for Sembawang, Singapore was willing to give up a degree of autonomy in exchange for a strategic partnership with the ANZUK nations.

Singapore's engagement with the ANZUK nations over the use of the Sembawang facility illustrated how it was willing to sacrifice a degree of national sovereignty and rely on Western arrangements for its security. Amongst scholars of ASEAN, the conventional wisdom is that during a time of U.S. and British military withdrawal from Southeast Asia, Singapore, with its defense forces that had little capability for deterrence, relied on ASEAN for "ensuring its sovereignty vis-a-vis its larger and more powerful neighbors."²⁵¹ Contrary to this argument, the historical record shows that Singapore's primary focus was on the FPDA when it came to security, not ASEAN. Moreover, the idea of Singapore preserving its sovereignty is overstated. Singapore did not have a strong reaction to extra-regional intervention in its national affairs, i.e., who to authorize in its naval bases. What is missing from the historical accounts of Singapore's foreign policy is that the military, economic, and political

²⁴⁸ Memorandum for Interagency Singapore Study Group, April 27, 1972, box 10, POL Policy Study (Singapore), Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

²⁴⁹ Speaking Note for Meeting with Singapore Officials, December 22, 1971, Use of dockyard facilities of Singapore by Soviet Union (Folder 4), FCO 24/1220, UKNA; Use of Singapore by Soviet Warships, January 10, 1972, Use of dockyard facilities by U.S.S.R. vessels in Singapore, FCO 24/1482, UKNA; Memo, Heavner to Green, May 17, 1972, box 10, Briefing Papers, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

²⁵⁰ Telegram, Singapore to FCO, May 11, 1971, Use of dockyard facilities of Singapore by Soviet Union (Folder 2), FCO 24/1218, UKNA (40); Control of Soviet Ships, February 2, 1972, Use of dockyard facilities by U.S.S.R. vessels in Singapore, FCO 24/1482, UKNA.

²⁵¹ Amitav Acharya, *Singapore's Foreign Policy: The Search for Regional Order* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2008), 5-6. 20.

value of ANZUK's presence, especially the naval and air contribution, was crucial in Singapore's calculations for its future security and stability.

Singapore's openness towards Western presence and interference benefitted the United States as the city-state became another arena in Southeast Asia for the containment policy. Singapore's naval and air bases played an important role in U.S. contingency planning against communism. In 1969, the British had also transferred ownership of the Seletar and Changi air bases to Singapore.²⁵² According to a 1972 Department of Defense policy study, U.S. officials viewed American access to Singapore's naval and air facilities as vital in several potential scenarios: (1) if South Vietnam and Cambodia denied U.S. overflight, (2) if the Philippines restricted access to the Clark Air Base and the Subic Naval Base, (3) if Indonesian relations with the United States deteriorated while improving with communist nations, and (4) if there was an increase in communist influence in Thailand and Malaysia. For U.S. officials, these contingencies provided valid reason to seek increased influence with the Singapore government.²⁵³ By convincing Singapore to restrict Soviet access to its facilities, the United States also aimed to prevent Singapore's maintenance and logistical capabilities from contributing to the Soviet Union's naval operations in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.²⁵⁴ Given Singapore's strategic location in the Strait of Malacca, a vital maritime route linking the Pacific and Indian Oceans, the United States sought to leverage its partnership with Singapore to hinder the Soviet naval expansion in the area.

The United States increased its naval and air presence in Singapore to prevent Soviet expansion, which in turn also helped alleviate Singapore's concerns about a power vacuum in Southeast Asia due to the significant British military withdrawal. In December 1970, the U.S. National Security Council (NSC) released a memorandum stating that the combined American and British naval presence in the Indian Ocean was slightly above that of the Soviet Union. However, the NSC warned that the Soviet Union could increase its naval vessels in the region and surpass the American

²⁵² Chua, *US-Singapore Relations*, 142.

²⁵³ Memorandum for Interagency Singapore Study Group, April 27, 1972, box 10, POL Policy Study (Singapore), Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA (56-60); Theodore J.C. Heavner to Robert A. Shaid, August 17, 1971, box 8, DEF 15 U.S. Use of Military Facilities Singapore, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

²⁵⁴ Ted Heavner to Ingersoll, April 5, 1974, box 12, DEF 15 US Use of Military Facilities (LASS), Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

and British presence by 1975.²⁵⁵ According to the 1972 Department of Defense policy study, U.S. officials predicted that Singapore would be significant to the United States and the Soviet Union “in the next five years, in terms of how the vacuum left by the British withdrawal is filled.”²⁵⁶ The study went on to state that there was the possibility the FPDA would collapse due to changes in government in the ANZUK nations and that the U.S. officials were concerned about military access to the city-state due to the “lack of a strong historical U.S. presence or influence in [Singapore].”²⁵⁷ Therefore, the Department of Defense study proposed the solution of increasing the level of American military use in Singapore’s naval and air bases for repairs so that the United States could ensure that it had continued access to Singapore’s strategically located facilities and demonstrate to Singapore that the United States had intention to remain in the area.²⁵⁸

The United States also had economic incentives for advocating the expansion of U.S. naval and aircraft repairs, a move that aligned with Singapore’s objective of buying time for economic development. Describing Singapore as the “largest Free World port” in Southeast Asia, the Department of Defense argued that it was important for the United States to maintain cordial political and economic relations with the Lee government due to growing U.S. private investment.²⁵⁹ The U.S. officials argued that a different government would have possibly made it more difficult for American firms to operate in Singapore and that if the city-state fell into “enemy hands,” there would be a “serious threat to free world commerce and [the United States’] ability to defend or exert influence in [Southeast Asia].”²⁶⁰ By utilizing Singapore’s naval and air bases for ship and aircraft repairs, the United States was not only signaling to Singapore its intention to maintain a presence in Southeast Asia but also demonstrating its interest in assisting in the economic well-being of the city-state.

²⁵⁵ Paper Prepared by the National Security Council Staff, December 8, 1970, Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter *FRUS*), 1969–1976, Volume XXIV, Middle East Region and Arabian Peninsula, 1969–1972; Jordan, September 1970, ed. Linda W. Qaimmaqami and Adam M. Howard (Washington D.C., 2008), doc. 46.

²⁵⁶ Memorandum for Interagency Singapore Study Group, box 10, April 27, 1972, POL Policy Study (Singapore), Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ Memorandum for Interagency Singapore Study Group, April 27, 1972, box 10, April 27, 1972, POL Policy Study (Singapore), Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

²⁵⁹ Memorandum for Interagency Singapore Study Group, April 27, 1972, POL Policy Study (Singapore), Box 10, USNA. (46)

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

As part of the Nixon Doctrine, the United States also pursued a policy that required the ANZUK nations to share the burden and continue engaging with Singapore, which, again, indicated how the United States viewed ANZUK as a vital political and geographical extension of Southeast Asia. In 1971, the U.S. Country Director for Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore Affairs argued that the “ANZUK commitment” to Southeast Asia required American backing, asserting that while the United States was applying bilateral diplomatic pressure on Singapore to discourage accepting the Russians, it would also simultaneously need to encourage ANZUK to use its influence to “minimize” the Soviet naval presence.²⁶¹ In practical terms, the U.S. strategy was to fill Sembawang with American and ANZUK naval vessels. The United States considered the ANZUK presence a crucial obstacle to Soviet attempts to use Singapore’s naval facilities.²⁶² By collaborating with ANZUK, the United States was addressing the problem of Singapore experiencing a lack of “confidence in any long-term Western commitment to the security of Southeast Asia.”²⁶³ For the United States, ANZUK was a valuable tool in dissuading Singapore of any notions that the gradual American and British military withdrawals would lead to a power vacuum in Southeast Asia. In an environment where Singapore was uncertain about the reliability of its Western partners, the United States persuaded the city-state that there were alternative means, i.e., naval presence, to show Western commitment to the security of the region.

U.S. interference in Southeast Asian affairs had implications on regional cooperation as it impeded closer collaboration between Singapore and Malaysia on maritime issues. The ANZUK nations had provided Singapore with U.S. intelligence on Soviet ship movements and considered sharing this information with Malaysia.²⁶⁴ The United States opposed sharing the intelligence, arguing that it was irrelevant to Malaysia as it concerned Soviet ships in Singapore’s facilities.²⁶⁵ The United States

²⁶¹ Memo, Theodore J.C. Heavner to Robert A. Shaid, August 17, 1971, box 8, DEF 15 U.S. Use of Military Facilities Singapore, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

²⁶² Memorandum for Interagency Singapore Study Group, April 27, 1972, box 10, POL Policy Study (Singapore), Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA; Briefing Book For Visit to Singapore of Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, February 4–6, 1973, box 11, Background & Briefing Singapore, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

²⁶³ Memorandum for Interagency Singapore Study Group, April 27, 1972, box 10, POL Policy Study (Singapore), Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

²⁶⁴ Information on Soviet Ships, June 16, 1972, Soviet ships in Singapore, FCO 24/1483, UKNA.

²⁶⁵ Memorandum for the Files, May 17, 1972, box 10, DEF 13 Logistic Matters (Soviet Navy), Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

also rejected sharing intelligence based on concerns about freedom of navigation in the Straits of Malacca. In 1971, Malaysia and Indonesia declared that the Straits of Malacca no longer an international waterway, extending their territorial waters to a 12 nautical mile zone from the coast.²⁶⁶ In contrast, the United States argued that passage through international straits was an “inherent and inseparable adjunct of the freedoms of navigation and overflight on the high seas.”²⁶⁷ The United States advocated for the unrestricted use of the straits, opposing Malaysia and Indonesia’s requirement for providing prior notification of passage.²⁶⁸ As previously mentioned, ANZUK and Singapore agreed to communicate in advance regarding Soviet ship movements. The United States was concerned that sharing intelligence with Malaysia would set a precedent and wanted to avoid conceding to territorial claims over international waterways at the Law of the Sea conferences at the United Nations.²⁶⁹ In this case, the Americans turned the FPDA into a four-powered arrangement (Singapore plus ANZUK) when it saw that the regional states acted in ways that were not in the interest of the United States.

Singapore’s engagement with the United States over the issue of Soviet naval access exemplified how the city-state partook in bolstering American predominance in Southeast Asia. As one of ASEAN’s “friendly kings,” Prime Minister Lee had integrated Singapore’s economy with the United States, sought American assistance, and attempted to influence U.S. policy in the region.²⁷⁰ By 1974, an official at Sembawang had stated that the shipyard had “never repaired or refitted Soviet warships,” confirming that the northern part of the island was non-accessible to the Russians.²⁷¹ That same year, Prime Minister Lee publicly stated there was no point in the Russians using Singapore’s naval facilities as it would not be available to them at times of crisis. The Americans interpreted this message to reaffirm that they would “remain as the major force in Asian affairs” and that Singapore preferred the

²⁶⁶ Joseph Liow Chin Yong, “Visions of Serumpun: Tun Abdul Razak and the Golden Years of Indo-Malay Blood Brotherhood, 1967–75,” *South East Asia Research* 11, no. 3 (2003): 343, <https://doi.org/10.5367/000000003772657391>.

²⁶⁷ Michael Leifer and Dolliver Nelson, “Conflict of Interest in the Straits of Malacca,” *International Affairs* 49, no. 2 (1973): 198.

²⁶⁸ Leifer and Nelson, “Conflict of Interest in the Straits of Malacca,” 196.

²⁶⁹ Memorandum for the Files, May 17, 1972, box 10, DEF 13 Logistic Matters (Soviet Navy), Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

²⁷⁰ Wen-Qing Ngoei, *Arc of Containment: Britain, the United States, and Anticommunism in Southeast Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019), 6.

²⁷¹ “Shipyard: No Soviet Warships Repaired in Store,” *The Straits Times*, April 20, 1974.

United States over the Russians.²⁷² The restriction of Soviet naval vessels by Singapore, the United States, and ANZUK represented a pivotal moment where these different actors converged to apply the containment policy and acknowledged U.S. hegemony as integral to the regional order in Southeast Asia.

Singapore's engagement with ANZUK and the United States in the early 1970s highlights its deliberate effort to align with Western powers rather than pursue regional neutrality and autonomy. Singapore saw ANZUK and the United States as stabilizing forces, in contrast to the Soviet Union, which it viewed as a potential source of conflict due to its competition with China. The city-state saw its political, military, and economic interests best served by the FPDA and the U.S. and ANZUK naval presence in its facilities. Ultimately, Singapore played a collaborative role in containing the Soviet Union from the region.

2.3 Singapore, China, and the Second Indochina War

Singapore's foreign policies towards China, Vietnam, and Thailand revealed its disregard for regional autonomy and neutrality, alongside a tendency to intervene in other countries' domestic policies. Viewing China as a destabilizing force due to its support for communist insurgencies, Singapore chose not to normalize relations with Beijing. This stance was at odds with Malaysia's proposal for a neutral Southeast Asia guaranteed by great powers, as Singapore refused to establish diplomatic ties with China. During the Vietnam War, Singapore diverged from a non-aligned image by actively lobbying for the U.S. presence in the region. It argued that American involvement provided crucial time for Southeast Asian countries to develop their economies and military capabilities. Singapore also supported the U.S. war effort by serving as a hub for petroleum transfers to South Vietnam and cooperating with the U.S. Department of Defense to establish repair offices in Singapore. Regarding Thailand, Singapore advocated for the retention of U.S. military bases, asserting that Thailand was a crucial buffer state in Indochina. It argued that the stability of Malaysia and Singapore depended on Bangkok's security. Non-alignment was a misnomer when referring to Singapore's foreign policy in the 1970s.

²⁷² Memo, Ted Heavner to Ingersoll, April 10, 1974, box 12, DEF 15 Soviet Use, April 10, 1974, DEF 15 Soviet Use, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

Singapore did not normalize diplomatic relations with China in the 1970s because it regarded China as a political and economic supporter of insurgencies in Southeast Asia. According to Prime Minister Lee, China had a “subtle” mode of operation in its foreign policy towards the Southeast Asian region as its aim was not to militarily invade other countries but instead focus on assisting in revolution as it did in South Vietnam through the North Vietnamese.²⁷³ Lee argued that there would not be any Chinese military presence in Southeast Asia; instead, China would support the “proxies to carry the torch of revolution with tremendous fervor and zeal.”²⁷⁴ Foreign Minister Rajaratnam conveyed the same message to the Australians by stating that it was not “Chinese imperialism” in the form of China taking over a country like Singapore; instead, China would attempt to gain leverage and influence over other nations.²⁷⁵ Therefore, Lee’s correspondence with the Americans emphasized that if the United States were to leave the Southeast Asian region, the countries in the area would lose confidence and have to start adjusting their policies to accommodate Beijing.²⁷⁶ Singapore’s objective was to maintain political independence from China.

Singapore’s messaging to the United States was that Singapore and the Southeast Asian region needed to buy time to strengthen its economic capabilities before it could formally recognize China. For instance, Prime Minister Lee argued that “weak and unstable situations” alongside subversion and insurgencies would potentially cause a “balkanized situation” in Southeast Asia.²⁷⁷ In 1971, Lee put forward the idea that Singapore needed at least ten more years for economic development before it could be in a position to end its political and diplomatic isolation from China.²⁷⁸ In a conversation with American officials in 1972, Foreign Minister Rajaratnam stated that although the United States and China were starting to develop friendlier

²⁷³ Ang Cheng Guan, *Reassessing Lee Kuan Yew’s Strategic Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2023), 47.

²⁷⁴ Ang Cheng Guan, “The Global and the Regional in Lee Kuan Yew’s Strategic Thought: The Early Cold War Years,” in *Singapore in Global History*, ed. Derek Heng and Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 235–59.

²⁷⁵ Record of Conversation Between the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of Singapore, Mr. S. Rajaratnam, November 15, 1973, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 5, NAA, 33.

²⁷⁶ Chiefs of Mission Briefing Paper, June 19, 1972, box 11, Background & Briefing Singapore, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA. (14)

²⁷⁷ Guan, “The Global and the Regional in Lee Kuan Yew’s Strategic Thought,” 248.

²⁷⁸ Memorandum for Interagency Singapore Study Group, box 10, April 27, 1972, POL Policy Study (Singapore), Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

relations, China's future intentions were uncertain and that Singapore could not rule out China's potential for an antagonistic outlook. Rajaratnam's focus was on the question of what kind of a role the United States would have in Southeast Asia's economic development in the post-Vietnam era. Rajaratnam emphasized that the United States' economic capabilities far outweighed those of the Soviet Union and China and recommended that the United States continue providing economic aid to the countries in the region.²⁷⁹ Fundamentally, Lee and Rajaratnam stressed that Singapore needed to develop a more robust economic foundation to withstand externally supported communist pressures and eventually approach China from a greater position of strength when it was ready to establish formal relations.

For Singapore, a continued U.S. military presence was one way the United States would help the rest of Southeast Asian countries to buy time to develop their economies, which, in turn, it argued, would put them in a stronger position when engaging with China. Lee asserted that with the British disengagement from the region, it was essential for the United States to support the economic development programs of the countries in Southeast Asia.²⁸⁰ Lee argued that the U.S. presence in Vietnam would provide Southeast Asian countries the time to strengthen their economies up to a point where China would struggle to influence subversive movements.²⁸¹ In 1972, Rajaratnam stressed that the end of the Vietnam War would signal that "time [was] up" for Southeast Asia and that the following years would show how prepared the countries in the region were in an environment where the U.S. military had withdrawn from Vietnam. Referring to the Cambodian and Laotian Civil Wars, Rajaratnam claimed that time "ran out too soon for Cambodia and Laos" and that "they were sucked into the war despite stubborn postures of neutrality."²⁸² Rajaratnam had appeared to state that it did not matter whether a country declared it was neutral or not and that as long as it did not have a solid economic and military foundation, it would fall into conflict. For Singapore's leaders, the rest of the region still had the time to prepare its economic and military base. For Lee, the U.S.

²⁷⁹ U.S. Policy in East Asia, June 20, 1972, box 10, POL 1 General Policy & Background, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

²⁸⁰ Memorandum for the President, May 7, 1969, box 3, POL 7 Prime Minister Lee's Visit (Singapore), Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

²⁸¹ Memorandum for the President, May 7, 1969, box 3, POL 7 Prime Minister Lee's Visit (Singapore), Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

²⁸² Excerpt From Recent Speech by Foreign Minister Rajaratnam, December 11, 1972, box 11, Background & Briefing Singapore, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

military withdrawal from Vietnam would lead the countries in the area to rush to engage with Beijing before the optimal time. Lee repeatedly insisted that the rest of Southeast Asia needed to get their houses in order first and that the United States had an important role in helping them achieve this objective.²⁸³

Singapore was critical of Malaysia's approaches towards China to start normalizing relations between the two as it claimed that the timing was wrong. In communications with the Americans, Singapore's leaders claimed that Malaysia was rushing into establishing a relationship with China and opening itself up to subversive activities it was not yet capable of fully handling.²⁸⁴ Singapore was also critical of Malaysia's moves as it was concerned that officially recognizing China would pressure Singapore to do the same, while Singapore's goal was to delay recognition for the foreseeable future. Prime Minister Lee considered it vital for Singapore to politically isolate itself from China during its national building process.²⁸⁵ Before Malaysia's Prime Minister Razak visited China in May 1974, Singapore's Minister for Defense Goh Keng Swee had advised the Malaysians to move with caution, stating that while China may have wanted to establish diplomatic relations, it was unlikely China would end its foreign policy of "party-to-party" relations which came with supporting insurgencies through money, weapons, and training.²⁸⁶ Singapore did not see it as a viable time to restructure the regional order by extending an official political invitation to China to become involved in the Southeast Asian region. In Singapore's view, if the United States were indeed disengaging from the region politically, economically, and militarily, the goal was to convince the Americans to stay and not, instead, turn to China as a way to guarantee its security.

An important note about Singapore's relations with China was that although it was critical of Malaysia, its foreign policy was not too dissimilar to that of its neighbor. Since 1956, the Bank of China had a Singapore branch that acted as the de facto

²⁸³ Aspects of Singapore's Foreign Relations, no date, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 2, NAA, 172.

²⁸⁴ Singapore's Relations with Malaysia, n.d., box 11, Background & Briefing Singapore, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

²⁸⁵ Singapore-China, n.d., box 11, Background & Briefing Singapore, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA. (40-41)

²⁸⁶ Ian Storey, *Southeast Asia and the Rise of China: The Search for Security* (London: Routledge, 2011), 233.

Chinese embassy as the two countries did not have diplomatic relations. In 1963, Malaysia had instructed the closure of the Bank of China branches in Penang and Singapore due to China's support of Indonesia's confrontation towards Malaysia. However, after Singapore's separation from Malaysia in 1965, Singapore repealed the closure of the bank. In 1971, Singapore sent a trade mission to China with the purpose of strengthening economic ties between the two countries.²⁸⁷ As outlined in the previous chapter, Malaysia, too, had established unofficial economic relations with China in the early 1970s. Like Malaysia, Singapore in 1971 also officially supported China's admission to the United Nations at the expense of Taiwan's seat at the United Nations Security Council and eventually the General Assembly. Singapore had followed in the footsteps of the U.S. resolution in 1972 calling for the admission of Taiwan to the United Nations.²⁸⁸ By 1973, Prime Minister Lee stated that it was "inevitable" that Singapore would eventually establish diplomatic relations with China.²⁸⁹ In other words, Singapore did not completely isolate itself from China. Like Malaysia, it was attempting to build political goodwill with China. The difference was that Singapore desired to keep China at arm's length for a longer period of time. As outlined in the previous chapter, Malaysia, instead, saw an urgency in establishing diplomatic relations due to the domestic political reason of making sure not to antagonize its local Chinese population at a time it privileged the interests of the Malay people in its national economic policies. In contrast, Singapore did not face the same pressures. Singapore pursued a foreign policy where it continued to build political goodwill with China while leveraging its economic relationship with the United States for as long as possible before it would move to formally recognize China.

Singapore's desire to postpone establishing diplomatic relations with China also meant putting up a roadblock to Malaysia's objective of the neutralization of Southeast Asia. As stated in the previous chapter, for Singapore, neutralization,

²⁸⁷ John Wong and Liang Fook Lye, "China-Singapore Relations: Looking Back and Looking Forward," in *Singapore-China Relations: 50 Years*, ed. Yongnian Zheng and Liang Fook Lye (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2016), 8-10.

²⁸⁸ Zijie Joshua Lim, "Resolving Away a China Problem: The Issue of Chinese Representation in the Singapore-Republic of China Relationship, 1965-1971," *The International History Review* 44, no. 3 (2021): 613-32.

²⁸⁹ Record of Conversation Between the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of Singapore, Mr. S. Rajaratnam, November 5, 1973, China - Relations with Singapore, A1838, 3107/40/109 PART 3, NAA.

which required the acceptance of all great powers to recognize Southeast Asia as a neutral zone, would have meant that the United States would no longer have a presence in the region. In other words, neutralization meant no extra-regional power and influence over Southeast Asian affairs. In private talks with American officials, Singapore's leaders expressed their strong opposition to pursuing a neutralization scheme for the region. In private talks with American officials, Singapore's leaders expressed their strong opposition to pursuing a neutralization scheme for the region.²⁹⁰ Again, Lee's argument was that the U.S. presence was an essential part of the regional order and to counter China's influence over Southeast Asia. Moreover, Lee considered the neutralization objective unattainable, especially when China would not abandon support for insurgencies. If a neutralization scheme was to come to life, Lee argued that China's abandonment of communist movements in Southeast Asia would have to be a precondition.²⁹¹ For Singapore, Malaysia's attempts to move closer to China in hopes of gaining guarantees from the Chinese to accept Southeast Asia as a neutral zone was unrealistic. It was also against Singapore's foreign policy objective of having the United States continue to play an active political, economic, and military role in Southeast Asia.

When it came to the role of the United States in the Vietnam War, Singapore was neither a neutral party nor an advocate for regional autonomy, as it stressed the need for a continued U.S. military presence in Indochina. For instance, in an interview in 1966, Prime Minister Lee argued that if the Americans were to withdraw from South Vietnam, it would not be the South Vietnamese population but rather the "armed terrorists," referring to North Vietnam, that would be dictating their future.²⁹² Referring to the domino theory, Lee also emphasized that if the United States left, it would only be "a question of time until Singapore and all of Southeast Asia [went] down the drain."²⁹³ Lee's position was that the United States needed to continue its struggle in Vietnam as he considered Southeast Asia's non-communist future

²⁹⁰ Chiefs of Mission Briefing Paper, June 19, 1972, box 11, Background & Briefing Singapore, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

²⁹¹ Aspects of Singapore's Foreign Relations, no date, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 2, NAA, 172.

²⁹² Extracts and Summary of Prime Minister's Interview on 10th August 1966, South East Asia - Intra-regional relations - South Vietnam relations with Singapore, A1838, 3006/8/4 PART 1, NAA, 230.

²⁹³ Report, Compilation of States of Support for U.S. Policy in Vietnam by Asian Leaders, August 31, 1967, doc. CK2349101730, USDDO, 49.

dependent on such a presence.²⁹⁴ With the United States already deeply entrenched in Vietnam in 1969, Lee claimed that it was too late for the United States to turn away. He argued that the United States had already committed to the cause with its tens of thousands of dead soldiers and economic aid to the region. Lee claimed that the U.S. withdrawal would be to “throw the whole of Southeast Asia away.”²⁹⁵ Singapore’s foreign policy understanding was that the security of Singapore was directly interlocked with that of the Indochina region and that to guarantee stability, there needed to be an extra-regional power, specifically the United States, present.

Singapore was critical of the United States’ public announcements of its plan to withdraw from Vietnam as it argued that such proclamations would shake the confidence of the countries in the region and bring about political instability. Speaking to U.S. Vice President Spiro Agnew in 1970, Prime Minister Lee stated that it was imperative for the United States to continue its presence in the region as it provided a “climate of confidence” and would ensure the non-communist countries in Southeast Asia to continue developing its economic and military capabilities.²⁹⁶ Lee cautioned against announcing that the United States intended for a complete withdrawal from Vietnam and instead recommended that the United States at least give the impression to North Vietnam and the Vietcong that at least the “U.S. non-combatant forces will be there indefinitely,” to which Agnew replied that the domestic scene in the United States would not make this possible.²⁹⁷ Lee was also against setting fixed timetables for U.S. military withdrawals. Referring to the British withdrawal announcement from East of Suez in 1968, Lee argued that the British had prematurely made the announcement, causing the Soviet Union to attempt to move into the Indian Ocean.²⁹⁸ The Prime Minister warned the Americans not to make the same mistake in Vietnam by announcing specific schedules for its

²⁹⁴ Bean to Bacon, November 2, 1967, box 1, POL 1 Gen. Policy Background, Box 1, Subject Files, 1968–1974, RG 59, USNA.

²⁹⁵ Daniel Wei Boon Chua, “Becoming a ‘Good Nixon Doctrine Country’: Political Relations between the United States and Singapore during the Nixon Presidency,” *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 60, no. 4 (2014): 537, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajph.12074>; Memorandum for the President, May 7, 1969, box 3, POL 7 Prime Minister Lee’s Visit (Singapore), Subject Files, 1968–1974, RG 59, USNA.

²⁹⁶ U.S. Presence in East Asia, July 10, 1970, box 14, Diary - Classified - June-Aug 1970, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA. (20)

²⁹⁷ Chua, “Becoming a ‘Good Nixon Doctrine Country’,” 538.

²⁹⁸ Meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Governments, December 4, 1971, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 2, NAA, 44-45.

military disengagement.²⁹⁹ Prime Minister Lee's view was that the United States, like the British, was the primary source of stability in the region and that announcements of withdrawal, let alone actual disengagement, would start the process of power grabs by North Vietnam, China, or the Soviet Union.

Singapore was not a non-aligned country as it contributed to the U.S. war effort in Vietnam through the transfer of petroleum products to the U.S. military and South Vietnam. Singapore owned oil refineries and was an important storage and transshipment center. Major corporations such as Shell, Exxon, and Caltex utilized Singapore's facilities to transfer petroleum to places such as Tan Son Nhut, Nha Be, Nha Trang, Da Nang, and Saigon in South Vietnam. Singapore helped provide the much-needed fuel for the U.S. Air Force and Navy.³⁰⁰ According to the Chief Executive of Shell Vietnam at the time, Singapore's oil refineries had supplied the majority of the fuel for the Vietnam War, enabling the city-state to reap massive profits.³⁰¹ Singapore's geographical proximity to South Vietnam at a time of American military engagement in Southeast Asia had contributed to the expansion of its oil refinery business.³⁰² Singapore did not have to commit ground troops or provide arms to be involved in the Vietnam War. It directly contributed to the U.S. war effort through its logistical support.

Singapore also contributed to the U.S. war effort in Vietnam through Rest and Recuperation (R&R) and item and ship repairs. R&R, also called Combat Leave, was a program where U.S. troops in Vietnam would take short breaks from their service. Singapore was one of the many destinations in Southeast Asia for R&R. The R&R center in Singapore processed around 1,600 U.S. military personnel every month between 1966 and 1970 when the United States terminated the program in Singapore.³⁰³ Singapore's leaders welcomed R&R as it provided a source of income

²⁹⁹ Ang Cheng Guan, *Southeast Asia and the Vietnam War* (London: Routledge, 2010), 67.

³⁰⁰ Louis Wesseling, *Fuelling The War: Revealing An Oil Company's Role In Vietnam* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co., 2000), 6-7, 40.

³⁰¹ Weng Hoong Ng, *Singapore, the Energy Economy: From the First Refinery to the End of Cheap Oil, 1960-2010* (London: Routledge, 2012), 12-16.

³⁰² Tilak Doshi, *Houston of Asia: The Singapore Petroleum Industry* (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 1989), 82-88.

³⁰³ Study of Non-Embassy U.S. Government Presence in Singapore, November 23, 1969, box 3, POL 15-1 Ambassador's Correspondence, USNA.

to Singapore.³⁰⁴ According to a 1969 study by Singapore's Ministry of Finance, American personnel expenditures were \$6 million in 1966, \$14 million in 1967, and \$19 million in 1968. R&R, however, was not a major source of revenue for Singapore, especially in comparison to places such as Hong Kong, which earned more than \$240 million in 1967.³⁰⁵ Singapore and the U.S. Department of Defense also set up the Singapore Procurement Office (SINPO) in 1966 to assist in the "procurement of goods for the rapid buildup of the U.S. presence in Vietnam."³⁰⁶ SINPO also functioned as a place to repair and maintain American items such as tires and electrical equipment from Vietnam.³⁰⁷ As for ship repairs, the U.S. Army set up the Marine Maintenance Field Office (MMFO), while the U.S. Navy also had headquarters known as the Ship Repair Office (SRO). The process typically involved MMFO bringing down ships to Singapore for repairs and returning them to the South Vietnamese.³⁰⁸ The hosting of American personnel on leave and working with the U.S. Department of Defense to set up offices for the U.S. military was a clear sign that Singapore was not the non-aligned country it had publicly claimed to be.

The idea of buying time for economic development through the continued U.S. presence in Vietnam and, more broadly, Southeast Asia was a recurring theme amongst Singapore's leadership. Public calls for the United States to buy time for Singapore continued even after the Paris Peace Accords in 1973 and the fall of South Vietnam in 1974. For instance, in 1973, Foreign Minister Rajaratnam expressed that great power competition that could "best help the region modernize in the shortest possible time and with the least cost" could benefit the great powers, the region, and "even for General Motors," the American automobile manufacturer³⁰⁹ General Motors was also involved in the defense industry and the war effort in Vietnam as it was the "largest producer of the M-16 rifle," delivering around half a million of

³⁰⁴ Galbraith to Bean, May 17, 1967, box 5, POL 15-1 Ambassador Galbraith's Official-Informals, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

³⁰⁵ Koh Cher Siang, *The Impact of the War in Vietnam on the Economy of Singapore (1965-1969)* (Singapore: Ministry of Finance, 1970), 11-12.

³⁰⁶ Siang, *The Impact of the War in Vietnam on the Economy of Singapore*, 10.

³⁰⁷ Siang, *The Impact of the War in Vietnam on the Economy of Singapore*, 10-11; Study of Non-Embassy U.S. Government Presence in Singapore, November 23, 1969, box 3, POL 15-1 Ambassador's Correspondence, Box 3, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

³⁰⁸ Siang, *The Impact of the War in Vietnam on the Economy of Singapore*, 11.

³⁰⁹ Dyson Memorial Lecture by S. Rajaratnam, November 15, 1973, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 5, NAA, 19.

these weapons to the U.S. military during the war.³¹⁰ If Singapore had to choose which great power to assist in its economic development, it was the United States. Rajaratnam's statement about helping the region modernize "with the least cost" would not have applied to the Soviet Union. Prime Minister Lee's fear was that the Southeast Asian countries would be "caught in the competitive clash between [the Soviet Union and China]."³¹¹ In 1975, Lee argued that having a continued American economic presence would help the rest of Southeast Asia to "make the task of learning to live with a communist Indochina less painful."³¹² In other words, with no longer a U.S. military presence in Vietnam in 1975, Singapore accepted the idea that political and economic engagement with the region would continue to provide an opportunity for Southeast Asian countries to modernize.

Singapore's foreign policy towards Vietnam reflected the notion that regional affairs could not solely be solved by regional powers. Singapore envisioned a regional order where there would be constant economic and political interplay between the Southeast Asian countries and the extra-regional powers, i.e., the United States and ANZUK. For example, Foreign Minister Rajaratnam's position was that it was a "dangerous fallacy" that the problems of Southeast Asia should only concern the region and not the outside world.³¹³ Rajaratnam emphasized that the United States could not "withdraw from the game because it [was] a global power"; otherwise, it would have "reduced itself to a second or third-rate power" that focused only on the Americas.³¹⁴ Regional autonomy was not a part of Singapore's foreign policy doctrine. It had political and economic benefits to having the U.S. involved in the region, as shown by its openness to indirectly assisting the United States during the Vietnam War. Moreover, it viewed the United States as the primary entity for preserving the stability of the non-communist Southeast Asian countries.

When it came to Thailand, Prime Minister Lee also neglected the notions of regional autonomy and neutrality as he constantly lobbied for the United States to retain its

³¹⁰ "A Legacy of Service," *GM Defense*, accessed June 3, 2023,

<https://www.gmdefense.com/site/us/en/gm-defense/home/about/history.html>

³¹¹ Remarks of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew to the National Press Club, April 7, 1975, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 6, NAA, 118.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Dyson Memorial Lecture by S. Rajaratnam, November 15, 1973, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 5, NAA, 19.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

military bases in the country. For instance, Lee stressed to Henry Kissinger in 1968, the soon-to-be U.S. Secretary of State/National Security Advisor, that Thailand was vital to the security of the rest of Southeast Asia. Referring to the domino theory, Lee warned that if Thailand fell to the communists, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia would be next on the list.³¹⁵ Other than private talks with American officials, Lee was also publicly outspoken about how critical it was for the United States to remain in Thailand to prevent communist encroachment. For instance, in one interview in 1973, Lee argued that with help from the United States, Thailand would be able to “maintain her independence,” and prevent the “relentless erosion” of Southeast Asia through insurgency.³¹⁶ Lee also did not leave the issue of military bases to chance, as he visited Thai leaders to convince them of the necessity of the U.S. military presence in their country. For example, in January 1973, Lee met with Thailand’s Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn. The meeting was successful as Thailand announced it would retain the seven air bases, station 400 aircraft, and 45,000 soldiers.³¹⁷ The meeting also allowed Singapore to deepen defense ties as Thailand provided training facilities for the Singaporeans.³¹⁸ Lee’s advocacy for the U.S. bases in Thailand underscored how he considered the U.S.-Thai relationship fundamental for regional security.

For Prime Minister Lee, Thailand was the buffer state between the communist and non-communist countries in Southeast Asia, and he urged the United States to continue providing military and economic aid to reassure Thailand of America’s commitment to its security. By 1972, Lee was not convinced that a non-communist government would survive in South Vietnam. He was also doubtful about the prospect of Cambodia and Laos assuming a buffer role in the region.³¹⁹ Therefore, for Lee, the fallback country was Thailand. Lee warned that U.S. interest in the country would be the determining factor on whether Thailand would have the “will

³¹⁵ Ang Cheng Guan, “Singapore and the Vietnam War,” 376-78.

³¹⁶ Excerpts from Interview with Prime Minister Lee During Recent Visit to Thailand, January 29, 1973, box 11, Background & Briefing Singapore, Box 11, Background & Briefing Singapore, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

³¹⁷ “A short but fruitful state visit,” *New Nation*, January 16, 1973; “Premier Thanom to visit S’pore in August,” *The Strait Times*, June 21, 1973.

³¹⁸ Singapore: Foreign Policy, November 1973, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 5, NAA, 77-78.

³¹⁹ Thailand and the Buffer?, October 29, 1972, China - Relations with Singapore, A1838, 3107/40/109 PART 3, NAA.

to resist” or end up going along with the “other side because [it was] the winning side.”³²⁰ Lee recommended that the United States continue providing arms and economic aid to demonstrate its commitment to the Nixon Doctrine and to help Thailand defend itself. Alongside a military force, Lee was convinced that these measures would give Thailand the confidence to resist communist expansion.³²¹ Prime Minister Lee was concerned about Thailand’s capacity to withstand communist pressures in the absence of military and economic support from the United States.

Singapore’s engagement with Thailand regarding the U.S. military bases showcased how it was not reluctant to intervene in the domestic issues of another ASEAN member. Prime Minister Lee’s lobbying of the United States to remain in Thailand was not immune to public criticism. For example, when Lee visited Thailand in 1973 to convince Prime Minister Kukrit to retain the presence of the military bases, Thanat Khoman, the former Foreign Minister of Thailand (1951-71), stated that “Lee should refrain from meddling in Thailand’s internal affairs” and that the “Thais [were] in a better position to judge whether the use of our territory by foreign military forces is good or ill for our nation.”³²² During this period, Thanat Khoman had been politically advocating for the withdrawal of U.S. troops, arguing that the American presence was now a danger to Thailand.³²³ Ironically, it was in 1962 that Thanat Khoman issued a joint communiqué with the then U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk where for the “strongest commitment of defense support ever in the history of the two nations.”³²⁴ Lee’s intervention behind the scenes included lobbying Kissinger in 1973. Lee expressed frustration towards Thanat Khoman for campaigning against the Americans even though he was no longer part of the Thai government. Lee warned Kissinger that there was a long road ahead, claiming that the insurgencies at the Thailand-Malaysian border hid rations that would last ten

³²⁰ Cablegram, AHC Singapore to DFA, October 30, 1972, South East Asia - Intra-regional relations - South Vietnam relations with Singapore [2cm], A1838, 3006/8/4 PART 1, NAA, 83.

³²¹ US Presence Will Assure the Thais - Mr. Lee, October 30, 1972, China - Relations with Singapore, A1838, 3107/40/109 PART 3, NAA.

³²² “About foreign military bases and the making of ASEAN,” *The Straits Times*, January 26, 1973.

³²³ John Tusa, “Thailand after the Vietnam Cease-fire,” *Asian Affairs* 4, no. 3 (1973): 281, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03068377308729679>.

³²⁴ Sutayut Osornprasop, “Amidst the Heat of the Cold War in Asia: Thailand and the American Secret War in Indochina (1960–74),” *Cold War History* 7, no. 3 (2007): 358–59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682740701474832>.

years. The Prime Minister, again, wanted the United States to leave a presence in Thailand, to which Kissinger replied that there was “no chance” that the Nixon administration would remove the airbases.³²⁵ Going against ASEAN’s notions of non-intervention in the affairs of another member, Singapore had attempted to leverage its relationship with the United States to influence Thailand’s foreign policies.

The United States welcomed the moves for military cooperation between Singapore and Thailand. In 1974, Thailand requested 25,000 M-16 rifles from Singapore.³²⁶ U.S. Embassy officials in Singapore recommended the State Department approve the transfer, citing a “political advantage in encouraging cooperation on security matters between these two countries [...]”.³²⁷ By 1975, Thai military officials stressed the urgency for these weapons. Approval from the U.S. State Department and the Department of Defense had delayed the transfer.³²⁸ Singapore was a willing participant. In 1975, Singapore’s Minister of Defense, Goh Keng Swee, notified American officials that Singapore was interested in supplying the Thai military with M-16s and was waiting for American approval. Singapore’s head of Singapore’s Security and Intelligence Division, Sellapan Ramanathan (S.R) Nathan, informed the Americans that Singapore was concerned about the security situation in Thailand and that there was a necessity for the transfer of weapons.³²⁹ In July 1975, the United States approved the transfer of 60,000 rifles. Singapore was to supply Thailand with 30,000 rifles, while the American arms company Colt would provide the remaining weapons.³³⁰ Although Colt could have supplied all 60,000 rifles directly, U.S. Embassy officials in Singapore recommended that it was in the interest of ASEAN if Singapore also provided the M-16s it had in stock. They argued that this was an

³²⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, April 11, 1973, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/virtuallibrary/documents/jun09/041173_memcon.pdf.

³²⁶ Telegram, U.S. Embassy Singapore to Secretary of State Washington D.C., November 1, 1974, doc. 1974SINGAP04398, NARA AAD; Telegram, Secretary of State Washington D.C. to U.S. Embassy Rangoon, December 3, 1974, doc. 1974STATE265352, NARA AAD; Memorandum for the Record, November 9, 1973, box 14, DEF 19 Military Assistance Program MAP July Dec, Subject Files, 1968–1974, RG 59, USNA.

³²⁷ Telegram, U.S. Embassy Singapore to Secretary of State Washington D.C., December 20, 1974, doc. 1974SINGAP05065, NARA AAD.

³²⁸ Telegram, U.S. Embassy Singapore to Secretary of State Washington D.C., June 28, 1975, doc. 1975SINGAP02797, NARA AAD.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Telegram, U.S. Embassy Singapore to Secretary of State Washington D.C., July 12, 1975, doc. 1975SINGAP02999, NARA AAD.

“excellent opportunity to demonstrate ASEAN solidarity in [the] security field at a time when the RTG [Royal Thai Government] could use some reassurance.”³³¹ The 30,000 M-16 rifles from Singapore eventually arrived in Thailand in August 1975. Of this total, 14,000 went to the Royal Thai Army, 10,000 to the Royal Thai Air Force, and 6,000 to the Royal Thai Navy.³³² The arms transfer from Singapore and Thailand was an example of how regional cooperation occurred with the encouragement of the United States, an extra-regional power. The cooperation was not a regional autonomous endeavor, as the transfer required collaboration from the United States.

Singapore’s interest in Thailand’s security was directly related to its concerns about how a weakened Thailand would help embolden communist insurgent movements in Malaysia, leaving Singapore to face instability at its doorstep.³³³ In 1972, the United States agreed to provide Thailand with \$128 million in military aid, the highest it had been throughout the alliance. By 1973, Prime Minister Thanom had authorized the United States to transfer the American military presence in Indochina to Thailand. In early 1973, Henry Kissinger had planned to gradually withdraw U.S. forces from Thailand in a period of around five to ten years.³³⁴ However, a student-led revolt in October 1973 led to the fall of the pro-U.S. Thanom government in Thailand. By 1975, Thailand’s civilian government, led by Prime Minister Kukrit Pramoj, announced that it was against the U.S. presence in Thailand. Kukrit demanded the Americans withdraw by June 1976.³³⁵ Between 1973 and 1976, Thailand experienced a fragile political environment as it saw three civilian governments come and go into power.³³⁶ Prime Minister Lee was anxious that the instability in Thailand would lead to an increase in the transfer of weapons from Indochina to the

³³¹ Telegram, U.S. Embassy Singapore to Secretary of State Washington D.C., June 2, 1975, doc. 1975SINGAP02361, NARA AAD.

³³² Telegram, U.S. Embassy Bangkok to Secretary of State Washington D.C., August 15, 1975, doc. 1975BANGKO17024; Telegram, U.S. Embassy Bangkok to Secretary of State Washington D.C., August 16, 1974, doc. 1975BANGKO16979. All NARA AAD.

³³³ The Bulletin, August 18, 1973, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 5, NAA, 118.

³³⁴ Zawacki, *Thailand*, 44, 54.

³³⁵ Ibid., 55-56.

³³⁶ The Prime Ministers in Thailand between 1973 and 1976 were Sanya Thammasakdi (1973-1975), Seni Pramoj (1975), and Kukrit Pramok (1975-1976). Ross Prizzia, *Thailand in Transition: The Role of Oppositional Forces* (Hawai'i: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 88.

insurgencies in Thailand and Malaysia.³³⁷ By the time South Vietnam fell in 1975, Singapore regarded Thailand as the weakest link in ASEAN and was anticipating an increase in insurgencies by the Communist Party of Malaya.³³⁸ Singapore was invested in a stable and U.S.-friendly Thailand as it considered its security linked directly with its neighbor Malaysia, which was fighting an insurgency against the Communist Party of Malaya.

Singapore also disapproved of Thailand's efforts to normalize relations with China in 1975, at least privately. For instance, in correspondence with Australian officials in June 1975, Prime Minister Lee stated his skepticism towards the Kukrit government following the collapse of South Vietnam in April 1975. Lee was convinced that the Thai military would have to accept the removal of the U.S. bases, although he had hoped that Thailand would change its mind and phase out the withdrawal over another three or four years. As mentioned, Prime Minister Kukrit Pramoj had given the Americans a deadline of June 1976 to withdraw.³³⁹ Lee disagreed with Thailand's civilian government disentangling itself from the United States and approaching China. In Lee's mind, the United States guaranteed Thailand's future stability.³⁴⁰ The normalization process between Thailand and China started in 1971, and in July 1975, Thailand became the third ASEAN country after Malaysia and the Philippines to establish diplomatic ties with China. However, Thailand was not able to gain guarantees from China that it would cease ties to the Communist Party of Thailand.³⁴¹ In a meeting with Indonesian President Suharto in late 1975 in Bali, the two leaders were disparaging towards the Kukrit government, indicating that moving closer to China would not stop the communists from continuing their insurgency campaigns.³⁴² The civilian Kukrit government did not survive. Thailand went back to a pro-US military government in back-to-back coups

³³⁷ Cablegram, Singapore to Canberra, July 25, 1974, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 6, NAA, 175.

³³⁸ Regional Perspectives - Singaporean Evaluation of ASEAN Neighbours, May 22, 1975, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 6, NAA, 75, 82.

³³⁹ Japan/Singapore: Visit of Lee Kuan Yew, June 4, 1975, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 6, NAA, 50.

³⁴⁰ Notes on Discussions Held During the Singapore Prime Minister's Stopover in Sydney, April 2, 1975, South East Asia Intra Regional Relations - Singapore - Malaysia, A1838, 3006/10/4 PART 23, 25.

³⁴¹ Storey, *Southeast Asia and the Rise of China*, 128.

³⁴² Cablegram, Singapore to Canberra, September 15, 1975, South East Asia Intra Regional Relations - Singapore - Malaysia, A1838, 3006/10/4 PART 23, NAA, 7.

with Thanin Kraivichien in 1976 and then General Kriangsak Chomanand becoming Prime Minister in 1977.³⁴³ For Singapore, a key precondition for normalization was China distancing itself from Southeast Asian communist parties. Singapore's leaders were skeptical of Thailand's and Malaysia's approaches to China, doubting China's willingness to sever party-to-party ties, which they asserted was necessary to end support for insurgencies in the region.

Prime Minister Lee constantly emphasized the necessity of a sustained U.S. economic, political, and military presence in Southeast Asia throughout the 1970s. Lee's foreign policy vision centered on leveraging U.S. involvement to buy Singapore and its regional neighbors the time to strengthen their economies and defense capabilities. In the face of China's impending influence over the region, Vietnam's communist insurgency, and Thailand's domestic instability, Singapore turned to the United States as a force that would bring a climate of confidence necessary for Southeast Asia to focus on economic development without succumbing to external pressures. Lee's view was that the United States was indispensable for long-term regional security and fostering economic growth.

2.4 Singapore's Economic Development

Singapore aligned itself closely with the United States and the ANZUK nations to foster an environment where it could attract foreign investment, which was central to its economic development strategy. Singapore pursued measures to ensure regional security as multinational corporations sought stable political climates for their investments. As a means to attract foreign investment, Singapore sought to strengthen ties with Indonesia, as an antagonistic relationship between the two would have likely deterred foreign capital. The FPDA also served as a signal to multinationals that Singapore was politically stable and capable of safeguarding their capital. Singapore's view was that the FPDA projected an image of stability, enhancing its attractiveness as a foreign investment destination. Singapore also advocated for a stronger U.S. presence in the city-state to protect private capital. The U.S. presence came in the form of the navy as it not only symbolized an American interest in the security and stability of the Lee government, but it also brought

³⁴³ Zawacki, *Thailand: Shifting Ground between the US and a Rising China*, 57-58.

economic benefits through military procurements, which in turn helped bolster Singapore's economy. Essentially, Singapore regarded the United States and ANZUK as essential partners in its desire to pursue its economic development plans through private capital.

During the Vietnam era, Singapore's objective was to incorporate Indonesia in its broader economic development strategy of attracting multinational corporations to Southeast Asia, as its leaders conceptualized regionalism as strengthening the flow of investment. Lee's government focused on a development strategy geared towards attracting multinational corporations as it considered local businesses lacking the expertise and long-term vision for industrialization. Singapore considered multinational corporations vital to its development strategy due to their global networks, access to vast resources, capacity to create jobs, management expertise, technology, and access to export markets.³⁴⁴ In the broader context, Foreign Minister Rajaratnam stated in 1972 that multinational corporations would play an important role in constructive regional economic cooperation. In his view, the work of the multinationals would "tie the countries together," therefore contributing to regionalism.³⁴⁵ An unstable, and especially a hostile Indonesia, would have prevented Singapore not only from its domestic development goals but also its regional vision of economic cooperation and establishing Southeast Asia as a destination for global investment.

One aspect of Singapore's foreign policy was to advocate for the survival of the Suharto regime in Indonesia. An ongoing concern was that the fall of the Suharto regime would bring a hostile new government against Singapore. For instance, in talks with British officials in 1968 and 1969, Prime Minister Lee stated there would be danger in Southeast Asia if the United States decided they would no longer support the Suharto government. Lee warned that with the fall of Suharto, there was the potential for a pro-Russian government that was hostile to Singapore to take over.³⁴⁶ Another scenario for Singapore was that there would be a resurgence of the

³⁴⁴ Poh Kam Wong, "The Role of the State in Singapore's Industrial Development," in *Industrial Policy, Innovation and Economic Growth: The Experience of Japan and the Asian NIEs*, ed. Ng Chee-Yuen and Poh Kam Wong (Singapore: NUS Press, 2001), 507–10.

³⁴⁵ U.S. Policy in East Asia, June 20, 1972, box 10, POL 1 General Policy & Background, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

³⁴⁶ Prime Minister of Singapore and Mrs. Lee Kuan Yew, April 27, 1969, Visit of Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister of Singapore, to UK, January 1969 (Folder 2), FCO 24/584, UKNA; D.J. D. Maitland

PKI with the fall of the current regime in Indonesia.³⁴⁷ Such worries continued even after the fall of South Vietnam in 1975. For example, S.R. Nathan stated that Singapore had a steady relationship with Indonesia but was apprehensive about what a successor government would look like in its attitude towards Singapore.³⁴⁸ Of course, not knowing what the future would bring at the time, Suharto ended up remaining in power all the way up until 1998. In the Vietnam era, Singapore's leadership considered the city-state's security as closely linked to the stability of the Indonesian government.

Singapore improved its relationship with Indonesia during the Vietnam era as it considered the Suharto regime important for its economic development. Economic relations between the two improved as Singapore conducted multiple investment missions to Indonesia during the 1970s.³⁴⁹ In 1971, Singapore became the fourth largest foreign investor in Indonesia, right behind the United States, Japan, and Hong Kong.³⁵⁰ By 1973, Prime Minister Lee had made his first official visit to Jakarta, and a year later, Singapore and Indonesia conducted Exercise Eagle, the first bilateral naval exercise between the two countries.³⁵¹ The question is why was there a shift in foreign policy from tension to cordial relations. One reason given by the Singapore leadership was that economic development would be difficult in a region of instability.³⁵² Through its economic and military engagement, Singapore's objective was to provide the Indonesian government external political legitimacy, anticipating that bilateral cooperation would improve Suharto's chances to continue holding onto power.³⁵³ For Singapore, it was anything but communism. The foreign policy

to Donald, Visit of Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister of Singapore, to UK, January 1969 (Folder 2) April 21, 1969, FCO 24/584, UKNA.

³⁴⁷ Cablegram, AHC Singapore to DEA, August 6, 1969, Singapore - Relations with United States of America, A1838, 3024/11/161 PART 2, NAA, 50.

³⁴⁸ Cablegram, Singapore to Canberra, April 19, 1975, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 6, NAA, 57.

³⁴⁹ Theophilus Kwek and Joseph Chinyong Liow, "Singapore's Relations with Malaysia and Indonesia," in *Perspectives On The Security Of Singapore: The First 50 Years*, ed. Barry Desker and Ang Cheng Guan (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2015), 138.

³⁵⁰ Singapore/Indonesia Relations, March 12, 1971, Political relations between Singapore and Indonesia, FCO 24/1206, UKNA.

³⁵¹ Kwek and Liow, "Singapore's Relations with Malaysia and Indonesia," 138.

³⁵² R.F. Stimson, July 9, 1970, Foreign policy of Singapore (Folder 1), FCO 24/886, UKNA.

³⁵³ Terence Lee Chek Liang, "Explaining Indonesia's Relations with Singapore During the New Order Period: The Case of Regime Maintenance and Foreign Policy," *RSIS Working Paper* 10, no. 1 (2001).

towards Indonesia was similar to the desire of seeing non-communist Malaysian and Thai governments survive.

The conditions that enabled Singapore to cooperate with Indonesia had to do with the FPDA. The FPDA functioned as a mechanism that protected Singapore against a potential Indonesian threat while also buying time for the city-state to cooperate with its neighbors under the protection of the ANZUK nations. As previously mentioned, the creation of the FPDA was partly directed against Indonesia. Although not explicitly stated by the members, the FPDA, especially its air defense, was “psychological reassurance” against a “potentially assertive Indonesia.”³⁵⁴ As a result of the FPDA, Singapore benefitted from the exercise and training that came with the arrangements and the access to the military equipment.³⁵⁵ Without the FPDA, Singapore may not have gained access to the ANZUK nations in the same way. Prime Minister Lee reflected positively on the FPDA in 1975, explaining that due to the FPDA, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia had made progress in their relationships after a turbulent time in the 1960s. Lee claimed that without the FPDA, there would have likely been more disagreements among these three nations. Although Lee considered the situation in Indochina as not promising after the collapse of South Vietnam, for him, the countries of mini-ASEAN now had greater defensive capabilities and was more politically stable.³⁵⁶ Lee was implicitly stating that with ANZUK taking on the responsibility of Singapore's security, Singapore was able to focus on building its relationship with Indonesia.

Being a part of the FPDA helped Singapore make up for its asymmetry relative to Indonesia and its vulnerability in terms of its geographical size, lack of natural resources, and defense capabilities that were still in progress. In other words, Singapore had a link or a “lifeline” to external powers, making it not solely reliant on regional powers.³⁵⁷ Singapore had the option to navigate politically and economically outside of the ASEAN framework and, therefore, was not limited to

³⁵⁴ Benvenuti, “The Heath Government and British Defence Policy in Southeast Asia at the End of Empire (1970–71),” 55; Bristow, “The Five Power Defence Arrangements,” 12; Emmers, “The Five Power Defence Arrangements and Defense Diplomacy in Southeast Asia,” 272.

³⁵⁵ Bristow, “The Five Power Defence Arrangements,” 12.

³⁵⁶ Cablegram, Wellington to Canberra, April 11, 1975, Singapore - Political - Foreign Policy, A1838, 3024/7/1 PART 6, NAA, 74.

³⁵⁷ Kishan S. Rana, “Singapore’s Diplomacy: Vulnerability into Strength,” *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 1, no. 1 (2006): 83, <https://doi.org/10.1163/187119006X101861>

working within the hierarchical confines of regional power dynamics. For instance, referring back to the issue of the Straits of Malacca, where Indonesia and Malaysia proclaimed that the straits were no longer international waters, Singapore was against this idea as it perceived such a move to impact its economic well-being negatively. Similarly, with ZOPFAN in 1971, Singapore rejected Malaysia's original conception but settled on Indonesia's proposal to manage the regional order solely through the region's members. For Singapore, both cases showcased Indonesia's regional dominance in ASEAN.³⁵⁸ The FPDA provided Singapore with a sense of political confidence and independence. Through bilateral cooperation with Indonesia, Singapore avoided regional isolation while keeping Indonesia at arm's length. This way, Singapore avoided being outnumbered or having to accommodate undesired positions in political and economic issues.

In Prime Minister Lee's view, Suharto's Indonesia was an important partner for Singapore in terms of contributing to a stable regional environment for economic development. Reflecting on the late Cold War period, Lee stated that Indonesia was a "great stabilizer" and created a climate of confidence in the region.³⁵⁹ Due to Suharto focusing on the economic development of Indonesia, Lee argued that Suharto's policies "created the conditions for strong economic growth" in the ASEAN countries, making the 1970s to 1990s the "golden years for Southeast Asia."³⁶⁰ Prime Minister Lee was contrasting President Suharto with his predecessor Sukarno. As previously mentioned, the ongoing fear was that Indonesia would take on a foreign policy of adventurism at the expense of Singapore and destabilize the region.³⁶¹ In his memoir, Lee wrote that if he had worked with an Indonesian president with a "character and temperament more like Sukarno's," the history of Southeast Asia would have likely been different, implying not for the better.³⁶² Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand had rapid economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s. By the early 1990s, these countries had become what the World Bank described as "Asian Miracles."³⁶³ The 1970s onwards was a period of

³⁵⁸ Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, 72-73, 77-78.

³⁵⁹ Khoo How San, "ASEAN as a 'Neighbourhood Watch Group,'" *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 22, no. 2 (2000): 295-96.

³⁶⁰ Lee, *From Third World to First*, 282.

³⁶¹ Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, 4-5.

³⁶² Lee, *From Third World to First*, 274.

³⁶³ Anne Booth and Norman G. Owen, "Contemporary Capitalism and the Rise of the 'Tigers,'" in *Routledge Handbook of Southeast Asian History* (London: Routledge, 2014), 177-82.

“relatively harmonious relations” among the five members of ASEAN in contrast to the turbulent 1960s.³⁶⁴ In an environment where Indonesia and Singapore were antagonistic towards each other, it would have potentially undermined international confidence and deterred foreign investment in the city-state.

The role of private enterprise and capital also explains why Singapore was a strong supporter of the ANZUK presence and the survival of the FPDA. Singapore’s leaders viewed ANZUK and the FPDA as important tools for portraying to the international community that Singapore was a stable nation for multinational corporations. The incoming Heath government had decided that the British would continue to remain militarily engaged in Southeast Asia and commit to the FPDA.³⁶⁵ Speaking to Australian officials in 1973, Singapore’s Minister for Defense Goh Keng Swee stressed the importance of ANZUK and the FPDA asserting that foreign enterprise looked to such a presence when making business decisions and therefore guaranteed investment into the city-state.³⁶⁶ The argument was that the FPDA provided “psychological backing for the maintenance of investment confidence and an atmosphere of stability in Singapore and Malaysia.”³⁶⁷ Therefore, the so-called psychological impact of the FPDA, as perceived by Singapore, was its value in deterring potentially antagonistic powers as well as protecting private capital, which was vital for Singapore’s economic development plans.

Singapore’s strategy of safeguarding its investment climate through the presence of extra-regional powers would have been crucial for it to continue to reap benefits from its lucrative industries, such as the petroleum refining industry. During the Vietnam War, Singapore’s involvement in the petroleum refinement industry immensely boosted its economy. In 1967, Singapore came in third, just behind the United States and Japan in exports to the South Vietnamese market.³⁶⁸ In 1968, petroleum products comprised 90 percent of Singapore’s exports to South Vietnam.

³⁶⁴ Dewi Fortuna Anwar, “ASEAN and Indonesia: Some Reflections,” *Asian Journal of Political Science* 5, no. 1 (1997): 23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02185379708434092>.

³⁶⁵ Benvenuti, “The Heath Government and British Defence Policy in Southeast Asia at the End of Empire (1970–71),” 53–73.

³⁶⁶ R. A. Peachey, Carrington Visit - Defence, 1973., Singapore ANZUK (Australia New Zealand United Kingdom) Five Power - general, A13883, 213/1/7A PART 2, NAA, 193.

³⁶⁷ R.A. Peachey, August 13, 1974, Singapore - Five power arrangements - Intelligence arrangements, A1838, 696/7/6/7 PART 4, NAA, 169.

³⁶⁸ “East Asia: Some Economic Effects of the War in Vietnam,” February 1, 1969, doc. CIA-RDP85T00875R001600020020-7, CREST, 16–17.

Shell Eastern Petroleum was the leading corporation involved in exporting petroleum products from Singapore. According to communications between Australian officials and a Shell manager in 1969, Singapore exported around 3 million tons of products annually. According to the Shell manager, one of the oil refineries in Singapore was operating at a capacity of 140,000 barrels per day. The Shell manager described Singapore as the “balancing point” as its oil refineries served as the center for facilitating exports to other countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and Japan.³⁶⁹ Essentially, Singapore became a key hub for the region’s demand for petroleum products throughout the Vietnam War.

Singapore had become a significant player in the global network of petroleum transshipment. Singapore was part of the supply line that linked the Arabian Gulf and the Caribbean to South Vietnam. Other than the oil refineries in the Arabian Gulf, Singapore’s refineries were the primary sources of petroleum products for South Vietnam. According to the U.S. Department of Defense’s Joint Logistics Review Board, the petroleum transshipment network initially consisted of direct links between the Arabian Gulf and the Caribbean to South Vietnam and Thailand. However, the facilities in Nha Be at Saigon (today’s Ho Chi Minh City) in Vietnam, and Chong Nonsri at Bangkok in Thailand did not have the capacity to accommodate larger-sized tankers. In the late 1960s, Singapore became a part of this global network as it took in the larger tankers and redistributed the petroleum products to smaller tankers for transfer to Saigon and Bangkok.³⁷⁰ In other words, Singapore emerged as a key logistical hub for petroleum products at a time of conflict and crisis in Southeast Asia.

Between 1969 and 1975, Singapore continued to gain economically due to the petroleum industry. For instance, in 1971, South Vietnam continued as the largest importer of Singapore’s petroleum products.³⁷¹ Moreover, during this period, Singapore hosted major international oil companies such as British Petroleum, Shell, Mobil, Esso, Chevron, Caltex, and Amoco. Other than electrical and electronic

³⁶⁹ Singapore’s Exports to the Republic of Vietnam, November 26, 1969, South East Asia - Intra-regional relations - South Vietnam relations with Singapore, A1838, 3006/8/4 PART 1, NAA, 115-121.

³⁷⁰ Logistic Support, Monograph 15, Petroleum, Oil, and Lubricants, December 15, 1970, A Report by the Joint Logistics Review Board, December 15, 1970, 30, 57, 59.

³⁷¹ Quarterly Economic Report, October 2, 1972, Economic development of Singapore, FCO 24/1475, UKNA.

products, Singapore experienced the most gains in foreign private investment in the petroleum products industry. The United States played a significant role in Singapore's economic growth as its corporations were at the forefront of private capital investment in the petroleum, electrical, and electronics industries.³⁷² In 1972, the majority of the city-state cargo (80 percent out of 58 million tons) was petroleum. By 1974, Singapore had possessed a total of five oil refineries, making it one of the world's major refinement centers, behind Houston in the United States and Rotterdam in the Netherlands.³⁷³ Singapore had indeed bought time to develop its economy with the help of an active multinational corporation presence in the city-state.

Singapore was a nation that was welcoming of American-based multinational corporations. Prime Minister Lee preferred U.S. corporations, arguing that Singapore's "best hope lay" with the Americans.³⁷⁴ He stressed that American corporations brought in advanced technology at a large scale and created many jobs.³⁷⁵ In the late 1960s, Prime Minister Lee had lobbied the United States for capital by promising that Singapore would provide American businesses with tax incentives. In 1970, the United States had invested \$200 million; by 1972, the value had risen to \$450 million. In 1967, Singapore hosted 60 American corporations, and by 1972, the number was at 260.³⁷⁶ By 1973, the multinational oil corporations had invested more than \$900 million in oil refinement, making Singapore capable of importing crude oil from other regions, such as the Middle East, and processing it into different products such as diesel, fuel oil, gasoline, jet kerosene, liquefied petroleum gas, and naphtha for export.³⁷⁷ Although the United States was at the forefront of the flow of private capital to Singapore, others were also involved, such as Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Australia, countries from Western Europe, and

³⁷² Garry Rodan, *The Political Economy of Singapore's Industrialization: National State and International Capital* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 85-124.

³⁷³ Weng Hoong Ng, *Singapore, the Energy Economy: From the First Refinery to the End of Cheap Oil, 1960–2010* (London: Routledge, 2012), 7-9.

³⁷⁴ Lee, *From Third World to First*, 57-58.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ S. R. Joey Long, "Strategic Partners: Singapore and the United States," in *Handbook on the United States in Asia: Managing Hegemonic Decline, Retaining Influence in the Trump Era*, ed. Andrew T.H. Tan (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2018), 268.

³⁷⁷ Ng, *Singapore, the Energy Economy*, 12, 36.

Malaysia.³⁷⁸ Essentially, Singapore's message to the United States throughout the Vietnam era was that not only did it demand capital, but it was also willing to protect investment and provide favorable conditions for U.S. corporations.

For Singapore's economic development to succeed, Prime Minister Lee also considered it vital for American protection of U.S. corporations operating in the city-state. With the hosting of many multinational corporations such as Amoco, Esso, and Mobil in the 1960s and 1970s, Singapore had gained credibility amongst foreign investors during a time of geopolitical uncertainty in Southeast Asia, making it an attractive location for investment.³⁷⁹ Singapore's strategy for economic development was not solely based on the infusion of private capital; there also had to be a physical entity looking over the enterprises, which, in this case, was the United States.

For there to be protection of private enterprise in Singapore, there needed to be a U.S. government that perceived it to be a worthwhile endeavor. In 1970, Foreign Minister Rajaratnam had "grilled" an American official about whether the Nixon Doctrine meant that there would be a decrease in the U.S. support of the "free Asian countries," indicating a worry that the United States was no longer interested in investing in Singapore.³⁸⁰ The United States had no intention of disengaging from Singapore. Besides Singapore's strategic location in Southeast Asia, American officials were satisfied with Singapore's transshipment capabilities and the monetary treatment of its companies. Moreover, U.S. officials regarded Singapore as Southeast Asia's "largest Free World port" and considered it contrary to their strategic interests of exerting regional influence by losing Singapore.³⁸¹ Moreover, according to American officials, Singapore was worthwhile because it also contributed to "regional cooperation and stability" through its membership in the FPDA and ASEAN.³⁸² The combination of Singapore's investment climate, strategic

³⁷⁸ Mary Turnbull, *A History of Singapore, 1819-1988* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 296.

³⁷⁹ Ng, *Singapore, the Energy Economy*, 8.

³⁸⁰ Memo, Josiah W. Bennet to Marshall Green, August 31, 1970, box 7, POL 1 General Policy, Subject Files, 1965-1974, RG 59, USNA.

³⁸¹ Memorandum for Interagency Singapore Study Group, April 27, 1972, box 10, POL Policy Study (Singapore), Subject Files, 1965-1974, RG 59, USNA.

³⁸² Telegram, Secretary of State Washington D.C. to U.S. Embassy Singapore, April 17, 1973, doc. 1973STATE071719, NARA AAD.

geographical location, and contribution to regional stability were sufficient factors for the United States to remain interested in the city-state.

An interest or willingness of the United States to maintain Singapore's stability and protect American private enterprise was not enough, as American capability was also required to achieve such an objective. The presence of a U.S. naval force was one of the ways in which the United States projected a desire to maintain Singapore's stability. A U.S. ground troop presence in Singapore was out of the question as the American political domestic scene would not have allowed it when it wanted nothing to do with Southeast Asia. Singapore's so-called non-aligned image would also not have allowed a visible troop presence. The U.S. naval presence in the form of sending vessels for repair was the alternative. For the Americans, ship repair in Sembawang met three objectives. First, it provided the United States with continued access to Singapore's naval facility. Second, it brought business to Singapore and helped maintain the skills of the people working in Sembawang. Third, the U.S. naval presence had the political purpose of "creating confidence in Singaporeans and others in the future of Southeast Asia."³⁸³ Foreign Minister Rajaratnam also considered it essential for the United States to maintain a naval presence overall in East Asia, claiming that it was an important component that supported the broader U.S. foreign policy of maintaining stability in the area.³⁸⁴ The U.S. naval force was a message to Singapore that the United States was still capable of projecting power in the region. It also helped protect American private enterprise indirectly by maintaining a presence that contributed to the stability of the Singapore government.

The frequent visits by the U.S. Seventh Fleet to Singapore was a significant showing of American support. The Seventh Fleet was active in the U.S. war effort throughout the Vietnam War. In 1954, the Seventh Fleet deployed an aircraft carrier task force in the South China Sea to assist the French. By the 1960s, the Seventh Fleet was heavily involved in operations against North Vietnam.³⁸⁵ According to a 1972 U.S. Department of Defense report, the Seventh Fleet and its assets made multiple visits

³⁸³ U.S. Naval and Aircraft Repair Program in Singapore, August 6, 1971, box 8, DEF 15 U.S. Use of Military Facilities Singapore, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

³⁸⁴ U.S. Policy in East Asia, June 20, 1972, box 10, POL 1 General Policy & Background, Box 10, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

³⁸⁵ Edward J. Marolda, "Changing Tides: Naval Coalitions and the Vietnam War," in *Naval Coalition Warfare: From the Napoleonic War to Operation Iraqi Freedom*, ed. Bruce A. Elleman and S.C.M. Paine (London: Routledge, 2007), 131–38.

between 1966 and 1971. Out of these six years, the highest number of visits was in 1971, with 100.³⁸⁶ The height of these visits in 1971 occurred during the same time the White House sent directives to the State Department and the Department of Defense to take measures to increase the use of Singapore's facilities for repairing U.S. naval vessels and military aircraft and to "deny or minimize access by the Soviet Union."³⁸⁷ As previously stated, Singapore agreed to ban all Soviet naval vessels from Sembawang, while directing Soviet naval and commercial ships to other facilities in the south. Ultimately, Singapore limited the Soviet Union to repair only commercial vessels in its Keppel facility while only authorizing visits of Soviet naval vessels there.³⁸⁸ Lee wanted the ANZUK forces and the Seventh Fleet to "still be in the area well into the 1980s."³⁸⁹ According to an American report in 1973, Singapore became a "favorite port of call for the Seventh Fleet" and a "good place for ship repair and shore leave purposes."³⁹⁰ Singapore and the United States viewed the Seventh Fleet visits as mutually beneficial. Singapore received business while the United States contained the Soviet Union.

A naval presence in Singapore was ideal for U.S. foreign policy as it enabled Singapore's security and confidence without a formal American military and economic commitment. According to one historian, Singapore had become a "good Nixon Doctrine country."³⁹¹ Nixon's foreign policy dictated that the United States would "limit its role to providing appropriate military and economic assistance to help threatened countries to help themselves."³⁹² By the early 1970s, Singapore was already self-reliant. The last of U.S. economic assistance was between 1968 and 1969, with \$20 million, while aid was non-existent moving forward.³⁹³ For the

³⁸⁶ Memorandum for Interagency Singapore Study Group, April 27, box 10, 1972, POL Policy Study (Singapore), Box 10, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

³⁸⁷ Memorandum for Interagency Singapore Study Group, April 27, box 10, 1972, POL Policy Study (Singapore), Box 10, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

³⁸⁸ Telegram, Washington to FCO, February 25, 1972, Use of dockyard facilities by U.S.S.R. vessels in Singapore, FCO 24/1482, UKNA.

³⁸⁹ Singapore Sees Soviet Fleet as Balancing Factor, April 12, 1971, Use of dockyard facilities of Singapore by Soviet Union (Folder 2), FCO 24/1218, UKNA.

³⁹⁰ U.S. Naval Presence, February 1, 1973, box 11, Background & Briefing Singapore, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA (50-51); Cronk to Heavner, December 18, 1973, box 10, DEF 15 US Use of Military Facilities, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

³⁹¹ Daniel Wei Boon Chua, "Becoming a 'Good Nixon Doctrine Country': Political Relations between the United States and Singapore during the Nixon Presidency," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 60, no. 4 (2014): 534–48, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajph.1207>.

³⁹² Jeffrey Kimball, "The Nixon Doctrine: A Saga of Misunderstanding," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36 (2006): 70, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5705.2006.00287.x>.

³⁹³ Fibiger, "The Nixon Doctrine and the Making of Authoritarianism in Island Southeast Asia," 981.

Americans, Singapore had become a “prime example of the kind of economic self-development the Nixon Doctrine encourages.”³⁹⁴ The United States was also satisfied that it could promote ANZUK leadership in the region and that the United States did not need to play a role that called for direct intervention other than having its navy visit Singapore.³⁹⁵ With Singapore and ANZUK collaborating through the FPDA and the United States providing support via its navy, American officials considered this setup to be the ideal relationship for the post-Vietnam era.

The external factors that brought benefits to Singapore in the shipbuilding and ship repairing industry had to do with continuing British support and the constant U.S. naval business, which provided a steady stream of contracts, further enhancing the industry and overall Singapore’s economy. Singapore had inherited the Sembawang shipyard’s equipment, facilities, and overall infrastructure from the British in good condition. Moreover, a British firm called Swan & Hunter managed the shipyard to assist in training in the facility.³⁹⁶ The British also agreed not to charge Singapore for transferring the military bases.³⁹⁷ Moreover, in 1974, Prime Minister Lee told the British that he was thankful that their forces had provided the “breathing space” for Singapore to develop its economy. In other words, for Lee, the British presence had allowed Singapore to buy time to strengthen itself.³⁹⁸ As for the United States, its procurement of Singapore’s shipbuilding and repair services continued to bring revenue to the city-state. For instance, according to a 1973 U.S. report, the disbursements by the U.S. Navy were at an all-time high in 1972, at \$7.3 million, compared with \$3.3 million a year earlier. These calculations did not include the expenditures of the naval personnel on leave.³⁹⁹ Singapore’s shipbuilding and ship repair work, which the United States had supported, helped establish its marine and offshore industry. The Singapore government went on to involve itself in larger offshore oil and gas projects.⁴⁰⁰ Extra-regional powers had a hand in Singapore’s

³⁹⁴ Memorandum for Interagency Singapore Study Group, April 27, 1972, box 10, POL Policy Study (Singapore), Box 10, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

³⁹⁵ Memorandum for Interagency Singapore Study Group, April 27, 1972, box 10, POL Policy Study (Singapore), Box 10, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

³⁹⁶ Jim Glassman, *Drums of War, Drums of Development: The Formation of a Pacific Ruling Class and Industrial Transformation in East and Southeast Asia, 1945-1980* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 491-92.

³⁹⁷ Seng, “The British Military Withdrawal from Singapore and the Anatomy of a Catalyst,” 202.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 210.

³⁹⁹ U.S. Naval Presence, February 1, 1973, box 11, Background & Briefing Singapore, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

⁴⁰⁰ Ng, *Singapore, the Energy Economy*, 86-87.

industrial development, which Singapore had welcomed and demanded throughout the Vietnam era.

The U.S. naval presence played a significant role in Singapore and the United States' assessment of how to construct a relationship that met the objectives of economic development and regional security. Singapore's leaders were strongly inclined towards the idea that its interests were best served with the United States maintaining the regional and international order. Therefore, throughout the Cold War, Singapore turned its focus to the Americans in its quest for economic development. On the other side, the Americans sought partners to advocate and support the U.S. war effort in Indochina and the U.S. hegemony in the Asia-Pacific.⁴⁰¹ Prime Minister Lee was never secretive about his support and appreciation for the U.S. naval presence, let alone the broader U.S. presence in the Asia-Pacific. Speaking to New Zealand's Prime Minister David Lange in 1984, Lee emphasized that although he knew there were risks with nuclear warships frequenting the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, he asserted that the "U.S. naval presence in the region had given us 30 years of stability."⁴⁰² The U.S. naval presence in Singapore was where capital (in the form of military procurements), political stability (in the form of capital maintaining the power of the Singapore government), and regional security (in the form of containing the Soviet Union) intersected all at once.

Singapore needed to balance regional and extra-regional cooperation to attract foreign investment. Singapore's leadership understood that stability in their relationship with Indonesia was essential to prevent regional volatility that could deter multinational corporations. Simultaneously, Singapore's continued engagement with the ANZUK nations and the United States was vital. The U.S. naval presence and the FPDA projected an image where these powers were interested in Singapore's security while also signaling the city-state's political and economic reliability to multinational corporations. This partnership reassured investors of Singapore's commitment to maintaining a secure and stable business environment, especially during uncertainty and conflict in the Indochina region.

⁴⁰¹ Long, "Strategic Partners: Singapore and the United States," 264-65.

⁴⁰² Lee, *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story, 1965-2000*, 401.

2.5 Conclusion

Singapore actively supported the construction of a regional space for the United States to sustain its power and influence in Southeast Asia. For example, Singapore viewed U.S. and ANZUK naval engagement in the region as crucial for preventing the expansion of Sino-Soviet competition into Southeast Asia. Furthermore, Singapore's foreign policies toward Vietnam and Thailand reflected a strategic preference for U.S. hegemony, recognizing that U.S. presence would provide the necessary means for Singapore to advance its economic development. Singapore's leaders consciously advocated for dependency on the United States as they viewed it as necessary to foster national development and ensure regional stability across Southeast Asia. Singapore's vision was to construct a regional space involving strategic reliance on U.S. support, such as the U.S. naval presence, active engagement with neighboring countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia, and the creation of networks with multinational corporations. Singapore's foreign policy was to complement the construction of such regional space within the context of a U.S. military presence in Indochina, specifically Thailand and Vietnam, as a means to help meet its national economic goals and regional stability objectives.

In Singapore's case, the U.S. war effort in Vietnam directly impacted the expansion of the city-state's economy. The partnership between Singapore, ANZUK, and the United States during the Vietnam era significantly contributed to Singapore's emergence as Southeast Asia's economic powerhouse from the 1970s onward. During this period, Singapore's marine industry, which initially focused on shipbuilding and repair, expanded to include large-scale offshore oil and gas projects. Moreover, the petroleum sector proved particularly lucrative, with U.S.-based companies investing hundreds of millions of dollars between 1970 and 1975. The petroleum industry continued to grow well into the late 1970s.⁴⁰³ If the United States had not intervened militarily in Vietnam, Singapore's rapid development during the war likely would not have progressed as quickly as it did. Singapore benefited from existing British-built infrastructure for the petroleum and maritime industries, allowing it to focus on economic growth rather than new construction. Without American intervention, this process would likely have taken longer. During

⁴⁰³ Rodan, *The Political Economy of Singapore's Industrialization*, 120-35.

the Vietnam War, Singapore became a key hub for multinational firms, particularly in the petroleum industry. The war-driven demand for petroleum products and Singapore's strategic position as a global hub for these corporations accelerated its development. Without the Vietnam War being a catalyst for development, Singapore's economic growth may have been significantly slower.

Another effect of the Vietnam War was that it solidified Singapore's support for U.S. political and economic power in Southeast Asia. Singapore's leadership viewed the U.S. war effort as essential for containing communist influence. As the United States gradually withdrew its military from Vietnam, Singapore advocated for a continued U.S. economic and military presence in Southeast Asia. In other words, Singapore reinforced U.S. hegemony in Southeast Asia through political rhetoric and concrete actions such as opening its naval facilities and distributing petroleum products. The leadership held the policy position that Western capitalist powers were vital for maintaining regional stability and security. The United States met Singapore with mutual interest as the Americans considered the city-state a crucial partner in its broader strategic considerations in the region. The Second Indochina War provided Singapore with massive economic benefits.

CHAPTER 3: INDONESIA

3.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates how Indonesia, like Malaysia and Singapore, adopted a foreign policy position that advocated for the United States and the ANZUK nations to maintain their presence in Southeast Asia to buy time for developing its military and economic capabilities. It argues that by adopting the buying time rhetoric, Indonesia diverged from its traditional policies of non-alignment, neutrality, and regional autonomy, which scholars consider hallmarks of Indonesian foreign policy behavior throughout the Cold War and beyond. Instead, during the Vietnam era, Indonesia preferred a regional order that favored continued U.S. and ANZUK influence and intervention over Southeast Asian security. The chapter also argues that Indonesia indirectly benefited from the Vietnam War. Although it did not contribute to the war effort, Indonesia played into the strategic considerations of U.S. policymakers, who viewed Indonesia as crucial to maintaining a non-communist Southeast Asia. The United States regarded Indonesia as the vital secondary piece to a non-communist Southeast Asia as it considered the simultaneous fall of Indochina and Indonesia devastating for American strategic interests in the Pacific. Therefore, throughout the Vietnam era, Indonesia benefitted from a U.S.-run international order that called for the transfer of large amounts of capital in the name of preserving American power over Southeast Asia. The effect of the U.S. war effort in Vietnam was that it indirectly caused a significant improvement in Indonesia's economic conditions.

3.2 Indonesia and ANZUK

The Indonesian leadership's objective was to achieve national and regional resilience. For the New Order government, national resilience meant that a country's ability to withstand internal and external threats depended on the combining factors of "economic prosperity, sociopolitical cohesion, and military strength."⁴⁰⁴ The economic, political, military, and sociocultural were interrelated components that made up national resilience. The view was that a weakness in any of these areas would lead to vulnerabilities in another component. For instance, vulnerabilities in political stability would potentially lead to a society that was susceptible to subversion and cause economic development to suffer.⁴⁰⁵ As for regional resilience, the Indonesian leadership viewed the ASEAN members as interconnected. If one member did not have national resilience, the other members would be in danger of communist subversion. They would have to focus their resources on the defense sector away from economic development, further negatively impacting one's national resilience. If each member achieved national resilience, it would prevent dangers from spreading to other states, enabling the members to continue focusing on their economic development.⁴⁰⁶ In other words, for the Indonesian leadership, the objective of national and regional resilience was to bring regional autonomy to Indonesia, enabling it to pursue an independent foreign policy free from extra-regional influence.

In practice, the Indonesian leadership disregarded the notion of regional autonomy. Rather, it framed national resilience by inviting extra-regional powers such as Australia into Southeast Asian affairs instead of placing regional security cooperation with the rest of the ASEAN members at the top of its priority list. Indonesia did not oppose the FPDA, arguing that the ANZUK presence bought time for the countries in the region to build their defensive capabilities. Indonesia viewed the ANZUK military presence as preferable to the alternative of having a power vacuum where China and the Soviet Union would compete over Southeast Asia. Indonesia's leaders considered Australia primarily an important extra-regional partner that could provide military and technical assistance when Indonesia was

⁴⁰⁴ Fibiger, *Suharto's Cold War*, 113.

⁴⁰⁵ Fibiger, *Suharto's Cold War*, 116.

⁴⁰⁶ Fibiger, *Suharto's Cold War*, 122.

cooperating with Malaysia against insurgencies at the West Kalimantan/Sarawak border. Consequently, Australia adopted the language of national and regional resilience as it recognized the value of having a stable Southeast Asia. As for the primary military supplier to Indonesia, the United States encouraged Australia to share the political, economic, and military burden and encouraged Australian-Indonesian engagement. The Indonesian leaders saw Australian engagement as a broader indication of U.S. interest in the region, viewing it as a sign of continuing interest in the ANZUS treaty, indirectly connecting the United States to the region. Overall, Indonesia's conception of national and regional resilience, defined by the necessity of extra-regional assistance, contradicted the ASEAN notion of regional autonomy with its intention to draw in both the ANZUK nations and the United States in the affairs of the Southeast Asian region.

Indonesia was not antagonistic towards the FPDA. It regarded the alternative, a power vacuum in Southeast Asia that could be filled by the Soviet Union and China, as a greater threat to its security, especially with the impending U.S. military withdrawal from Vietnam. On multiple occasions in 1968 and 1970, Foreign Minister Adam Malik publicly stated that Indonesia did not object to Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom maintaining their military commitments to Malaysia and Singapore. What Indonesia rejected was other powers stepping in to fill the void.⁴⁰⁷ During President Suharto's tours to Italy and Austria in 1972, the president reportedly had expressed concern about the power vacuum that would occur following the U.S. military withdrawal from Vietnam. Suharto's worry was that the void would lead to a power struggle between the Soviet Union and China to dominate the region. According to these reports, President Suharto was pessimistic about Southeast Asia's future, and that he was convinced the rivalry between the Soviet Union and China would increase regional tensions and create significant challenges for the countries in Southeast Asia.⁴⁰⁸ Indonesia preferred a regional power dynamic with which it was familiar. Instead of having to accommodate or

⁴⁰⁷ Malik: Indonesia Opposes "Foreign" Troops Replacements After British Withdrawal from S.E. Asia, April 20, 1968, [Jakarta] - Five Power defence arrangements (Post AMDA), A4359, 221/4/31/4 PART 1, NAA, 275; Cablegram, Australian Embassy Jakarta to Canberra, July 6, 1970, [Jakarta] - Five Power defence arrangements (Post AMDA), A4359, 221/4/31/4 PART 1, NAA, 221.

⁴⁰⁸ President Soeharto's State Visit to Austria: 16-20 November, November 24, 1972, Tours abroad of President Suharto of Indonesia, FCO 24/1400, UKNA (23); State Visit to Italy of President Suharto of Indonesia, November 28, 1972, Tours abroad of President Suharto of Indonesia, FCO 24/1400, UKNA.

choose between the Soviet Union or China, it favored the continued U.S. and ANZUK military presence in Southeast Asia.

Indonesia also considered the FPDA a significant tool in preventing Malaysia and Singapore from developing closer relations with the Soviet Union and China. For instance, Foreign Minister Malik not only considered the FPDA crucial in preventing other powers from moving in, but he also considered it helpful in providing Singapore with a sense of security, which prevented it from having to be in a position where it would have to turn to another power. Indonesia's concern was that Singapore would become a place where the Soviet Union or China would advance their interests in Southeast Asia.⁴⁰⁹ Malik also viewed the ANZUK presence as a stabilizing force for Malaysia, especially since it faced an insurgency along its northern border. The Indonesians considered ANZUK valuable in the sense that the communist insurgents would have needed to factor such a presence into their strategies.⁴¹⁰ By the time Australia announced in 1973 that it would withdraw its troops from Singapore, Foreign Minister Malik stated that he preferred there be no changes to the FPDA for the next five years. General Ali Murtopo, President Suharto's right-hand man, also noted that although Indonesia avoided joining military pacts, it had no problem with the FPDA due to what he considered as a stabilizing force for Malaysia and Singapore.⁴¹¹ The Indonesian leadership considered the FPDA a temporary but necessary military arrangement that prevented its neighbors from succumbing to communist pressures.

Indonesia viewed the ANZUK engagement with the Southeast Asian region as crucial for buying time to develop regional military capabilities. For instance, in 1971, one of President Suharto's generals told British officials that it would be a mistake for the United States to withdraw from Indochina before the countries in the region were capable of self-defense, adding that the British had a similar responsibility. The general emphasized the region's struggle with communist

⁴⁰⁹ Five Power Arrangements, June 18, 1973, Singapore ANZUK (Australia New Zealand United Kingdom) Five Power - general, A13883, 213/1/7A PART 2, NAA, 89; Cablegram, Australian Embassy Djakarta to Canberra, n.d., [Jakarta] - Five Power defence arrangements (AMDA), A4359, 221/4/31/4 PART 2, NAA, 28.

⁴¹⁰ Cablegram, Canberra to Australian Embassy Jakarta, July 16, 1970, [Jakarta] - Five Power defence arrangements (Post AMDA), A4359, 221/4/31/4 PART 1, NAA, 223.

⁴¹¹ Five Power Arrangements, June 18, 1973, Singapore ANZUK (Australia New Zealand United Kingdom) Five Power - general, A13883, 213/1/7A PART 2, NAA, 89.

insurgencies, citing the example of Malaysia's operations at the border with Thailand.⁴¹² Buying time for Malaysia also meant buying time for Indonesia. Indonesia was also conducting joint counterinsurgency operations with Malaysia at the West Kalimantan/Sarawak border. In 1972, Foreign Minister Malik informed British officials that Indonesia required better communication equipment, helicopters, and patrol boats and expressed Indonesia's openness to British material assistance through the FPDA or bilateral means.⁴¹³ In other words, the Indonesian leadership saw the continued ANZUK engagement with Malaysia as an opportunity to leverage their support in addressing the common insurgency threat at the Indonesian-Malaysian border in Kalimantan.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, Indonesia and Malaysia collaborated in counterinsurgency operations at the border between Indonesia's West Kalimantan and Malaysia's Sarawak. According to accounts by the Indonesian Military Regional Command of Pontianak at West Kalimantan, starting in 1967, Indonesia and Malaysia began to exchange intelligence about the strength, movement, and weapons of the so-called communist groups at the borderlands. The cooperation and intelligence sharing between the two armies took place every month with the objective of "eradicating and destroying" the communist insurgents.⁴¹⁴ The Military Regional Command of Pontianak described the groups of people at the West Kalimantan border as majority nationals of the PRC living in Sarawak who conducted insurgency operations in the Indonesian area. Furthermore, the military command also attributed these groups of people as having a tendency to being sympathetic to their "ancestral country," China, and that their objective was to spread the ideologies of the PRC throughout Indonesia and Southeast Asia.⁴¹⁵ In 1968, Indonesia conducted two counterinsurgency operations, Operation Clean Sweep and Operation Destruction, to eradicate the subversive movements in the

⁴¹² Notes on a Meeting Held in Jakarta Between HM Ambassador and Mr. D. P. Aiers of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and Major General Yoga Sugomo, May 14, 1971, Attitude of Indonesia towards new Five Power Defence arrangements in South-West Pacific area, FCO 24/1121, UKNA.

⁴¹³ Record of Conversation Between the Foreign Commonwealth Secretary and the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs Held at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Jakarta, July 4, 1972, Visit of Sir Alec Douglas-Home, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to Indonesia (Folder 2), FCO 24/1406, UKNA.

⁴¹⁴ Indonesia, Angkatan Darat, Komando Daerah Militer XII/Tandjungpura, *Sedjarah Militer, Tandjungpura Berdjuaug: Sedjarah Kodam XII/Tandjungpura Kalimantan Barat* (Pontianak: Semdam, 1970), 269-70.

⁴¹⁵ Indonesia, Angkatan Darat, Komando Daerah Militer XII/Tandjungpura, 301-03.

region. By the early 1970s, the Indonesian military and the National Development Planning Agency (BAPPENAS) started plans for development projects across the border, claiming that communist subversion could not be entirely stopped without the region's development.⁴¹⁶ The counterinsurgency operations in West Kalimantan were part of Indonesia's broader domestic Cold War project of enhancing national security through the combination of military action and development projects aimed at undermining communist influence.

Faced with what the Indonesians considered an existential threat along the border with Malaysia, the Indonesian military emphasized the need for a collaborative effort with Malaysia to tackle the insurgencies along the West Kalimantan/Sarawak border. In 1970, Indonesia's Military Regional Command of Pontianak stated that the process of eradicating communist movements at the Indonesian-Malaysian borderland would take a long time and that, therefore, there was a lasting threat to West Kalimantan. As a solution, the Indonesians decided to deploy troops along the border in collaboration with the Malaysians.⁴¹⁷ By 1972, Indonesia and Malaysia agreed to conduct joint military operations at the border. The agreement authorized each country to operate up to five miles into each other's territory.⁴¹⁸ The two countries were now conducting operations at the state rather than the local level. The operations on the Indonesian side were headed by General Maraden Panggabean, the Minister of Defense and Security, and on the Malaysian side, it was Tun Ismail Abdul Rahman, the Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Home Affairs. In other words, operations in Indonesia were under the Indonesian command, while operations in Sarawak were under the Malaysian command.⁴¹⁹ As a result, the Indonesia-Malaysia General Border Committee meetings occurred three times in 1972 in Sumatra, Indonesia, in July, in Kuching, Malaysia, in September, and in

⁴¹⁶ Michael Eilenberg, "Straddling the Border: A Marginal History of Guerrilla Warfare and 'Counter-Insurgency' in the Indonesian Borderlands, 1960s–1970s," *Modern Asian Studies* 45, no. 6 (2011): 1440–44, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X11000230>.

⁴¹⁷ Indonesia, Angkatan Darat, Komando Daerah Militer XII/Tandjungpura, 301-03.

⁴¹⁸ Cablegram, Australian Embassy Jakarta to DFA, April 10, 1972, Indonesia - Australia defence co-operation with Indonesia - General, A1838, 696/2/2/1 PART 5, NAA.

⁴¹⁹ Record of the Meeting Between the Minister of Defence, the Hon D.E. Fairbairn, DFC, MP, and General M. Panggabean, Indonesian Minister of State for Defence and Security Affairs and Deputy Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, April 13, 1972, Indonesia - Australia defence co-operation with Indonesia - General, A1838, 696/2/2/1 PART 5, NAA.

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in December.⁴²⁰ The General Border Committee meetings between Indonesia and Malaysia were an example of regional cooperation that reflected a shared understanding of what they considered a threat by communist insurgencies toward the nation-state.

Indonesian officials regarded the issues at the West Kalimantan/Sarawak border as an obstacle to Indonesia and Malaysia's economic development and viewed the operations as contributing to the process of national and regional resilience. During the General Border Committee meeting in Kuala Lumpur in December 1972, General Panggabean argued that despite signs of decreasing regional and international tensions (referring to the *détente*), Indonesia and Malaysia had to remain vigilant. He stressed that the Indonesia-Malaysia cooperation would contribute to the national resilience of the respective nations, and by doing so, they were also helping build regional resilience.⁴²¹ President Suharto added that subversive attempts to undermine the stability of ASEAN nations would continue to accompany their efforts to carry out national economic development plans. Therefore, the Indonesian leaders hoped that through cooperation in counterinsurgency operations, both countries could maintain their political stability while implementing their development policies.⁴²² The collaboration with Malaysia was an example of how the Indonesian government looked to its neighboring partners to assist in the domestic objective of bolstering national stability and development.

Indonesia also considered collaboration with powers outside of the Southeast Asian bilateral framework as having an essential role in its objective of achieving national resilience. In essence, national resilience was an "inward-looking security doctrine"

⁴²⁰ *Malaysia 1972, Official Year Book*, vol. 12 (Kuala Lumpur: Federal Department of Information, Ministry of Information, Malaysia, 1974), 89, 589, 593, 598.

⁴²¹ "Upacara Pembukaan Musyawarah Ke-2 General Border Committee Antara Pemerintah Republik Indonesia Pemerintah Kerajaan Malaysia [Opening Ceremony of the 2nd General Border Committee Meeting between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Kingdom of Malaysia]," in *Himpunan Amanat MENHANKAM/PANGAB dan WAPANGAB* [Collection of Mandates by the Minister of Defense/Commander of the Armed Forces and Deputy Commander of the Armed Forces] (*Departemen Pertahanan Keamanan* [Department of Defense and Security], 1972-1973), 103-105.

⁴²² "Upacara Penutupan Musyawarah Ke-2 General Border Committee Antara Pemerintah Republik Indonesia Pemerintah Kerajaan Malaysia [Closing Ceremony of the 2nd General Border Committee Meeting between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Kingdom of Malaysia]," in *Himpunan Amanat MENHANKAM/PANGAB Dan WAPANGAB* [Collection of Mandates by the Minister of Defense/Commander of the Armed Forces and Deputy Commander of the Armed Forces] (*Departemen Pertahanan Keamanan* [Department of Defense and Security], 1972-1973), 107-108.

that focused on the “ability of each state to overcome subversion within its borders.”⁴²³ However, this did not mean that Indonesia wanted to isolate itself from the rest of the world even though the domestic realm was the main priority. Instead, as one of Suharto’s generals put it in 1966, Indonesia considered it to be potentially easier for it to achieve its domestic objectives “if the external forces and dynamics could be utilized.”⁴²⁴ The question is, then, how would extra-regional powers contribute to Indonesia’s national resilience? For the Indonesians, Australia, with its material and technological capabilities as well as its experience in addressing insurgency threats, would play a role in a “modified” way, not as an ASEAN member but as a nation that had a shared interest in solving the insurgency threats in the region. In other words, due to Indonesia’s lack of economic means and technical capabilities at the time, it had to look beyond itself, beyond Southeast Asian bilateral cooperation, and beyond the ASEAN grouping to address domestic subversive movements.

Indonesia went beyond its ASEAN partner Malaysia when it came to defense and security issues as it was also active in its efforts to build closer ties with the Australians. For instance, in 1972, President Suharto stated that with the withdrawal of British troops East of Suez and the incoming U.S. military withdrawal from Vietnam, Australia and New Zealand would inevitably play an increasing role in the affairs of Asia.⁴²⁵ In a meeting with Australian officials that same year, one of President Suharto’s generals expressed that Australia could play an essential role in the national resilience of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore as it had the necessary technology and experience needed for development.⁴²⁶ General Panggabean, talking about regional defense cooperation, stated that in addition to the bilateral cooperation amongst ASEAN members against insurgencies, the Indonesians were also looking to Australia to assist in its security efforts. Panggabean had seminars, joint exercises, training, and technical assistance in mind. Other than that, the

⁴²³ Dewi Fortuna Anwar, “National versus Regional Resilience? An Indonesian Perspective,” in *Southeast Asian Perspectives on Security*, ed. Derek da Cunha (Singapore: ISEAS, 2000), 82-83.

⁴²⁴ Anwar, “National versus Regional Resilience? An Indonesian Perspective,” 85-86.

⁴²⁵ Cablegram, Australian Embassy Djakarta to DFA, June 1, 1972, Indonesia - Australia defence co-operation with Indonesia - General, A1838, 696/2/2/1 PART 5, NAA.

⁴²⁶ Record of the Meeting Between the Minister of Defence, the Hon D.E. Fairbairn, DFC, MP, and General M. Panggabean, Indonesian Minister of State for Defence and Security Affairs and Deputy Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, April 13, 1972, Indonesia - Australia defence co-operation with Indonesia - General, A1838, 696/2/2/1 PART 5, NAA.

Indonesians wanted the Australians to help rehabilitate their Air Force, build a capability in defense research and development, and develop a coastal surveillance capability for the Navy and police.⁴²⁷ Indonesia did not focus on an insular foreign policy that strictly focused on the ASEAN members when it came to national security issues.

Australia was not directly involved in counterinsurgency operations with Indonesia; however, it provided technical support to its Southeast Asian neighbor. For instance, the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) collaborated with the Indonesian Army in a survey and mapping project for the islands of Kalimantan and Sumatra.⁴²⁸ Starting in 1970, the RAAF surveyed and mapped around 24,000 square miles in Kalimantan and 28,000 square miles in Sumatra. The job involved deploying three aircraft and three helicopters alongside fifty Australian troops.⁴²⁹ The projects were to continue until 1975 and extended to the West Papua border. The understanding between the Australian and Indonesian officials was that these projects had a defense and an economic development “spin-off” objective.⁴³⁰ In other words, the survey and mapping projects the Australians and Indonesians conducted had civil and military value.⁴³¹ Indonesia looked to Australia to assist in getting a better sense of the environment of Kalimantan, which would have not only contributed to the Indonesian government identifying locations for economic development projects but also potentially helped locate targets in their battle against insurgents.

Australia also provided material assistance towards Indonesia’s counterinsurgency efforts in West Kalimantan. According to the Military Regional Command of Pontianak, one of the difficulties the Indonesian military faced was controlling and monitoring the West Kalimantan/Sarawak area, especially the seacoast areas. The Military Regional Command argued that insurgent groups had freedom of movement

⁴²⁷ Defence Cooperation with Indonesia, May 1972, Indonesia - Australia defence co-operation with Indonesia - General, A1838, 696/2/2/1 PART 5, NAA.

⁴²⁸ Defence Relations - Indonesia, Foreign and UK interest in Indonesia, February 10, 1972, Military aid to Indonesia from UK Incorporating defence relations with Indonesia, FCO 24/1414, UKNA.

⁴²⁹ Defence Co-operation Programme, n.d., Indonesia - Australia defence co-operation with Indonesia - General, A1838, 696/2/2/1 PART 5, NAA; Australian-Indonesian Defence Cooperation, n.d., [Jakarta] - Defence co-operation with Indonesia, A4359, 221/9, NAA.

⁴³⁰ Defence co-operation with Indonesia, August 9, 1974, Defence co-operation with Indonesia, A1838, 696/2/2/1 PART 10, NAA, 11-12.

⁴³¹ Defence Cooperation with Indonesia, November 19, 1970, [Jakarta] - Defence co-operation with Indonesia, A4359, 221/9, NAA, 74.

in these strategic areas, leaving the areas with high populations vulnerable to communist influence.⁴³² In 1972, one of President Suharto's generals met with the Australians requesting assistance for the Indonesian Navy. The General stressed that the Indonesian Navy required patrol boats and personnel training to monitor the areas between the islands of Sumatra, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi.⁴³³ By 1974, the Royal Australian Navy provided Indonesia with two Attack-class patrol boats to assist in maritime surveillance and an agreement to deliver six Nomad aircraft and six more patrol boats.⁴³⁴ In the early 1970s, Indonesia and Australia started developing closer ties.

In talks with Indonesian leaders, the Australians had adopted the language of national and regional resilience when referring to the necessity of maintaining the security of Southeast Asia. For instance, Prime Minister Whitlam, addressing President Suharto in 1972, stated that Australia identified with the Indonesian concepts. Whitlam noted that both countries had a duty to build up their capabilities to strengthen their countries but also needed to cooperate to achieve regional resilience. Whitlam emphasized that the two countries could not "go [at] it alone."⁴³⁵ The Australian talking points for meetings with Indonesian officials included conveying that Australia had the same goal as Indonesia, which was to see a stable Southeast Asian region. Another talking point in preparation for meetings with the Indonesians was to stress that the FPDA's goal with Malaysia and Singapore was to assist with national and regional resilience through material assistance and military training.⁴³⁶ In other words, the Australians were attempting to alleviate any potential concerns by the Indonesians about the intentions of the FPDA. Australia's message was that its foreign policy goal aligned with Indonesia's desire for regional stability and expressed a willingness to assist in achieving this objective.

⁴³² Indonesia, Angkatan Darat, Komando Daerah Militer XII/Tandjungpura, 303.

⁴³³ Record of the Meeting Between the Minister of Defence, the Hon D.E. Fairbairn, DFC, MP, and General M. Panggabean, Indonesian Minister of State for Defence and Security Affairs and Deputy Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, April 13, 1972, Australia defence co-operation with Indonesia - General, A1838, 696/2/2/1 PART 5, NAA.

⁴³⁴ Indonesia: Enquiry Regarding Australian Defence Aid, May 21, 1975, Defence co-operation with Indonesia, A1838, 696/2/2/1 PART 11, NAA, 99.

⁴³⁵ Cablegram, Australian Embassy Djakarta to DFA, June 6, 1972, Indonesia - Australia defence co-operation with Indonesia - General, A1838, 696/2/2/1 PART 5, NAA.

⁴³⁶ Cablegram, Australian Embassy Djakarta to DFA, June 6, 1972, Indonesia - Australia defence co-operation with Indonesia - General, A1838, 696/2/2/1 PART 5, NAA.

During the Vietnam era, Indonesia's leadership under President Suharto did not view regional resilience as a process that was solely implemented internally by the members of ASEAN. The existing scholarship defines regional resilience as a process of "strong commitment to regional cooperation, particularly within the framework of a regional organization" or "cooperation through ASEAN in addition to the realization of national resilience by all its members."⁴³⁷ In other words, the scholarship suggests that the combination of individual countries in ASEAN achieving domestic stability and cooperation within the framework of ASEAN would bring about regional resilience. Instead, Indonesia, as an active and willing participant, invited an extra-regional power, Australia, to assist in the objective of regional resilience. Indonesia worked together with Australia without a formal military agreement, adhering to a public image of non-alignment. However, at the same time, Indonesia was willing to give up a degree of regional autonomy in pursuing regional stability or resilience through its engagement and cooperation with the Australians.

The United States played a major role in encouraging Australia to engage with Indonesia in security efforts and wanted the Australians to share the political and economic burden in Southeast Asia. For example, U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia, Francis J. Galbraith, considered the engagement between Australia and Indonesia to have a potential "constructive role in slowly emerging cooperation on security arrangements in the area." In other words, Galbraith saw Australian-Indonesian cooperation as contributing to a regional environment where the nations in the area would eventually be the primary actors responsible for Southeast Asia's security.⁴³⁸ He viewed Australia as the "key country" for regional security cooperation.⁴³⁹ Ambassador Galbraith also saw value in Australia in taking a leadership role in the region, thinking it would help the United States play a low-profile role.⁴⁴⁰ This supporting role by the United States would have helped Indonesia maintain its non-

⁴³⁷ Anwar, "National versus Regional Resilience? An Indonesian Perspective," 89; Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia*, 57, 73.

⁴³⁸ Francis J. Galbraith to Marshall Green, March 12, 1970, box 5, CHRONs - Jan 1970, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA.

⁴³⁹ [Diary Entry: 24 February 1970 En route Singapore-Djakarta], February 24, 1970, Diary - Classified - Jan-Feb 1970, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA.

⁴⁴⁰ U.S. Presence in East Asia, June 28, 1970, box 1, Chiefs of Mission Conference 1970, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA.

aligned credentials. As did other U.S. officials working in and with Singapore and Malaysia, Ambassador Galbraith considered Australia part of and an extension of the Southeast Asian region. Additionally, for American policymakers who held such a position, regional security arrangements, whether formal, such as the FPDA, or informal, like the bilateral engagement between Australia and Indonesia, also needed external encouragement from the United States.

In its coordination with Australia, the U.S. priority was to ensure that its efforts to assist in the modernization of Indonesia's military capabilities did not end up alarming Malaysia and Singapore or jeopardize existing regional groupings such as the FPDA and ASEAN. One aspect of the U.S. Military Assistance Program (MAP) for Indonesia focused on improving the military's counterinsurgency and transport and communication capabilities. Australia complemented this assistance by focusing on training the Indonesian military.⁴⁴¹ U.S. Ambassador Galbraith also recommended that the military aid provided to Indonesia should not cause an adverse reaction from its neighbors, Malaysia and Singapore. He stressed that the U.S. military supply and training should only be provided in the "context of acceptance by neighbors and in strengthening rather than weakening the web of developing security constellations and arrangements within ASEAN."⁴⁴² Through the consultations in the FPDA, the Australians also would have been able to keep Malaysia and Singapore informed about its military engagement with Indonesia.⁴⁴³ Put differently, the United States focused on ensuring that the military assistance it provided supplemented and complemented regional security initiatives without replacing them. The aim of the United States was not to be the sole power that dealt with security matters in Southeast Asia, and the hope was that countries within it would step up to take on a larger burden in the region.

⁴⁴¹ Francis J. Galbraith to Marshall Green, February 12, 1970, box 5, CHRONs - Jan 1970, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA; Richard H. Donald to Paul F. Gardner, November 2, 1970, box 7, DEF 19 Other third country Military Assistance, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

⁴⁴² [Diary Entry: 24 February 1970 En route Singapore-Djakarta], February 24, 1970, Diary - Classified - Jan-Feb 1970, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA; Memo, Ted Heavner to John Dorrance, November 9, 1972, box 10, Memoranda, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

⁴⁴³ Francis J. Galbraith to Marshall Green, February 12, 1970, box 5, CHRONs - Jan 1970, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA.

An example of Australia sharing the military burden with the United States occurred when it provided Indonesia with fighter aircraft. In 1973, the RAAF provided sixteen Sabre aircraft to Indonesia, including spare parts and training provisions in Australia. Additionally, an RAAF Advisory Unit of 23 personnel was present in Indonesia. Through this program, the Australians trained 500 Indonesian personnel, with 150 of them specifically trained to operate the Sabre aircraft.⁴⁴⁴ In response to the initiative from Australia, Foreign Minister Malik stated that although the Sabre aircraft were old and did not significantly enhance Indonesia's military capabilities, Indonesia welcomed the gift as it provided Indonesia with the opportunity for training.⁴⁴⁵ For the United States, the Australian gift of Sabre aircraft to Indonesia was a positive development as it provided an excuse to decline the Indonesian military's request for more sophisticated air defense jets. U.S. policymakers were pleased with the burden-sharing by the Australians, as it allowed the Americans to focus on providing other types of military projects and equipment, such as radar systems.⁴⁴⁶ More importantly, the aircraft did not cause tensions between Indonesia and its neighbors. As stated in Chapter 1, Australia also supplied Malaysia with Sabre aircraft during this period.

Although the United States called for Australia and New Zealand to step up their efforts in military cooperation with Indonesia, the Americans remained the leading military supplier of weapons to Indonesia. For example, U.S. officials encouraged New Zealand to collaborate with Indonesia. The cooperation between New Zealand and Indonesia came through visits by military officials and naval visits. The two countries also established intelligence exchanges.⁴⁴⁷ In comparison to Australia, New Zealand's military cooperation with Indonesia was more limited. For instance, in

⁴⁴⁴ Defence Co-operation with Indonesia, August 9, 1974, Defence co-operation with Indonesia, A1838, 696/2/2/1 PART 10, NAA, 11-12; Defence Relations - Indonesia, Foreign and UK interest in Indonesia, February 10, 1972, Military aid to Indonesia from UK Incorporating defence relations with Indonesia, FCO 24/1414, UKNA.

⁴⁴⁵ Security Rogers' Visit, June 4, 1972, Indonesia - Relations with USA, 3034/11/161 PART 17, NAA, 233.

⁴⁴⁶ Theodore J.C. Heavner to Francis J. Galbraith, April 1972, box 9, DEF 19-1 Policy and Plans Jan-June, Subject Files, 1965-1974, RG 59, USNA; Chief, U.S. Defense Liaison Group, Indonesia to Change to FY 73 Military Assistance Plan and Submission of FY 74 Program, August 9, 1972, box 9, DEF 19-1 July-December, Subject Files, 1965-1974, RG 59, USNA; Lewis M. Purnell to Theodore J. C. Heavner, January 18, 1972, box 9, DEF 19 Military Assistance Program (MAP General) Jan-June, Subject Files, 1965-1974, RG 59, USNA.

⁴⁴⁷ Defence Relations - Indonesia, Foreign and UK interest in Indonesia, February 10, 1972, Military aid to Indonesia from UK Incorporating defence relations with Indonesia, FCO 24/1414, UKNA.

1970, in talks with U.S. officials, New Zealand's Ambassador to Indonesia, Bill Challis, stated his intention to encourage more exchanges of military visits between Indonesia and New Zealand, although New Zealand would not be able to provide significant military equipment. The U.S. officials replied that this development was encouraging and that the United States preferred to have multiple suppliers as it would not jeopardize Indonesia's non-aligned image in the international arena.⁴⁴⁸ In reality, an important reason why the United States wanted Australia and New Zealand to increase their military assistance was to alleviate domestic criticism by the U.S. Congress about the U.S. becoming the sole supplier to Indonesia.⁴⁴⁹ Despite the U.S. encouragement of Australia and New Zealand, by 1972, the United States was still Indonesia's primary source of military equipment. The U.S. military assistance amounted to \$28 million by 1972, and there were also talks to create a five-year plan for the United States to provide training in skills such as transport, communications, and logistics.⁴⁵⁰ While the United States succeeded in getting Australia and New Zealand to increase their military responsibilities, by the early 1970s, the Americans remained the dominant extra-regional military influence in Indonesia.

The Indonesian leadership in private saw the Australian and New Zealand engagement with Southeast Asia as an indication of U.S. interest in the region. For example, Lim Bian Kie, who worked under General Ali Murtopo, Suharto's trusted advisor, told the Australians in 1973 that Australia, as a "European" country, was the physical link between the United States and the United Kingdom. He explained that a threat to the ASEAN region would also involve Australia, which had a direct connection to the United States and Western Europe. The Indonesian official emphasized his support for preserving the ANZUS treaty as an "umbrella" commitment to the region through Australia.⁴⁵¹ These talks reflected the same thought process as Malaysia and Singapore regarding the importance of the ANZUS treaty as a potential tripwire. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore shared the idea that

⁴⁴⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, September 30, 1970, box 7, DEF 19 Other third country Military Assistance, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

⁴⁴⁹ Marshall Green to Francis J. Galbraith, June 2, 1971, box 8, DEF 19 Other Countries, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

⁴⁵⁰ Westmoreland's Indonesia visit aimed at a buildup of U.S. mil. presence, February 3, 1972, box 9, DEF 19-1 Policy and Plans Jan-June, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

⁴⁵¹ Record of Meeting Between Mr. Malcolm Fraser MP and Lim Bian Kie, June 19, 1973, Indonesia - Relations with international organisations - SEATO, A1838, 3034/9/5, NAA, 32-33.

the ANZUS treaty provided an indirect sense of security. Although it was doubtful that the United States would have militarily intervened in another Southeast Asian conflict during the Vietnam War, Indonesia considered the ANZUS nations the best option for modernizing their military equipment. Essentially, by way of accepting large sums of military equipment from the United States, Indonesia contributed to and preferred a regional order with a dominant American influence and presence.

Indonesia's military engagement with the United States, Australia, and New Zealand during the Vietnam era demonstrated that its priority was not achieving regional autonomy and expelling extra-regional influence from Southeast Asia. Instead, regional autonomy was more of an ideal or a future goal. For instance, Brigadier General Sunarso, the first Indonesian ambassador to Singapore, stated in 1970 at the Foreign Correspondents' Association of Southeast Asia that Indonesia had no objection to its neighbors securing defense arrangements with other nations or maintaining foreign military bases as long as they were not directed against Indonesia.⁴⁵² These statements by Indonesian officials were stronger than their stance on Malaysia's proposal to neutralize Southeast Asia by excluding great power interference. Indonesia's main focus was internal stability, and it received substantial military and economic assistance from the United States and Australia. Thus, Indonesia's foreign policy of national and regional resilience contradicted the idea of regional autonomy, as it both required and facilitated U.S. influence and intervention in Southeast Asia.

3.3 Indonesia, China, and the Second Indochina War

Indonesia's foreign policy towards China, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand demonstrated that it was neither a neutral nation nor one that sought to expel extra-regional influence from Southeast Asia. Regarding China, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the military leadership disagreed over foreign policy. The former wanted to recognize China, while the latter viewed China as a domestic and regional security threat. President Suharto agreed with the military leadership, making it impossible for Indonesia to approach China to negotiate great power guarantees for regional neutrality as envisioned by Malaysia's neutralization concept. With Vietnam,

⁴⁵² Minister's Speech, January 23, 1970, British withdrawal - Five power Arrangements, A1838, 696/1/9 PART 16, NAA, 312.

Indonesia requested the United States to prolong its military presence, arguing that the fall of South Vietnam would embolden subversive movements across Southeast Asia and that the American presence provided time for Indonesia to build its economic and military strength. Indonesia also abandoned the concepts of neutrality and regional autonomy regarding Cambodia as it supported the American-backed Lon Nol regime over Norodom Sihanouk and attempted to legitimize Lon Nol as the ruler of Cambodia. As for Thailand, the Indonesian leadership held the position that the United States should continue to maintain its military bases in the country, as it argued Thailand was the first domino that could cause the fall of the rest of Southeast Asia. Moreover, while Indonesia was not a party to formal military arrangements, it privately informed its U.S. and ANZUK partners that it supported the Manila Treaty and covertly attended and organized counterinsurgency seminars financed by SEATO. Ultimately, the Indonesian leadership viewed the United States as the power that could guarantee the security and stability of Southeast Asia, contradicting the common view that Indonesia was historically a non-aligned nation.

Indonesia did not adhere to the concept of regional autonomy or Malaysia's neutralization scheme, as the Indonesian military considered China a threat to its national security. For instance, in a 1970 speech, General Panggabean warned that the PRC would continue to influence subversion in Southeast Asia and attempt to spread communism over the next five to ten years.⁴⁵³ He stressed that Indonesia needed to pay attention to China's "war of liberation" and that Indonesia needed to be prepared to face such threats and could not afford to be careless and wait until the enemy was at its door.⁴⁵⁴ General Panggabean also held the view that China's influence had the potential to help the resurgence of the PKI.⁴⁵⁵ For instance, in 1972, Indonesia's military officials had allegedly come across evidence of Chinese propaganda in support of the communist insurgents at the Kalimantan/Sarawak border. Indonesia's military officials regarded these groups as having been inspired

⁴⁵³ *Himpunan Amanat Menhankam/ Pangab Dan Wapangab* [Collection of Mandates by the Minister of Defense/Commander of the Armed Forces and Deputy Commander of the Armed Forces] (*Periode Desember 1969-Maret 1970* [December 1969-March 1970]) (Jakarta: Departemen Pertahanan Keamanan [Ministry of Defense and Security], 1970), 170-71.

⁴⁵⁴ *Himpunan Amanat Menhankam/ Pangab Dan Wapangab* [Collection of Mandates by the Minister of Defense/Commander of the Armed Forces and Deputy Commander of the Armed Forces], 124.

⁴⁵⁵ *Himpunan Amanat Menhankam/ Pangab Dan Wapangab* [Collection of Mandates by the Minister of Defense/Commander of the Armed Forces and Deputy Commander of the Armed Forces], 15.

by the PKI.⁴⁵⁶ The Indonesian military's perception of China as a security threat prevented it from seeking to approach or accommodate China. Given this view, the Indonesian military did not find regional autonomy or neutralization schemes that required guarantees from great powers, including China, to be a viable foreign policy.

During the Vietnam era, there was friction between the Indonesian military and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led by Foreign Minister Adam Malik, over establishing diplomatic relations with China. Suharto's New Order government blamed China for the 1965 coup attempt, and by 1967, Indonesia had severed diplomatic ties with China.⁴⁵⁷ Starting in 1969, Foreign Minister Malik attempted to normalize relations with China, arguing that Southeast Asia was undergoing a geopolitical transformation. With China and the Soviet Union competing for influence, Washington and Beijing moving closer, and the United States withdrawing militarily from Vietnam, Malik advised the Indonesian government to approach China to gain leverage with the great powers. However, the Indonesian military rejected Malik's efforts, insisting that China pursued a policy of interference in Indonesia's domestic affairs. President Suharto heeded his generals' advice and undermined the Adam Malik's attempts to restore relations with China.⁴⁵⁸ Consequently, Indonesia did not re-establish diplomatic relations with China until 1990. The Indonesian military was the predominant actor that shaped the country's foreign policy decisions.

Indonesia did not view China solely as a domestic threat. It also regarded the PRC as a growing problem for the Southeast Asian region. For instance, according to U.S. reports of Indonesian perceptions towards China, American officials in 1969 had noted that Indonesia considered China as the "most likely aggressor in Southeast Asia," although it also viewed the Soviet Union with suspicion.⁴⁵⁹ In 1972, President Suharto also expressed to Australian Prime Minister William McMahon that Southeast Asia faced the dangers of Chinese subversion and that there needed to be a stable region for Southeast Asian countries to build national resilience. In other

⁴⁵⁶ Indonesian and Regional Security, June 7, 1972, Indonesia - Visit to Indonesia by Australian Prime Minister - Mr McMahon - 1972-1973, A1838, 3034/10/11/19 PART 1, NAA, 27-29.

⁴⁵⁷ Storey, *Southeast Asia and the Rise of China*, 194-95.

⁴⁵⁸ Rizal Sukma, *Indonesia and China: The Politics of a Troubled Relationship* (London: Routledge, 1999), 80-85.

⁴⁵⁹ J. Robert Fluker to All Country Team Members, December 9, 1969, box 1, Country Team Meetings - 1969, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966-1974, RG 84, USNA.

words, for Suharto, an active China in Southeast Asia had the potential to disrupt the Indonesian government's efforts for political and economic stability.⁴⁶⁰ That same year, President Suharto conveyed to Sir Alec Douglas-Home, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, that it was unlikely China would remain inactive in the face of the U.S. military withdrawal from Vietnam. Referring to the Sino-Soviet competition, Suharto expressed that both powers would attempt to maintain influence in Southeast Asia, with China likely stepping up its support for subversion in the region.⁴⁶¹ As it related to Vietnam, an official from Indonesia's Foreign Ministry stated that he expected Hanoi to control Cambodia and Laos, with China potentially becoming the guardian of these countries in Indochina.⁴⁶² In summary, Indonesian officials viewed China as a regional threat and anticipated that China would take on a more active role following the U.S. military withdrawal from Indochina.

Indonesian officials requested that the United States maintain its troops in Vietnam until South Vietnam could reinforce its political, economic, and military capabilities. For example, in 1969, President Suharto held the view that the U.S. military withdrawal should be based on South Vietnam's "ability to consolidate its strength."⁴⁶³ Indonesian officials recommended that the United States assist South Vietnam in fortifying its political base in rural areas as a measure against the influence of the Viet Cong.⁴⁶⁴ The Indonesian Ambassador to the United States, Soedjatmoko, argued that the United States should not withdraw abruptly or else the rest of Southeast Asia could potentially collapse.⁴⁶⁵ Likely drawing from the direct instructions of President Suharto in 1970, Foreign Minister Malik also informed U.S. officials that Indonesia did not want to see the United States withdraw and that even after the Vietnam War was over, the United States would likely have to continue

⁴⁶⁰ Record of Conversation with President Soeharto, June 6, 1972, Indonesia - Visit to Indonesia by Australian Prime Minister - Mr McMahon - 1972-1973, A1838, 3034/10/11/19 PART 1, NAA, 78.

⁴⁶¹ Record of a Conversation Between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the President of Indonesia at the Presidential Office, Djakarta, July 4, 1972, Visit of Sir Alec Douglas-Home, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to Indonesia (Folder 2), FCO 24/1406, UKNA.

⁴⁶² Talks in Jakarta, July 7, 1972, Foreign policy of Indonesia (Folder 2), FCO 24/1399, UKNA.

⁴⁶³ Francis J. Galbraith to Marshall Green, August 1, 1969, box 3, Meeting with Suharto, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966-1974, RG 84, USNA.

⁴⁶⁴ Memo, Indonesia's Views on Regional Security, March 26, 1969, box 2, Indonesia [Correspondence, Memorandums, and Receipts, 1969], Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966-1974, RG 84, USNA.

⁴⁶⁵ Memo, Indonesian Ambassador's Call on the Secretary, February 12, 1969, box 5, POL U.S., Subject Files, 1965-1974, RG 59, USNA.

providing economic assistance to Vietnam and the rest of the region.⁴⁶⁶ Indonesian officials regarded U.S. military, political, and economic support as vital for building the strength of the Southeast Asian countries.

Indonesian officials justified the continued U.S. military presence in Vietnam by claiming it prevented the spread of communist subversive movements across the region. The leadership argued that if communist “energies and resources” were no longer focused on Indochina, the communist struggles would be diverted elsewhere.⁴⁶⁷ Indonesian officials feared that a reunified Vietnam under Beijing’s influence would not only absorb Cambodia and Laos but also threaten Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore. Consequently, one of Suharto’s generals argued for maintaining a divided Vietnam.⁴⁶⁸ In 1969, President Suharto envisioned a post-Vietnam environment where the communists had a “bigger scope for infiltration and subversion in the countries of the region.”⁴⁶⁹ Suharto contended that Southeast Asian countries needed to strengthen their “national will and capacity to resist through international and regional cooperation in the fields of economic development, culture, and ideology.”⁴⁷⁰ The Indonesian leadership anticipated a regional environment where a fully communist Vietnam posed a threat to Indonesia and urged the countries in the region to prepare for such a scenario.

For Indonesia, the United States was vital in helping it prepare for a communist Indochina. Indonesia considered the U.S. military presence important for buying time to develop its economic and military strength against communist insurgencies. Prior to assuming full power as Indonesia’s president in 1967, Suharto had already conveyed to the Americans that it was in support of the U.S. military effort in Vietnam. For instance, in 1966, Foreign Minister Adam Malik informed U.S. officials that General Suharto regarded a U.S. military withdrawal from Vietnam and a communist victory there as a direct threat Indonesia.⁴⁷¹ By 1969, Indonesian

⁴⁶⁶ [Diary Entry: 11 January 1970], January 11, 1970, box 14, Diary - Classified - Jan-Feb 1970, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA.

⁴⁶⁷ Francis J. Galbraith to Marshall Green, April 13, 1971, box 1, Chiefs of Mission Conference 1971, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA.

⁴⁶⁸ Record of Conversation with General Soepardjo, July 24, 1969, Indonesia - Foreign Policy - General, A1838, 3034/7/1 PART 12, NAA, 208.

⁴⁶⁹ Indonesian News & Views, May 14, 1969, Indonesia - Foreign Policy - General, A1838, 3034/7/1 PART 12, NAA, 24.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ Memo, Vice President to the President, September 25, 1966, Doc. CK2349052333, USDDO, 2.

officials sought clarity from the United States on its withdrawal timeline from Vietnam to gauge how many years they had left to focus on internal economic development.⁴⁷² In 1970 and 1971, Indonesian leaders continued to privately support the U.S. military effort in Vietnam, viewing it as a check against communism and stressing that continued U.S. economic and military aid was essential for addressing internal threats. They argued that British and American withdrawals would disrupt the region as they would be leaving before the Southeast Asian countries could fully develop enduring stability.⁴⁷³ Essentially, Indonesia ignored the concept of neutrality and privately called for continued U.S. military engagement in the region, viewing the United States as a stabilizing force that helped countries build their defenses against communist forces.

Another example of Indonesia abandoning the concepts of regional autonomy and neutrality occurred following the Cambodian coup of 1970, where the Indonesian government agreed to provide arms to the U.S.-backed Khmer Republic headed by Lon Nol who had overthrown Sihanouk.⁴⁷⁴ Following Lon Nol's coup in March 1970, there was a sense of urgency amongst Indonesia's military establishment to assist in the survival of the Lon Nol government through the transfer of weapons.⁴⁷⁵ Between April and August of 1970, President Suharto's military negotiated with U.S. officials to deliver AK-47 rifles Indonesia had possessed to the Lon Nol regime. The plan was for Indonesia to transport the rifles covertly through airlifts and ships.⁴⁷⁶ By July 1970, the Indonesians had agreed to provide 25,000 AK-47s, while U.S. officials would go to Bandung, Indonesia, to establish an ammunition plant.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷² Memo, Security of Indonesia and Reorganization of the Indonesian Military Establishment, March 21, 1969, box 2, Indonesia [Correspondence, Memorandums, and Receipts, 1969], Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA.

⁴⁷³ Indonesia: Annual Policy Review and Assessment, February 16, 1970, box 1, Annual Policy Review & Assessment [1969, 1970], Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA, 15 of A-33; NSSM-61 Indonesia, November 3, 1971, doc. CK2349547665, USDDO.

⁴⁷⁴ Kenton Clymer, "Cambodia and Laos in the Vietnam War," in *The Columbia History of the Vietnam War*, ed. David Anderson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 371.

⁴⁷⁵ Telegram From the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State, April 19, 1970, *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume XX, Southeast Asia, 1969–1972, ed. Daniel J. Lawler (Washington D.C., 2006), doc. 289.

⁴⁷⁶ Telegram From the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State, April 15, 1970, *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume XX, Southeast Asia, 1969–1972, ed. Daniel J. Lawler (Washington D.C., 2006), doc. 287; Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Helms to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), April 15, 1970, *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume VI, Vietnam, January 1969–July 1970, ed. Edward C. Keefer and Carolyn Yee (Washington D.C., 2006), doc. 232.

⁴⁷⁷ Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, June 18, 1970, doc. 329; Memorandum From the Deputy Assistant to the President for

In return, the United States promised to provide the Indonesians with 15,000 M-14 rifles on loan to be replaced with 30,000 M-16 rifles by the following year.⁴⁷⁸ The Indonesian military's agreement to provide arms in support of the Lon Nol regime showed how it was willing, in a limited manner, to intervene and engage in regional conflicts.

An important reason why Indonesian officials were willing to provide Cambodia with arms was because it saw an opportunity to convince the United States to assist in modernizing the military. Prior to Suharto coming into power in 1966, Indonesia's military equipment primarily came from the Soviet Union. Between 1959 and 1965, Sukarno's Indonesia came only second to Egypt when it came to the Soviet Union providing military assistance.⁴⁷⁹ By 1970, the Indonesian Navy and Air Force struggled to maintain their equipment as the Lyndon B. Johnson administration's policy was to prioritize foreign assistance for economic stabilization and rehabilitation instead of the military. Out of all the equipment, only 20 percent of the airplanes and 40 percent of the naval vessels were functioning.⁴⁸⁰ To get a commitment from the United States to replace the Soviet equipment, the Indonesians emphasized how they wanted to take on the responsibility of a regional leadership role.⁴⁸¹ By 1971, the United States planned to provide Indonesia with \$25 million in military assistance for the following year.⁴⁸² Indonesia had adopted the rhetoric of the Nixon Doctrine, claiming it would have an outward-looking foreign policy that would assist Southeast Asia against communist threats.⁴⁸³ By doing so, the

National Security Affairs (Haig) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), July 7, 1970, doc. 309. All *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume XX, Southeast Asia, 1969–1972, ed. Daniel J. Lawler (Washington D.C., 2006).

⁴⁷⁸ Fibiger, *Suharto's Cold War*, 150; Memorandum of Conversation, July 8, 1970, *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume XX, Southeast Asia, 1969–1972, ed. Daniel J. Lawler (Washington D.C., 2006), doc. 310.

⁴⁷⁹ Ragna Bogdan, "Cold War Economics: Soviet Aid to Indonesia," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 10, no. 3 (2008): 110–28, <https://doi.org/10.1162/jcws.2008.10.3.110>.

⁴⁸⁰ Harold Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 1978), 239–40; Fibiger, *Suharto's Cold War*, 175.

⁴⁸¹ Memorandum of Conversation, May 27, 1970, doc. 299; Letter From the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Green) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), May 27, 1970, doc. 300. All *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume XX, Southeast Asia, 1969–1972, ed. Daniel J. Lawler (Washington D.C., 2006).

⁴⁸² Memorandum From Richard T. Kennedy of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig), October 30, 1971, *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume IV, Foreign Assistance, International Development, Trade Policies, 1969–1972, ed. Bruce F. Duncombe (Washington D.C., 2001), doc. 70.

⁴⁸³ Fibiger, *Suharto's Cold War*, 180.

Indonesian military, especially the Navy and Air Force, had convinced Nixon to provide it with the assistance it had desired since Suharto became president.

Indonesia also assisted the Lon Nol government by training Cambodian military personnel. In May 1970, Foreign Minister Adam Malik told Marshall Green, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, that Indonesia had decided it was going to train the Cambodians in guerilla warfare. The training was not to be publicized and to be “blanketed with other nationalities” to avoid suspicion.⁴⁸⁴ Additionally, the Indonesians considered sending officers to train the forces in Cambodia under the disguise of Indonesian Embassy staff.⁴⁸⁵ The plan, which would cost the United States around \$1 million, was to have the Indonesians train the Cambodians between 1970 and 1972 through “an educational program in joint strategic intelligence, a senior seminar, an Indonesian advisory and military training program in Cambodia, and a language training program.”⁴⁸⁶ Between 1971 and 1972, Indonesia hosted sixty Cambodian officers and trained them in airborne and commando skills and subsequently sent them to South Vietnam for additional reconnaissance patrolling and tactics courses.⁴⁸⁷ In 1971, alongside the sixty Cambodians, there were also reportedly around 600 Malaysian paratroopers training in Indonesia.⁴⁸⁸ Besides the military, the Indonesians also trained hundreds of Cambodian police officers.⁴⁸⁹ Through its training initiatives, the Indonesian military attempted to ensure the Khmer Republic would remain in power following the coup in 1970.

Regional cooperation between the Suharto and Lon Nol regimes emerged due to shared interests and a mutual desire between Indonesia and the United States to ensure the regime’s survival. Indonesia saw parallels between the struggles of Lon

⁴⁸⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, May 26, 1970, doc. 298; Letter From the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Green) to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), May 27, 1970, doc. 300. All *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume XX, Southeast Asia, 1969–1972, ed. Daniel J. Lawler (Washington D.C., 2006).

⁴⁸⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, May 27, 1970, *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume XX, Southeast Asia, 1969–1972, ed. Daniel J. Lawler (Washington D.C., 2006), doc. 299.

⁴⁸⁶ Memorandum From John H. Holdridge of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), October 13, 1970, *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume XX, Southeast Asia, 1969–1972, ed. Daniel J. Lawler (Washington D.C., 2006), doc. 312.

⁴⁸⁷ Ken Conboy, *KOPASSUS: Inside Indonesia’s Special Forces* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2003), 190–91.

⁴⁸⁸ J. D. I. Boyd to P. J. Sullivan, October 8, 1971, Political relations between United States of America and Indonesia, FCO 24/1114, UKNA.

⁴⁸⁹ Memo, Henry A. Kissinger to the White House, July 1, 1970, doc. LOC-HAK-459-9-2-1, CREST.

Nol's Cambodia and Indonesia's experience with the PKI. For Suharto, the PKI gaining political power led to betrayal and attempted coups. Suharto claimed that despite the crackdown on the PKI since 1965, the PKI was still obstructing Indonesia's economic development efforts. The President saw Cambodia as facing similar hurdles. His view was that the communist movements in Indochina were obstacles to the establishment of strong governments.⁴⁹⁰ In other words, Suharto's desire was to assist Cambodia in its capacity for national resilience against communist subversion.⁴⁹¹ The United States also saw an opportunity to encourage Indonesia to take on a regional security role by engaging with Cambodia. The Americans considered it a good idea for Indonesia to get "their feet a little wet in their attempt to give context to the Nixon Doctrine on Asians taking initiative."⁴⁹² However, the Americans knew that Indonesian assistance would be limited. They were looking to the future in hopes that this initial step would lead to Indonesia independently contributing to regional security.⁴⁹³ Indonesia's deviation from non-alignment and neutrality, coupled with U.S. support, catalyzed regional cooperation.

As for Foreign Minister Adam Malik, he aimed to intervene in the Cambodian crisis diplomatically, contrasting the more hawkish elements of the Indonesian military and Foreign Ministry, to sustain his domestic decision-making power and maintain the nation's non-aligned credentials. Initially, Foreign Minister Malik wanted to block the transfer of arms to Cambodia but was overruled by Suharto.⁴⁹⁴ Rumors surfaced about Indonesia preparing to send 1,600 troops to Cambodia, which Malik publicly denied, stating that Indonesia's policy was to prevent foreign intervention.⁴⁹⁵ Malik preferred to host a conference on May 16-17, 1970, in Jakarta to discuss political solutions for Cambodia. Although Indonesia invited communist

⁴⁹⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, February 6, 1973, Diary - Jan-March 1973, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966-1974, RG 84, USNA.

⁴⁹¹ Memorandum of Conversation, November 5, 1971, Diary - Oct-Dec 1971, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966-1974, RG 84, USNA.

⁴⁹² Telegram From the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State, April 19, 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume XX, Southeast Asia, 1969-1972, ed. Daniel J. Lawler (Washington D.C., 2006), doc. 289.

⁴⁹³ Indonesia's Future Contribution to Southeast Asian Security, August 11, 1970, Eyes only - 1970, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966-1974, RG 84, USNA; Memorandum From John H. Holdridge of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), October 13, 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume XX, Southeast Asia, 1969-1972, ed. Daniel J. Lawler (Washington D.C., 2006), doc. 312.

⁴⁹⁴ Fibiger, *Suharto's Cold War*, 149-50.

⁴⁹⁵ Ang Cheng Guan, "The Jakarta Conference on Cambodia, 1970," in *Southeast Asia and the Cold War*, ed. Albert Lau (London: Routledge, 2012), 248.

countries and members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), only Australia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Korea, South Vietnam, Singapore, and Thailand attended.⁴⁹⁶ Thailand, South Vietnam, and South Korea sought explicit support for the Lon Nol regime to the rejection of Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, and Singapore. The conference's final communique called for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Cambodia, an international conference, respect for Cambodia's sovereignty and neutrality, and the formation of a group consisting of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Japan to consult with the United Nations to implement these measures.⁴⁹⁷ Although the conference was of no substance for Cambodia, Malik benefitted as Indonesia's domestic scene generally endorsed the initiative.⁴⁹⁸ Malik hosted a conference that did not overtly support Lon Nol nor condemn the communist camp while bolstering his role in Indonesia's foreign policy decisions.

In the NAM conferences between 1970 and 1972, Indonesia started to clearly assert its position of recognizing Lon Nol as the legitimate leader of Cambodia. In the 3rd Summit of the NAM on 8-10 September 1970 in Lusaka, Zambia, Indonesia was against Sihanouk's government-in-exile representing Cambodia. According to an Indonesian journalist traveling with Suharto, Indonesia was against Sihanouk to the extent that there was a jetliner on standby, waiting for its delegates to walk out in case the conference insisted on Sihanouk's representation.⁴⁹⁹ In the end, there was no consensus on Cambodia's representation as there was no majority in the voting, with seven members supporting Lon Nol and seventeen supporting Sihanouk.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁶ Indonesia invited China, North Korea, North Vietnam, Australia, Japan, Laos, South Korea, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Vietnam, Afghanistan, Burma, Ceylon, India, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, and Singapore. The communist countries (China, North Korea, and North Vietnam), the members of the Non-Aligned Movement (Burma, Ceylon, and India), and Pakistan all declined the invitation. China and North Vietnam criticized the conference stating that it was an American initiative that supported Cambodia's invasion by the United States. The Soviet Union, although not invited, similarly condemned the conference. See Andrea Pressello, "Japan's Debut in Multilateral Peace Diplomacy: The 1970 Jakarta Conference on the Cambodian Conflict," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 33, no. 2 (2022): 287–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2022.2062125>.

⁴⁹⁷ Kenton Clymer, *The United States and Cambodia, 1969-2000: A Troubled Relationship* (London: Routledge, 2004), 35; Pressello, "Japan's Debut in Multilateral Peace Diplomacy," 284-89.

⁴⁹⁸ Guan, "The Jakarta Conference on Cambodia, 1970," 258.

⁴⁹⁹ Savingram No. 44, Lusaka Conference, September 28, 1970, Indonesia - Foreign Policy - General, A1838, 3034/7/1 PART 13, NAA.

⁵⁰⁰ By 1972, there was an even clearer distinction in the NAM between those who supported Lon Nol and those who advocated for Sihanouk. At the NAM Foreign Minister's Conference in 1972 in Georgetown, Guyana, the majority agreed to the full membership of the North Vietnamese-controlled Republic of South Vietnam. Burma, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, and Singapore protested the motion, and delegates from Indonesia, Laos, and Malaysia walked out. In the end, a majority recognized Sihanouk as the representative of Cambodia. See Lorenz M. Lüthi, "The Non-Aligned Movement and

Reflecting on Lusaka, Suharto and Malik expressed to the Americans that Indonesia had faced a bloc of Arab and African countries who were “ill-informed” about Southeast Asia and pressured by China to support Sihanouk.⁵⁰¹ They also claimed that Indonesia could not convince the NAM members that U.S. ground troops had left Cambodia and that the occupying forces were actually the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong. After the Jakarta Conference, Malik had switched tone, blaming China for the Cambodian crisis. Malik stated that there was a “Peking-dominated axis” between Peking, Pyongyang, Hanoi, the Vietcong, and Sihanouk’s government-in-exile. Malik argued that the goals of this axis were contrary to the efforts of restoring Cambodia’s “neutrality,” “territorial integrity,” and “non-alignment.”⁵⁰² Indonesia had picked sides. When advocating for the sovereignty of Cambodia, it referred to the Lon Nol government. Moreover, it identified the so-called Peking-dominated axis as the aggressors and bringers of instability to Cambodia. at NAM conferences and by providing military assistance and training. Ultimately, Indonesia’s efforts did not make a difference as Lon Nol’s regime collapsed in 1975.

Indonesia also deviated from its traditional foreign policy of regional autonomy and neutrality when it came to the U.S. presence in Thailand, as its government and military officials asked the Americans to prolong their stay. For example, Brigadier General Sunarso, the Indonesian ambassador to Singapore, told American officials in 1969 that he hoped the United States would retain its troops in the bases in Thailand in the post-Vietnam period. Sunarso’s justification was that there was concern Thailand would resort to “accommodating” whichever major power was dominant in the region.⁵⁰³ As potential threats to Southeast Asia, Sunarso listed Japan, China, and the Soviet Union.⁵⁰⁴ Another Indonesian Foreign Ministry official suggested that if

the Cold War, 1961–1973,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18, no. 4 (2016): 138–44, https://doi.org/10.1162/JCWS_a_00682.

⁵⁰¹ [Diary entry: September 19, 1970], September 19, 1970, Diary - Classified - Sept-Dec 1970, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA; [Diary entry: September 16, 1970], September 16, 1970, Diary - Classified - Sept-Dec 1970, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA.

⁵⁰² How Will the Djakarta Foreign Ministers’ Conference Affect Asia’s Political Future?, July 15, 1970, Indonesia - Foreign Policy - General, A1838, 3034/7/1 PART 13, NAA, 26.

⁵⁰³ Memo, Sunarso’s Views on Regional Security Problems, February 23, 1969, box 2, Indonesia Correspondence, Memorandums, and Receipts, 1969, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

Thailand did not allow exclusive U.S. bases in the post-Vietnam period, the United States could consider standby airbases with a small contingent of U.S. troops who could fly in for exercises and emergencies.⁵⁰⁵ By 1973, as the United States neared the end of its military withdrawal from Vietnam, Vice President Spiro T. Agnew informed President Suharto that the United States planned to maintain an air presence in Thailand, keep carriers in the South China Sea, and have ground forces on alert nearby.⁵⁰⁶ The stance Indonesia conveyed to the United States was that while the eventual removal of the bases in Thailand was desirable, it considered the bases useful for the region's security in the interim period of U.S. military withdrawal from Vietnam.⁵⁰⁷

Indonesia's support for the U.S. presence in Thailand derived from the domino theory, as it feared that the fall of Thailand would lead to the fall of Malaysia and Singapore, and in turn, jeopardize Indonesia's security. Like Malaysia and Singapore, the Indonesians considered Thailand as the first line of defense in Indochina and critical to the security of the maritime countries in Southeast Asia.⁵⁰⁸ According to one Indonesian Foreign Ministry official in 1970, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand were planning to exchange information about counterinsurgency methods.⁵⁰⁹ While Malaysia and Thailand were cooperating at their border, Indonesia and Malaysia were also conducting joint military campaigns against communist guerrillas in the West Kalimantan borderland.⁵¹⁰ Indonesia was announcing to its Western partners of its intent to foster regional cooperation. However, Indonesia also emphasized that it did not have the capabilities to take on a security role beyond its borders as it first needed to develop its economy. Therefore,

⁵⁰⁵ Memo, Indonesia's Views on Regional Security, March 26, 1969, box 2, Indonesia Correspondence, Memorandums, and Receipts, 1969, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA.

⁵⁰⁶ Memo, Vice President's Discussions with President Suharto, February 6, 1973, box 18, Diary - Jan-March 1973, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA.

⁵⁰⁷ Telegram, U.S. Embassy Jakarta to Secretary of State Washington D.C., July 11, 1973, doc. 1973JAKART08278, NARA AAD.

⁵⁰⁸ Regional Security Indonesian Viewpoints and Perspectives, n.d., box 1, Chiefs of Mission Conference 1970, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA (114); Indonesia and the Guam Doctrine, n.d., box 1, Chiefs of Mission Conference 1970, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA.

⁵⁰⁹ Record of Conversation, January 9, 1970, Indonesia - Foreign Policy - General, A1838, 3034/7/1 PART 12, NAA, 79-81.

⁵¹⁰ Michael Eilenberg, "Straddling the Border: A Marginal History of Guerrilla Warfare and 'Counter-Insurgency' in the Indonesian Borderlands, 1960s–1970s," *Modern Asian Studies* 45, no. 6 (2011): 1439–40, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X11000230>.

the Indonesians called on the Americans not to leave Indochina “too soon,” fearing the fall of South Vietnam would threaten Thailand.⁵¹¹ Indonesia justified the need for a U.S. presence in Thailand on the basis that although the Southeast Asians were taking measures to collaborate, they still needed time to strengthen their countries.

Indonesia’s covert support of retaining the American military presence in Thailand demonstrated how the perceptions and fears of immediate regional instability outweighed the ASEAN principles and ideals of non-interference and regional autonomy. In principle, the Bangkok Declaration of 1967 was ASEAN’s response to its historical experience with colonialism, occupation, and external interference and intervention. As one Indonesian diplomat in 2018 put it, the “support for national sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs has been one of the strongest unifying principles among the disparate countries that came together in 1967 to form ASEAN.”⁵¹² In other words, theoretically, with the establishment of ASEAN, the aim was to have the member states commit to the notion of non-intervention in another member’s internal and political affairs.⁵¹³ Originally, Indonesia’s “cherished ideal” with ASEAN was to have the members accept the principle that regional security was the responsibility of the Southeast Asians.⁵¹⁴ With ASEAN’s founding, Indonesia’s purpose was to gain a “greater degree of regional autonomy by reducing the roles of external powers in regulating the regional order.”⁵¹⁵ However, Indonesia, like Malaysia and Singapore, suspended the ASEAN principles of non-interference and regional autonomy when it came to the U.S. bases in Thailand. First, it attempted to interfere indirectly in Bangkok’s internal affairs by trying to influence the United States to retain the bases. Second, Indonesia disposed of the principle of reducing the role of external powers, thereby ignoring regional autonomy by calling for a more extended U.S. presence. In the Vietnam era, Indonesia’s focus was not on reducing the role of extra-regional powers in Southeast Asia and having ASEAN take on the responsibility of the region’s security. Instead, it saw the United States as the main guarantor of regional stability.

⁵¹¹ Memo, L.M. Purnell to the Ambassador, October 29, 1969, box 3, Meeting with Suharto, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA.

⁵¹² Natalegawa, *Does ASEAN Matter? A View From Within*, 177-78.

⁵¹³ Anwar, *Indonesia in ASEAN*, 210.

⁵¹⁴ Anwar, *Indonesia in ASEAN*, 134.

⁵¹⁵ Anwar, *Indonesia in ASEAN*, 174.

Indonesia also perceived the Manila Treaty as it related to Thailand as a necessary temporary measure for maintaining stability in Southeast Asia due to its deterrent value. Signed in September 1954 by the United States, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, France, and the United Kingdom, the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty (SEACDT), or Manila Treaty, aimed to counter communist influence. The Manila Treaty was a consultative arrangement that did not mandate military intervention in the case of an attack. The treaty led to creation of SEATO.⁵¹⁶ Indonesia regarded the treaty as a crucial tool for the countries region to buy time and strengthen their national resilience.⁵¹⁷ Indonesia hoped SEATO's members would avoid abrogating the Manila Treaty, fearing this would weaken Thailand's efforts against communist subversion and hinder the U.S. military presence in Thailand.⁵¹⁸ Indonesia saw the preservation of U.S.-Thai security relations as vital due to instability in Indochina. In 1973, an Indonesian official insisted to the Australians that Indochina was vulnerable to military threats from North Vietnam and Chinese-influenced subversion. The official claimed that ASEAN was "anxious to ensure that the United States maintained an interim military presence in mainland Southeast Asia."⁵¹⁹ Indonesia, a country that traditionally disavowed military pacts for itself, called for the continuation of the Manila Treaty as it regarded the treaty beneficial to its national interests.

1955, SEATO established the Committee of Security Experts (CSE) to counter the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. Based in Bangkok, the CSE held biannual meetings with representatives from the intelligence agencies in the United States, Thailand, the Philippines, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and Pakistan. These agencies produced intelligence assessments on communist subversion and insurgencies and disseminated political warfare papers for governments and the media.⁵²⁰ Under President Suharto, Indonesia secretly participated in SEATO

⁵¹⁶ Damien Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon: SEATO and the Defence of Southeast Asia, 1955–1965* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012), 25-26.

⁵¹⁷ SEATO and Indonesia, February 1973, Indonesia - Relations with international organisations - SEATO, A1838, 3034/9/5, NAA, 49.

⁵¹⁸ Future of SEATO - IND/PHIL Section, February 1973, Indonesia - Relations with international organisations - SEATO, A1838, 3034/9/5, NAA, 50.

⁵¹⁹ Record of Meeting Between Mr. Malcolm Fraser MP and Lim Bian Kie, June 19, 1973, Indonesia - Relations with international organisations - SEATO, A1838, 3034/9/5, NAA, 32.

⁵²⁰ David McKnight, "Western Intelligence and SEATO's War on Subversion, 1956–63," *Intelligence and National Security* 20, no. 2 (2005): 292, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02684520500134024>.

counterinsurgency seminars. In March 1971, Indonesia discreetly sent two generals and a colonel to a SEATO-sponsored counterinsurgency seminar in Vung Tau, South Vietnam. Australian officials reported that the Indonesian representatives attended all sessions and held private discussions with Thai officials. The Australians reported that Foreign Minister Adam Malik had instructed the attendees to maintain a low profile due to concerns about domestic reactions and the seminar's location in South Vietnam.⁵²¹ In March 1972, Indonesia hosted a SEATO seminar in Bandung. President Suharto had instructed his generals to inform the SCE that he wanted the appearance of having Thailand sponsor the seminar to avoid public scrutiny. The Royal Thai government agreed to this arrangement after being approached by SEATO officials.⁵²² Indonesia also invited representatives from Cambodia, Malaysia, and Singapore.⁵²³ Indonesia's Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS) and the Ministry of Defense and Security (HANKAM) attended the seminar, which focused on strategies for countering insurgency in rural areas and maintaining rural stability and development. As part of the seminar, the participants visited Central and West Java to observe the Indonesian government's development initiatives in former strongholds of the PKI.⁵²⁴ Despite Indonesia's adherence to an official policy of non-alignment, it willingly engaged in clandestine educational and informational exchanges under the auspices of SEATO.

Indonesia's brief and informal engagement with SEATO illustrated a flexible foreign policy when it came to Western-led security organizations. This approach marked a

⁵²¹ Report of the Second Seminar on Village Defence and Development, July 5, 1971, Indonesia - Relations with international organisations - SEATO, A1838, 3034/9/5, NAA, 94; Memo, Report of the Second Seminar on Village Defence and Development, June 11, 1971, Indonesia - Relations with international organisations - SEATO, A1838, 3034/9/5, NAA, 96.

⁵²² SEATO Seminar on Village Defence & Development (SVDD), November 15, 1971, Indonesia - Relations with international organisations - SEATO, A1838, 3034/9/5, NAA, 69; Cablegram, Australian Embassy Bangkok to DFA, December 10, 1971, Indonesia - Relations with international organisations - SEATO, A1838, 3034/9/5, NAA, 67.

⁵²³ Cablegram, DFA to Australian Embassy, February 4, 1972, Indonesia - Relations with international organisations - SEATO, A1838, 3034/9/5, NAA, 63; SEATO Seminar on Village Defence & Development (SVDD), December 12, 1971, Indonesia - Relations with international organisations - SEATO, A1838, 3034/9/5, NAA, 65-66; Lembang Seminar on Counter-Insurgency, April 4, 1972, Indonesia - Relations with international organisations - SEATO, A1838, 3034/9/5, NAA, 58-60.

⁵²⁴ Cablegram, Australian Embassy Bangkok to DEA, July 27, 1970, Indonesia - Relations with international organisations - SEATO, A1838, 3034/9/5, NAA, 99; SEATO Seminar on Village Defence & Development (SVDD), December 12, 1971, Indonesia - Relations with international organisations - SEATO, A1838, 3034/9/5, NAA, 65-66; Lembang Seminar on Counter-Insurgency, April 4, 1972, Indonesia - Relations with international organisations - SEATO, A1838, 3034/9/5, NAA, 58-60.

notable departure from the traditional policy of non-alignment that had existed since the Sukarno presidency. Under President Sukarno, Indonesia rejected SEATO, calling it an organization made up of “white colonial powers,” and accused the United States of attempting to pressure Indonesia to abandon its neutral foreign policy.⁵²⁵ President Suharto continued the foreign policy of non-alignment publicly, refusing to join military pacts. However, unlike his predecessor, Suharto did not perceive bilateral and regional arrangements with Western actors, such as the Manila Pact, SEATO, and FPDA, as threats to Indonesia’s security. Instead, the Suharto administration selectively engaged and supported aspects of these arrangements, which it considered would enhance Indonesia’s security interests. A case in point was Indonesia continuing not to embrace SEATO as an organization but utilizing the CSE for counterinsurgency purposes as it recognized the importance of intelligence sharing for Indonesia’s national resilience policy. Indonesia publicly claimed non-alignment while simultaneously favoring the United States and its allies through its secret acceptance of Western-initiated security arrangements.

3.4 Indonesia’s Economic Development

During the Vietnam era, Indonesia improved its economic conditions due to it being a priority for U.S. foreign policy, where the United States did not want to see both Indochina and Indonesia fall to communism simultaneously. U.S. policymakers played a major role in Indonesia becoming the center of a large international network of donors consisting of nation-states and multilateral institutions willing to provide economic assistance. Robert McNamara, World Bank President, believed that instability stemmed from poverty and argued that developed nations had a duty to provide economic aid and prevent the spread of subversive movements. Indonesian technocrats, known as the Berkeley Mafia, actively and willingly participated in restructuring Indonesia’s economy according to IMF and World Bank requirements. The Berkeley Mafia were the primary actors that shaped Indonesia’s economic policies in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Berkeley Mafia comprised Widjojo Nitisastro, Mohammed Sadli, Subroto, Ali Wardhana, and Emil Salim. These

⁵²⁵ Kai Dreisbach, “Between SEATO and ASEAN: The United States and the Regional Organization of Southeast Asia,” in *The Transformation of Southeast Asia: International Perspectives on Decolonization*, ed. Marc Frey, Ronald W. Pruessen, and Tan Tai Yong (New York: Routledge, 2003), 247; Ang Cheng Guan, *The Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation* (London: Routledge, 2022), 51.

individuals and over three hundred others had received funding from the Ford Foundation to study at American universities such as the University of California, Berkeley and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).⁵²⁶ The Berkeley Mafia viewed these institutions as sources of legitimacy and credibility, enabling Indonesia to receive more aid from international donors. Consequently, Indonesia received economic assistance from many donors, including Japan, Australia, and the United Kingdom, due to its economic policies and the World Bank's lobbying. Attracting foreign capital was also a priority for the Indonesian government and the United States, as the Americans considered Indonesia a prize with its natural resources. However, a corruption scandal involving the Indonesian oil company Pertamina challenged Indonesia's credibility and legitimacy as a responsible recipient of economic assistance. Suharto faced international pressure to take measures against Pertamina, which he eventually did in the mid-1970s. Despite the corruption, Indonesia continued to receive economic aid as it was too politically valuable for the United States to cut off Indonesia while losing in Vietnam. Essentially, Indonesia substantially improved its economic conditions and bought time during the Vietnam era due to the United States considering it an interrelated part of the struggle against communism in the region.

During the Vietnam War, Indonesia was a significant recipient of economic assistance from the United States. The United States provided Indonesia with more than \$1 billion in financial aid during this era. The funding primarily supported the Indonesian government's First Five Year Development Plan (1969-74), which tackled inflation, reconstructed infrastructure, boosted rice production, and encouraged exports. Foreign aid made up around 30 percent of Indonesia's government budget.⁵²⁷ Indonesia also received economic assistance from multilateral institutions. For instance, the Intergovernmental Group on Indonesia (IGGI) provided Suharto's New Order Government annually with more than \$450 million in economic aid. Other institutions, such as the United Nations agencies, the World Bank, and private foundations, also provided Indonesia with tens of millions in

⁵²⁶ Peter F. Geithner, "The Ford Foundation in Southeast Asia: Continuity and Change," in *Legacy of Engagement in Southeast Asia*, ed. Ann Marie Murphy and Bridget Welsh (Singapore: ISEAS Publications, 2008), 187-88.

⁵²⁷ Fibiger, "Buying Time? The Vietnam War and Southeast Asia," 239-40.

foreign aid.⁵²⁸ The IGGI consisted of Indonesia, the United States, Australia, Belgium, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The U.S. struggle in Southeast Asia against communism prompted the United States to provide substantial economic aid to Indonesia, a country it considered strategically important in Southeast Asia during the Cold War.

As the United States poured massive amounts of economic aid towards Indonesia during the Vietnam War, the question is, why then did the United States do this? U.S. policymakers considered Indonesia a vital piece in the U.S. broader strategy of containing communism as it aimed to secure a U.S.-friendly Indonesia in the event Indochina fell. Robert McNamara, the Secretary of Defense under President John F. Kennedy (1961-68) and President of the World Bank (1968-81), described Indonesia in 1964 as the “greatest prize of all” due to its “resources, territory, and the world’s fifth largest population, whose strategic location straddles and dominates the gateway to the Indian Ocean.”⁵²⁹ Similarly, Richard Nixon stated in 1967 that Indonesia was “by far the greatest prize in the Southeast Asian area.”⁵³⁰ William Sullivan, U.S. Ambassador to Laos (1964-69), articulated the strategic significance of Indonesia and the U.S. fear of losing both the Indochina region and Indonesia. Sullivan explained that with communist control of both areas, there would be a “pincer that would cut off Japan’s supply routes, isolate Australia and New Zealand,” leading to a strategic defeat for the United States. Therefore, he asserted, “the real prize in this was always Indonesia.”⁵³¹ U.S. policymakers viewed Indochina and maritime Southeast Asia as two critical interrelated blocs where losing both to communism would severely impact the U.S. standing in the Pacific. For the United States, Indonesia was connected to the broader war in Indochina. Therefore, U.S. policymakers sought to prevent a complete communist takeover of Southeast Asia.

⁵²⁸ Brad Simpson, “Indonesia’s ‘Accelerated Modernization’ and the Global Discourse of Development, 1960-1975,” *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 3 (2009): 478, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2009.00781.x>

⁵²⁹ “Text of Secretary McNamara’s Address on United States Policy in South Vietnam,” *The New York Times*, March 27, 1964.

⁵³⁰ Richard M. Nixon, “Asia after Viet Nam,” *Foreign Affairs* 46, no. 1 (1967): 111–25, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20039285>.

⁵³¹ Kim Willenson, *The Bad War: An Oral History of the Vietnam War* (New York: New American Library, 1987), 45.

As President of the World Bank, Robert McNamara applied his Vietnam War experience to development assistance, believing that addressing poverty through economic aid was crucial for political stability in the developing world. For example, McNamara argued that the situation in Vietnam showed how “economic disparities” were the “underlying causes of Third World conflict.”⁵³² McNamara insisted that insurgencies stemmed from poor economic conditions in developing countries and asserted that development aid from wealthy nations could reduce poverty and effectively prevent developing countries from succumbing to political instability. For McNamara, the Vietnam War and his work at the World Bank were two interrelated quests for world stability.⁵³³ Such a perspective particularly influenced McNamara’s interest in aiding Indonesia. Starting in 1968, the World Bank made Indonesia a major recipient of its development planning and assistance. The World Bank advised the Suharto government on economic policies, thus expanding its connections to the Western world.⁵³⁴ That same year, North Vietnam and the Viet Cong launched the Tet Offensive against South Vietnam, undermining confidence and dispelling any hopes by the U.S. government for an imminent South Vietnamese victory. While facing these challenges in Vietnam, the United States worked to ensure the success of Suharto’s New Order government. For example, President Johnson requested \$156 million in aid for Indonesia, which the U.S. Congress approved, aiming to secure a Southeast Asia that embraced modernization and rejected communism.⁵³⁵ Informed by the view that poverty was a major source of instability in Vietnam, the policymakers in the World Bank and the U.S. government initiated a strategy of economic assistance to ensure that Indonesia did not follow the same path.

The Indonesian policymakers in the New Order government were not passive actors as they cooperated with the international community, including the IMF, to restructure the Indonesian economy. In 1966, Indonesia faced severe economic challenges as it was nearly bankrupt. It faced inflation (at 600 percent), a halt in

⁵³² Patrick Allan Sharma, *Robert McNamara’s Other War: The World Bank and International Development* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 57.

⁵³³ Martha Finnemore, “Redefining Development at the World Bank,” in *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Randall M. Packard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 210-11.

⁵³⁴ Sharma, *Robert McNamara’s Other War*, 39-40.

⁵³⁵ Simpson, *Economists with Guns*, 3-4.

industrial production, and did not have access to hard currency. Consequently, the international community, especially the United States and Japan, leveraged this situation to push for extensive economic reforms. Between 1966 and 1968, in exchange for renegotiated external debt, Indonesia implemented a new foreign investment law and a stringent structural adjustment program organized by the IMF and Western governments.⁵³⁶ The Berkeley Mafia worked in tandem with officials from the IMF to structure an economic program for Indonesia. The Indonesian officials viewed working with the IMF as crucial in helping Indonesia's development plans. They considered the IMF to help bring international credibility to Suharto's New Order government, which, in their minds, would have helped the continuation of U.S. economic assistance as the IMF was important for the U.S. Congress which had the ability to authorize or deny aid to Indonesia.⁵³⁷ Although Indonesia faced economic challenges in the mid-1960s, the economic policies implemented by the Indonesian government were not reluctantly imposed due to pressure from the United States and the international financial institutions. The American-educated officials in Indonesia saw the value in adhering to IMF policies and were willing participants in the restructuring of Indonesia's economy.

For the Berkeley Mafia, international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF played a crucial role in legitimizing the Indonesian government within the international community. They also promoted the acceptance that these organizations were necessary for addressing Indonesia's economic development issues. The World Bank oral histories conducted in 1991, for example, show how members of the Berkeley Mafia looked back positively on the impact of the World Bank on Indonesia. For instance, Ali Wardhana, the Minister of Finance (1968-83), reflecting on the years following the 1960s, stated that the World Bank not only understood Indonesia's economic requirements but also grasped the country's political environment. Wardhana claimed that the officials in the World Bank understood the potential political implications of an economic policy to be taken by the Indonesian government that could, for example, lead to demonstrations against

⁵³⁶ Simpson, "Indonesia's 'Accelerated Modernization' and the Global Discourse of Development, 1960-1975," 478.

⁵³⁷ Fibiger, *Suharto's Cold*, 78-79.

the government.⁵³⁸ Emil Salim, who was part of President Suharto's Economic Advisory Team (1966) and Deputy Chairman of Indonesia's National Development Planning Agency (BAPPENAS) (1968-71), stated that the World Bank provided Indonesia with credibility amongst the economic donors in the IGGI. Salim stated that the annual reports by the World Bank influenced and justified funding decisions in the IGGI meetings. Salim stated that the studies by the World Bank were "much more credible" than a study that the Indonesian government would have done by itself.⁵³⁹ In other words, in the late 1960s and 1970s, the Indonesian government actively participated in a broader international network with the U.S. government, international financial institutions, and the many donors in the IGGI. This network collectively validated Indonesia as a credible recipient of international assistance, thereby justifying the need for continued economic support.

The Indonesian technocrats were deeply embedded in the international development network as they had direct access to key IMF and World Bank figures. According to recollections by Mohammad Sadli, the Indonesian economists were personally close with Kemal Siber from Turkey, who worked as the Resident Representative of the IMF in Jakarta starting in 1966.⁵⁴⁰ Siber worked directly with Widjojo Nitisastro, the head of Indonesia's National Development Planning Agency (1967-83) and leader of the Berkeley Mafia, as well as Mohammad Sadli, the Chairman of the Technical Committee for Capital Investment (1967-73) and Minister of Manpower (1971-73) since his appointment in Jakarta in 1966. Siber's recollection was that the IMF operations in Indonesia were "different" in the sense that he was not an "IMF watchdog" but rather an advisor, collaborator, and part of Widjojo's team.⁵⁴¹ With Widjojo's team having direct access to the IMF and World Bank, their job was not

⁵³⁸ Ali Wardhana, Transcript of interview with Ali Wardhana, interview by John Lewis, Richard Web, and Devesh Kapur, November 25, 1991, World Bank History Project: Brookings Institution, <https://oralhistory.worldbank.org/en/archive/oralhistory/transcriptdetail/transcript-oral-history-interview-ali-wardhana-held-november-25-1991>.

⁵³⁹ Emil Salim, Transcript of interview with Emil Salim, interview by John Lewis, Richard Web, and Devesh Kapur, November 23, 1991, World Bank History Project: Brookings Institution, <https://oralhistory.worldbank.org/en/archive/oralhistory/transcriptdetail/transcript-oral-history-interview-emil-salim-held-november-23-1991>.

⁵⁴⁰ Thee Kian Wie, ed., "Mohammad Sadli," in *Recollections: The Indonesian Economy, 1950s–1990s* (Singapore: ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2003), 129.

⁵⁴¹ Kemal Siber, Transcript of oral history interview with Kemal Siber held on November 25, 1991, interview by John Lewis, Richard Web, and Devesh Kapur, November 25, 1991, World Bank History Project: Brookings Institution, <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/801571468049164100/transcript-of-oral-history-interview-with-kemal-siber-held-on-november-25-1991>.

only to present sound economic policies but also to lobby these institutions to politically endorse Indonesia's credibility to other donors. For instance, in 1971, Ali Wardhana told McNamara that the World Bank and the IMF had an "extremely important role in strengthening international confidence in Indonesia's performance and its ability to use aid effectively" and that he wanted these two institutions to take a "more active" role in presenting Indonesia's capabilities to other donor governments.⁵⁴² The Berkeley Mafia's engagement with the IMF and the World Bank demonstrates how recipients of economic development aid, i.e., the Indonesian government, attempted to influence the political functions of these institutions to support Indonesia's economic agendas.

The World Bank was aligned with the Indonesian technocrats as it was proactive in convincing other donor nations, such as neighboring Australia, to keep up or increase its economic assistance to Indonesia. McNamara, on multiple occasions, requested the Australians to expand their economic aid to Indonesia. For instance, in 1969, McNamara emphasized that the World Bank was working on expanding its activities in the Pacific area, specifically in Indonesia, Western New Guinea (Papau), and New Guinea, and that it could not continue "without increased assistance from Australia."⁵⁴³ In 1971, during talks with Australia's Treasurer, McNamara stressed that the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) was looking for more economic resources to assist Indonesia. Sir Billy Mackie Snedden, Australia's Treasurer, stated that although Indonesia had "great problems of administration and management," it was vital that its "economic development should go ahead."⁵⁴⁴ Australia had provided Indonesia with continuing economic assistance on a three-year basis. Initially, the Australians had dedicated \$58.8 million, and by 1972, Prime Minister William McMahon had informed President Suharto that his government

⁵⁴² Memorandum for the Record, Indonesia, October 8, 1971, Contacts with member countries: Indonesia - Correspondence 01, Folder ID: 1771083, Reference Code: WB IBRD/IDA 03 EXC-10-4549S, Records of President Robert S. McNamara, Records of the Office of the President, The World Bank Group Archives (hereafter WBGA).

⁵⁴³ Memorandum of Conversation, Sheraton-Park Hotel, September 30, 1969, Contacts with member countries: Australia - Correspondence 01, Folder ID: 1770947, Reference Code: WB IBRD/IDA 03 EXC-10-4549S, Contacts - Member Countries files, Records of President Robert S. McNamara, Records of the Office of the President, WBGA.

⁵⁴⁴ Memorandum for the Record, Australia, September 27, 1971, Contacts with member countries: Australia - Correspondence 01, Folder ID: 1770947, Reference Code: WB IBRD/IDA 03 EXC-10-4549S, Contacts - Member Countries files, Records of President Robert S. McNamara, Records of the Office of the President, WBGA.

would extend economic and technical assistance worth another \$82 million over the next three years.⁵⁴⁵ Australia's economic aid towards Indonesia was not contingent on World Bank pressure as it had its own reasons for providing economic assistance concerning security concerns, as outlined earlier in this chapter. Despite the Australian officials having reservations about Indonesia's economic management capabilities, Australia still increased its financial assistance. The presence of the World Bank and other donors likely provided additional incentive for continued assistance to Indonesia as Australia would be sharing the risks while also addressing regional security concerns.

The other country that was high on the World Bank and the United States' priority list for contributing economic aid to Indonesia was Japan. For example, in 1971, McNamara met with Takeo Fukuda, Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs (1971-72) and future Prime Minister (1976-78). When asked by Fukuda about the World Bank's views towards Indonesia, McNamara praised the Indonesian leadership. He stated that the people running the economy, referring to Widjojo's team, were all capable and that he was confident that they would be able to make effective use of the funds given to them. McNamara also stated that he was pleased Japan was able to provide economic assistance to Indonesia on par with the United States.⁵⁴⁶ The United States and Japan agreed to commit to one-third of the agreed-upon amount amongst the IGGI consortium while the remaining members contributed the remainder. The IGGI consortium agreed to a total of \$190 million in 1967, \$350 million in 1968, \$500 million in 1969, and \$600 million in 1970 in economic assistance to Indonesia.⁵⁴⁷ While the Indonesian technocrats wanted McNamara to spread the word about Indonesia's economic credibility, the United States also had its own long-lived agenda of having Japan play an expanded political and economic role in Southeast Asia. Throughout the Cold War, from President Harry S. Truman

⁵⁴⁵ Cablegram, Australian Embassy Djakarta to DFA, June 7, 1972, Indonesia - Visit to Indonesia by Australian Prime Minister – Mr. McMahon - 1972-1973, A1838, 3034/10/11/19 PART 1, NAA, 35; Economic Cooperation: Aid, Trade, and Investment, n.d., Indonesia - Visit to Indonesia by Australian Prime Minister – Mr. McMahon - 1972-1973, A1838, 3034/10/11/19 PART 1, NAA, 108.

⁵⁴⁶ Memo, Raymond J. Goodman to Files, November 22, 1971, Contacts with member countries: Japan - Correspondence 02, Folder ID: 1771104, Reference Code: WB IBRD/IDA 03 EXC-10-4549S, Contacts - Member Countries files, Records of President Robert S. McNamara, Records of the Office of the President, WBGA.

⁵⁴⁷ H.W. Arndt, "Australian Economic Aid to Indonesia," *Australian Outlook* 24, no. 2 (1970): 130, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357717008444372>.

to Nixon, the United States sought to integrate Japan and Southeast Asia. The common goal of each U.S. presidency from the 1940s to the 1970s was to have a Japan that shared the economic and political burden in Southeast Asia as a way to prevent the spread of communism and establish regional security.⁵⁴⁸ The relationship between Indonesia and the World Bank was not only economic but also political. McNamara lobbied on behalf of the Indonesian government to convince Japan that their economic contributions would continue to be a sound investment for the region.

In addition to the World Bank and the IMF, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) also played a role in development assistance and projects in Indonesia. The top contributors to the ADB's Special Fund were the United States and Japan. For example, in 1970, the United States pledged \$100 million, while Japan pledged \$70 million over a three-year period. Other donors included the United Kingdom with \$14.4 million and Australia with \$10 million. West Germany, the Netherlands, and Denmark also indicated they would provide to the ADB's Special Fund.⁵⁴⁹ One example where the ADB assisted Indonesia was the PUSRI Fertilizer Project. This was a joint effort that also involved Japan and the World Bank, which financed \$80 million for the project.⁵⁵⁰ Other instances of development projects funded by the ADB generally focused on agriculture, irrigation, forest products, ports, roads, and power. The Netherlands, for example, provided technical assistance in cooperation with ADB officials for port projects.⁵⁵¹ The Suharto government had become a major recipient of multilateral development assistance not long after it came into power and had plenty of institutions to turn to for its economic needs.

Another way the Indonesian government gained international support was through enacting economic policies that would potentially attract foreign capital. For instance, President Suharto had reversed a decree by former President Sukarno that had banned foreign investment and placed companies under the control of the Indonesian government in 1965. In December 1966, Indonesia passed the Foreign

⁵⁴⁸ Susanto, "U.S.-Japanese Relations, ASEAN, and Economic Power in Southeast Asia, 1969–1981," 220–21.

⁵⁴⁹ Meeting of the Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia, Rotterdam, April 20–22, 1970, box 5, AID IGG, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

⁵⁵⁰ Country Team Meeting Minutes, September 2, 1969, box 5, POL 2-1 Country Team Meetings, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

⁵⁵¹ Meeting of the Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia, Rotterdam, April 20–22, 1970, box 5, AID IGG, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

Investment Law and signed an investor guarantee agreement with the United States. Widjojo drafted the Foreign Investment Law according to the recommendations of U.S. officials.⁵⁵² In 1968, Widjojo released an article stating the basic framework for Indonesia's Five-Year Development Plan (1969-74). For Widjojo, foreign capital was essential for Indonesia's economic development as he emphasized its necessity for incorporation into the five-year development plan. Widjojo advocated for improving the investment and business climate through the enactment of fiscal and monetary policies and balance of payments to promote national development. The objective was to collaborate with multilateral economic institutions to enact such policies and attract foreign capital for Indonesia's development.⁵⁵³

Indonesia's foreign investment strategy aimed to leverage external capital through attractive incentives, with the eventual goal of fostering a self-sustaining national economy rooted in domestic enterprises and local businesses. For instance, Mohammad Sadli wrote in 1972 that the Foreign Investment Law was to attract foreign capital by providing tax incentives to foreign firms and guaranteeing that companies would not be nationalized without a law passing stating that it was necessary for Indonesia's national interest. In the event of nationalization, the Indonesian government would compensate the companies. Sadli also stated that the aim was to have foreign capital as a "supplementary" or "complementary" role towards Indonesia's economic development.⁵⁵⁴ The hope was that Indonesia would eventually build its national economy based on domestic firms and the "indigenous business class," with foreign capital serving as a temporary solution to address gaps and "deficiencies in the array of domestic factors of production."⁵⁵⁵ Although Sadli did not explicitly refer to buying time, relying on foreign capital as a temporary measure echoed the Indonesian government's broader rhetoric of employing extra-regional actors to assist in economic and military matters until Indonesia was self-sufficient.

⁵⁵² Simpson, *Economists with Guns*, 234-35, 243.

⁵⁵³ Widjojo Nitisastro, *The Indonesian Development Experience: A Collection of Writings and Speeches* (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2011), 112.

⁵⁵⁴ Mohammad Sadli, "Foreign Investment in Developing Countries: Indonesia," in *Direct Foreign Investment in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Peter Drysdale (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 215.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

As the Berkeley Mafia put forward economic policies to attract foreign capital, World Bank officials informed IGGI donors about Indonesia's investment climate, which expanded the pool from which the Indonesians could seek private capital. For instance, in the IGGI meetings in 1970, representatives of the IMF provided the members with a memorandum for the recent "developments and outlook" for Indonesia, while the World Bank officials circulated a report on the "current investment activity in Indonesia."⁵⁵⁶ In attendance at the IGGI meeting were the official donors (Australia, Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and observers from Austria, Canada, Denmark, New Zealand, Switzerland, the ADB, and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). During the meeting, the World Bank representatives emphasized progress in Indonesia's economic development program and investment activity in the public and private sectors. The reports by the IMF and the World Bank had geographically wide-reaching implications for Indonesia in terms of potential investors.⁵⁵⁷ As noted earlier, the World Bank and the IMF helped legitimize the Indonesian government internationally for economic aid. Indonesia's openness towards private capital also contributed to the international community's acceptance of the New Order government.

The IGGI meetings essentially served as a forum to justify the need for foreign investment in Indonesia. For instance, in an April 1970 IGGI meeting, a World Bank official noted that while capital inflow to Indonesia's private sector was still in its early stages, the 1969 Indonesian Foreign Investment Law had significantly facilitated this influx. The official also stated that intended investments for 177 projects starting in 1969 could potentially exceed \$1 billion, particularly in the mining, forestry, and industrial sectors. Although there were only commitments for 67 projects, the official emphasized that "investment in the private sector [was] essential for restoring the Indonesian economy and gathering momentum in the development process."⁵⁵⁸ An official from the Netherlands endorsed the World Bank report, highlighting significant progress in public and private sector investments in

⁵⁵⁶ International Monetary Fund, Report on Meeting of Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia and Indonesian Debt Meeting, May 4, 1970, External debt negotiations of Indonesia (Folder 1), FCO 24/764, UKNA.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia, April 20-21, 1970, box 5, AID IGG, Subject Files, 1965-1974, RG 59, USNA.

1969 despite existing challenges such as infrastructure damage and hyperinflation. He described 1969 as just the beginning of a potentially promising trajectory for Indonesia's economic development.⁵⁵⁹ During a December 1970 IGGI meeting, the chairman of the U.S. delegation endorsed reports from the World Bank and the IMF, as well as Indonesia's government outlook on economic development. The American chairman welcomed Widjojo's support for private investment and recommended supplementing economic aid flows and programs for the public sector with private capital.⁵⁶⁰ The U.S. delegation's recommendation to use private investment alongside public sector economic development mirrored the policies of the Berkeley Mafia. American and Indonesian officials aimed to promote this policy to a broader audience to encourage other donors to contribute to the same goal.

The Indonesian government did not solely rely on the IGGI forums as it actively toured Western Europe and Japan to entice them into investing in Indonesia. For instance, in 1971, Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX, the Chief Minister for Economic and Financial Affairs (1966-73) and future Vice President of Indonesia (1973-78) visited the United Kingdom, Belgium, Netherlands, and France to draw up interest in foreign investment opportunities in Indonesia.⁵⁶¹ In 1972, during a visit to Italy, Suharto had reportedly assured Italian officials that Indonesia considered foreign capital "sacred," emphasizing the security of investments in the country.⁵⁶² During President Suharto's visit to Belgium that same year, the Belgians agreed to arrange a visit for bankers and industrialists the following year, along with increasing their economic assistance to the IGGI and expanding their bilateral development program with Indonesia.⁵⁶³ Another example of President Suharto seeking private capital and economic assistance was Japan. A project that Indonesia wanted Japan to invest in

⁵⁵⁹ Address of H.E. Mr. B.J. Udink, Minister in charge of Development Aid of the Netherlands at the opening of the Eighth conference of the Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia, Rotterdam, April 20-21, 1970, AID IGG, Subject Files, 1965-1974, RG 59, USNA.

⁵⁶⁰ IGGI Meeting, December 15-17, 1970, box 8, AID 3-1 IGGI, Subject Files, 1965-1974, RG 59, USNA.

⁵⁶¹ Indonesia: Call of Sultan of Jogjakarta on Secretary of State, May 3, 1971, Visit of Sultan of Jogjakarta, Hamengkubuwono IX, from Indonesia to UK, 3-6 May 1971 (Folder 2), FCO 24/1128, UKNA; Record of Conversation between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and his Highness the Sultan of Jogjakarta held at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on Thursday, May 6, 1971, Visit of Sultan of Jogjakarta, Hamengkubuwono IX, from Indonesia to UK, 3-6 May 1971 (Folder 2), FCO 24/1128, UKNA.

⁵⁶² State Visit to Italy of President Suharto of Indonesia, November 28, 1972, Tours abroad of President Suharto of Indonesia, FCO 24/1400, UKNA.

⁵⁶³ Visit of the Indonesian President to Belgium, 21-23 November, November 28, 1972, Tours abroad of President Suharto of Indonesia, FCO 24/1400, UKNA.

was Asahan, an aluminum smelter and hydroelectricity project planned for the island of Sumatra.⁵⁶⁴ In 1975, Japan eventually agreed to finance the Asahan project in Indonesia.⁵⁶⁵ Indonesia was proactive in its attempts to build a vast network of donors that could provide private capital and economic assistance.

As part of the network of international donors, the United Kingdom had an interest in seeing a politically and economically stable Indonesia. For instance, the British Foreign Office's Permanent Under-Secretary's Planning Committee in 1971 argued that the spread of communism in Southeast Asia where Suharto was replaced by a "more leftist or a more narrowly nationalist character," would deter private investment.⁵⁶⁶ Therefore, the objective for the United Kingdom, when it came to Indonesia, was to support the existing government in its ability to rebuild the "economy and to assist in the creation of an economic climate in which UK commercial interests have an opportunity to participate in the development of Indonesia's potentially rich resources."⁵⁶⁷ The United Kingdom also had a regional concern in relation to its political and economic interests in Malaysia and Singapore. For instance, the Permanent Under-Secretary's Planning Committee argued that in the scenario where Indonesia fell to communism, there would be a security threat for the ANZUK nations and the FPDA. As for British economic interests in the region, the committee claimed that a communist Indonesia would present a threat to the United Kingdom's private investments in Malaysia and Singapore.⁵⁶⁸ British policymakers wanted to see an Indonesia that was friendly to the West that would not threaten their economic interests in Southeast Asia.

Similar to the British, the United States was also keen on safeguarding and expanding private investment in Indonesia. For instance, U.S. Ambassador Francis

⁵⁶⁴ President Suharto's Visit to Japan, May 8, 1972, Tours abroad of President Suharto of Indonesia, FCO 24/1400, UKNA.

⁵⁶⁵ Wayne Robinson, "Imperialism, Dependency and Peripheral Industrialization: the case of Japan in Indonesia," in *Southeast Asia (Routledge Revivals): Essays in the Political Economy of Structural Change*, eds. Richard Higgott and Richard Robison (Oxford, 1985), 214.

⁵⁶⁶ Permanent Under-Secretary's Planning Committee, Future Policy Towards Indonesia, November 4, 1971, Political relations between Indonesia and United Kingdom, FCO 24/1115, UKNA. (22-23)

⁵⁶⁷ Defence Relations - Indonesia, February 10, 1972, Military aid to Indonesia from UK Incorporating defence relations with Indonesia, FCO 24/1414, UKNA.

⁵⁶⁸ Permanent Under-Secretary's Planning Committee, Future Policy Towards Indonesia, November 4, 1971, Political relations between Indonesia and United Kingdom, FCO 24/1115, UKNA; Defence Relations - Indonesia, February 10, 1972, Military aid to Indonesia from UK Incorporating defence relations with Indonesia, FCO 24/1414, UKNA.

Galbraith contended that it was crucial for Indonesia to “develop along sound lines economically,” emphasizing that the United States’ future would be “enhanced by access to Indonesia’s substantial resources,” referring to Indonesia’s liquefied natural gas as an example, which was of particular interest to the American West Coast.⁵⁶⁹ The United States was also interested in the copper deposits in Western Papua, where the American company Freeport Sulphur (later known as Freeport Minerals Company) had spent millions of dollars on surveys. In 1970, Galbraith announced that the project would cost around \$120 million.⁵⁷⁰ By the mid-1970s, Freeport had invested more than \$300 million in the project in Western Papua, with the Indonesian government receiving 8.9 percent equity in the endeavor. Freeport became Indonesia’s “largest taxpayer,” with an average of \$28.2 million per year paid to the Suharto government. The relationship between Freeport and the Suharto government continued until Suharto’s fall in 1998.⁵⁷¹ Another interest of the United States was oil. In 1970, Galbraith stated that more than 30 American, British, Japanese, French, and Dutch companies were operating in oil exploration projects in Indonesia.⁵⁷² By 1972, Ambassador Galbraith emphasized that the outlook for the foreign investor was promising due to his optimistic view of Indonesia’s political stability.⁵⁷³ The United States and the Indonesian government had a cordial and cooperative relationship when it came to private capital.

A defining characteristic of U.S. foreign policy towards Indonesia was to ensure that Indonesia’s economic development helped bring in American investors. For instance, Ambassador Galbraith outlined that the United States had operated on the assumption that the Indonesians would use the assistance they were receiving to attract private investment.⁵⁷⁴ In 1973, Ambassador Galbraith wrote to U.S. Senator

⁵⁶⁹ Francis J. Galbraith to Daniel K. Inouye, January 12, 1973, box 6, CHRON - January-May 1973, Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

⁵⁷⁰ Presentation to British Military Attaches Conference Singapore (CINCFE) by Ambassador Galbraith, February 24, 1970, box 14, Diary - Classified - Jan-Feb 1970, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA.

⁵⁷¹ Denise Leith, “Freeport and the Suharto Regime, 1965–1998,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 14, no. 1 (2002): 69–100, <https://doi.org/10.1353/cp.2002.0023>.

⁵⁷² Presentation to British Military Attaches Conference Singapore (CINCFE) by Ambassador Galbraith, February 24, 1970, box 14, Diary - Classified - Jan-Feb 1970, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA.

⁵⁷³ Francis J. Galbraith to Theodore J.C. Heavner, November 9, 1972, box 5, CHRON - 1972, Classified Files of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith, 1966–1974, RG 84, USNA.

⁵⁷⁴ [Diary Entry: November 27, 1970], November 27, 1970, box 15, Diary - Classified - Sept-Dec 1970 Subject Files, 1965–1974, RG 59, USNA.

Daniel K. Inouye, stating that it was essential to encourage the current Indonesian leadership through continued support from the IGGI and various multilateral agencies. Galbraith emphasized that this support should continue to improve Indonesia's economic development efforts and help investment prospects. Additionally, Galbraith stressed the importance of other donors maintaining and increasing their contributions to Indonesia.⁵⁷⁵ In other words, for U.S. policymakers, if Indonesia could sustain an environment that attracted ongoing economic assistance from international donors, the prospects for American investors in the country would improve.

The credibility of the Indonesian state as an economic planner and manager stemmed partly from the policies introduced by the Berkeley Mafia, but it was also shaped and pressured by the United States and international donors to uphold this credibility, especially when confronted with the oil giant Pertamina's corruption scandal. The Pertamina scandal put Indonesia's international credibility in danger. In 1969, an Indonesian newspaper released an article about General Ibnu Sutowo, the head of Pertamina, and his corruption and mismanagement of finances. In a 1969 IGGI meeting, the World Bank removed information about Pertamina's corruption. By 1970, President Suharto faced pressure from the IGGI members as Foreign Minister Malik had received word that the donors would not provide aid to Indonesia due to Pertamina's corruption. As a result of pressure from the IMF and the IGGI donors, Suharto took measures between 1970 and 1972 to rein in Pertamina and place constraints on its borrowings, obligating it to announce its debts to the finance ministry. However, the oil boom in 1973 and Pertamina being a major source of revenue for Indonesia's military helped keep Sutowo in power. It was not until 1975 that Widjojo released the government's first public statement about Pertamina's debt being \$1.6 billion, which turned out to be \$10.5 billion later in the year. In 1976, Suharto fired Sutowo.⁵⁷⁶ Despite Pertamina's corruption scandal, the members of the IGGI agreed to continue providing hundreds of millions of dollars of economic assistance to Indonesia throughout the 1970s. For instance, in 1972, the amount was \$670 million, while in 1973, it was \$760 million.⁵⁷⁷ Especially for the United States,

⁵⁷⁵ Francis J. Galbraith to Daniel K. Inouye, January 12, 1973, box 6, CHRON - January-May 1973, Subject Files, 1965-1974, RG 59, USNA.

⁵⁷⁶ Fibiger, *Suharto's Cold War*, 169-74, 192-93, 233-34.

⁵⁷⁷ Fibiger, *Suharto's Cold War*, 204, 210.

maintaining Suharto's hold on power through the continuation of aid was far more critical than actual corruption and economic mismanagement.

The question is, then, whether Indonesia bought time to develop during the Vietnam era. In short, the answer is yes. In 1968, Foreign Minister Adam Malik stated to a World Bank official that he was uncertain of how long Vietnam could remain independent of total communist control and argued that the countries in the region should "use the time at [their] disposal to build up the economies of Southeast Asia so as to prevent more communist takeovers."⁵⁷⁸ By 1973, Indonesia significantly improved its economic conditions with international support as the New Order government could implement economic policies aimed at growth. Between 1968 and 1973, there was a significant increase in non-oil export earnings in major primary commodities such as coffee, copra, palm oil, nickel, rubber, tin, and timber. Foreign assistance also played a crucial role in improving Indonesia's infrastructure during the First Five-Year Development Plan (1969-74), as the funds went towards projects in transportation, electrification, and telecommunication. There were also improvements in the agricultural sector as the majority of Indonesia's irrigation infrastructure, built during Dutch colonial rule, had seen little maintenance since the Second World War. During this period, there was also an increase in rice production as the annual rice output rose from 11.6 million tons to 14.5 million tons from 1968 to 1973. Finally, foreign capital also revitalized Indonesia's economy as its gross domestic product grew at an average rate of 7.9 percent annually while decreasing inflation to the single digits from 600 percent.⁵⁷⁹ Despite the massive corruption brought about by Pertamina, the combining factors of the World Bank viewing Indonesia tangentially to the struggle in Vietnam against communism, the existence of a global network of economic donors where the Berkeley Mafia was deeply embedded, as well as the urgency of countries such as the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom desiring to have a stable and Western-friendly Indonesian government all contributed to significant advances in Indonesia's economic development during the Vietnam war.

⁵⁷⁸ Memo, William Clark to Robert McNamara, June 20, 1968, Contacts with member countries: Indonesia - Correspondence 01, Folder ID: 1771083, Reference Code: WB IBRD/IDA 03 EXC-10-4549S, Contacts - Member Countries files, Records of President Robert S. McNamara, Records of the Office of the President, WBGA.

⁵⁷⁹ Fibiger, *Suharto's Cold War*, 188-89.

3.5 Conclusion

The Vietnam era was a transformative period for Indonesia. The combined factors of Indonesia being open to the Western world, the necessity for foreign capital, and the urgency of the United States wanting to maintain a strategic noncommunist regime in Southeast Asia amidst its flailing endeavors in Vietnam helped integrate Indonesia into an international community willing to subsidize its economic development. In 1965-66, Indonesia was facing dire economic conditions and was practically isolated internationally due to Sukarno's Confrontation against Malaysia and its withdrawal from international institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank in 1965.⁵⁸⁰ Being a part of this U.S.-led community was beneficial to the Suharto regime as Indonesia started to experience economic growth and political legitimacy in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Without the United States maintaining its engagement with the region and lobbying for all the economic aid and private capital that made its way to Indonesia, it would have been unlikely that Indonesia would have made the improvements to its economy over the following decade. This is, of course, barring the massive corruption of Ibnu Sutowo's Pertamina, which, if properly prevented or punished through domestic policies and international pressure, may have set a precedent for the Indonesian leadership to pursue responsible economic policies that would have even further advanced the development of the country during this era instead of lining up the pockets of the military establishment. Nevertheless, an effect of the Vietnam War on Indonesia was its contribution to its economy. The U.S. military presence in Indochina signaled to Indonesia, that the United States had the political and economic willingness and capability to engage with Indonesia and respond to and meet its economic demands.

Indonesia's adoption of the buying time rhetoric during the Vietnam era also reveals how it viewed regional cooperation and entanglements. In its pursuit of achieving economic stability, Indonesia recruited the assistance of extra-regional powers and entities, in particular the United States and Australia, and other developed countries through the IGGI and multilateral organizations such as the World Bank, ADB, and the IMF. A defining characteristic of Indonesia's foreign policy was that it was involved in different economic and security networks, formally and informally,

⁵⁸⁰ Mattias Fibiger, *Suharto's Cold War*, 43.

which ultimately puts into question how much it prioritized genuine regional cooperation and autonomy, i.e., cooperation within the ASEAN framework without external influence, intervention, and assistance to achieve national resilience.

Indonesia's economic policies toward the actors mentioned above, as well as its security policies toward China and Indochina, show that its primary concern was to create linkages with countries such as the United States in the name of achieving national development and regional stability.



CONCLUSION

During the Vietnam War, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia adopted the “buying time” rhetoric and practice, which involved constructing a regional space that welcomed U.S. hegemony in Southeast Asia. This strategy aimed to establish regional stability and integrate Southeast Asia into the U.S.-led global order by reserving space for a continued and significant U.S. presence in the region. They advocated for the sustained economic, military, and political involvement of the United States and ANZUK to secure and reinforce regional stability. These three ASEAN member states regarded the power and influence of extra-regional powers, in particular the United States, as vital for their ambitions of improving their nation’s defensive and economic capabilities. The buying time concept adopted by the three ASEAN countries had implications for defining their foreign policy characteristics and goals. ASEAN historians and political scientists typically classify Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia as non-aligned and neutral nations whose priority was to achieve regional autonomy. The three ASEAN states adopting the buying time rhetoric led them undermine ASEAN’s core principles and norms, namely regional autonomy, neutrality, and non-alignment. The foreign policy priority for each of these countries was to ensure that the extra-regional powers maintain their influence over Indochina and maritime Southeast Asia. Singapore and Indonesia managed to reap economic benefits as it adopted the buying time concept and supported the engagement of the United States in Southeast Asia. Malaysia was not met with the same response and attention by the United States as Singapore and Indonesia. Therefore, the Vietnam War did not have much of effect on Malaysia’s economic development during the 1970s. However, Malaysia nevertheless adhered to the buying time thesis by advocating for U.S. hegemony in Southeast Asia. On the other

hand, as the United States considered Singapore and Indonesia to be strategically vital countries in Southeast Asia, the Americans incorporated them into a global economic network that contributed to the growth of their economies. The U.S. war effort in Vietnam had paid dividends to Singapore and Indonesia.

Meanwhile, a closer look at Malaysia's foreign policy during the Razak administration reveals that it did not abandon its pro-American stance in the early 1970s, contrary to the common belief among historians of Malaysia. Instead of interpreting the concept of neutralization—i.e., the pursuit of regional autonomy through the acceptance of great power guarantees in recognition of Southeast Asia's neutrality—as actual applied policy, scholars should regard it as a statement of unfulfilled intent. Although Malaysia's leadership publicly and privately claimed that the FPDA and the concept of neutralization were not contradictory, these two notions were, in fact, incompatible. The acceptance of the FPDA led to extra-regional intervention, as the ANZUK nations dictated how Malaysia should structure its defensive capabilities. Although the ANZUK nations were not great powers, the FPDA enabled indirect U.S. influence. The Americans encouraged ANZUK intervention and blocked Malaysian and Singaporean weapons purchases based on their vision of Southeast Asian security. In other words, the United States assumed the role of regional overseer, convinced that without its oversight and occasional intervention, the countries would engage in an arms race. The Razak leadership, however, was not an unwitting participant in the regional structure involving ANZUK and the United States. Malaysia deliberately created a foreign policy that demanded linkages between Southeast Asia, ANZUK, and the United States. Such connections were higher in priority than pursuing genuine regional cooperation with its neighbor Singapore, as both parties were reluctant to work together on defensive matters even though each had signed on to the FPDA. By accepting the FPDA, Malaysia accepted extra-regional influence.

Malaysia's foreign policy towards China, Vietnam, and Thailand indicates a lack of commitment towards regional autonomy and neutrality. Malaysia's pessimistic outlook towards China granting guarantees for the neutrality of Southeast Asia partly stemmed from other ASEAN members rejecting neutralization. However, Malaysia was also suspicious of China's support of communist movements in Southeast Asia.

Additionally, Malaysia's unilateral approach towards establishing diplomatic relations with China resulted from domestic needs and concerns, particularly in winning over the votes of the Malaysian Chinese population rather than regional autonomy. The lack of regional cooperation and coordination among ASEAN members regarding China led to unilateral decision-making. The Malaysian leadership focused on supporting the U.S. war effort in Indochina by urging the Americans to remain in Vietnam and Thailand. Malaysia hosted British bases that trained foreign military and police personnel, indirectly connecting it to the Vietnam War. During regional cooperation, particularly between Malaysia and Thailand against insurgencies, Malaysia urged the United States to continue providing political and economic assistance to Bangkok. When examining Malaysia's neutralization foreign policy, it is essential to weigh it against Malaysia's advocacy for U.S. power and influence in Southeast Asia.

The driving force behind Malaysia's advocacy for the United States to remain in Southeast Asia was its desire to deepen the political and economic relationship between the two countries. The United States, however, did not regard Malaysia as a strategic country for its interests in Southeast Asia. While government-to-government relations were not as close in the early 1970s, Malaysia still managed to be part of an economic network with private foundations and multilateral institutions that provided capital for its development. Malaysia's economic progress during the 1970s resulted from its initiatives to attract foreign capital rather than the U.S. war effort in Vietnam. If Malaysia aimed to bolster the U.S.-Malaysian political and economic relationship, the simultaneous calls for neutralization and continued U.S. presence may have been an obstacle. It presented a contradictory foreign policy and obscured its strategic objectives. At the same time, however, U.S. political disinterest may have benefitted Malaysia. Unlike Singapore, Malaysia did not need to navigate between multiple extra-regional powers to sustain its economic interests, nor did it have to rely heavily on U.S. support and international aid like Indonesia. Malaysia could thus achieve a degree of economic autonomy without excessively being dependent on the U.S. government. Compared to Singapore and Indonesia, Malaysia did not benefit economically from the Vietnam War. However, the Malaysian case still supports the buying time thesis in how its leaders framed foreign policy during the conflict. Malaysia positioned itself as an advocate for U.S. power

and influence in Vietnam, Thailand, and Southeast Asia more broadly. The main difference was that Malaysia did not reap the same economic benefits from this approach, unlike Singapore and Indonesia.

Singapore was consistent in its private and public rhetoric as it advocated for maintaining the regional power of Southeast Asia through the continued presence of ANZUK and the United States. Prime Minister Lee saw value in the FPDA. Without ANZUK and U.S. influence in the region, Singapore's leaders feared that there would be a power vacuum leading to the Soviet Union and China competing over Southeast Asia. In an imagined scenario where the ANZUK nations and the United States completely withdrew from the region, Singapore would have likely accepted the Soviet naval presence as it viewed China as a greater threat due to its ties with the communist parties in Southeast Asia. The United States addressed Singapore's power vacuum concerns as it responded with an expansion of naval and air presence after Lee took the risk of declaring that the city-state was open to servicing Soviet naval vessels. Singapore's foreign policies show how this small city-state contributed to strengthening U.S. dominance in maritime Southeast Asia as it played a role in containing the Soviet naval expansion in the region.

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Southeast Asia as it played a role in containing the Soviet naval expansion in the region. As a regional entity, Singapore helped uphold the power structure in Southeast Asia, which involved the United States.

Singapore's foreign policy positions towards China, Vietnam, and Thailand show how the city-state viewed these countries as directly connected to its ability to develop its economy. Singapore's justification for not establishing diplomatic relations with China resulted from distrust and a desire to strengthen its economy to a point where it would not be susceptible to communist influence. Singapore advocated for the United States to remain militarily in Vietnam and Thailand, as it argued that with the absence of the United States, the countries in Southeast Asia would have to accommodate China prematurely before they had established a stronger economic base. Singapore's support for the United States in Vietnam was not solely rhetorical, as it hosted the visitations of U.S. soldiers stationed in Vietnam and provided repairs for equipment from the war. The most significant contribution was Singapore's distribution of petroleum products. As for Thailand, Singapore attempted to interfere in the domestic politics of Bangkok and convince it to keep welcoming U.S. military bases. Singapore aimed to bolster the United States in Indochina as it regarded the Americans as a necessary force that could hold the line while the city-state could focus on its economic development.

Singapore, ANZUK, and the United States shared the common objective of creating an environment conducive to attracting private capital. Singapore considered multinational corporations as essential to its economic development plans. All three parties argued that as long as the United States and ANZUK nations the stability and security of the region, there would be a continuing influx of private investment. During the Vietnam War, Singapore became a key hub for the distribution of petroleum products, with many major multinational petroleum companies operating in the city-state. The war essentially integrated Singapore into a global network of petroleum transshipment. As for the United States, it helped create a sense of confidence that Singapore was a stable country that multinationals could invest due to its naval presence in the city-state. A naval presence for the United States was ideal for its foreign policy as it did not necessitate a formal commitment to Singapore but still maintained American influence in the region. As demonstrated in

this dissertation, the Vietnam War served as a direct catalyst for Singapore's economic development.

Indonesia's pursuit of national resilience, which essentially meant political and economic stability, required assistance from extra-regional powers. Suharto's New Order Government supported the continuation of the FPDA because it needed to maintain cordial relations with Australia, which could provide military assistance to Indonesia. Indonesia saw Australia as a partner that could help in its counterinsurgency efforts with Malaysia through material support and aid in developing its defense capabilities. Had the Suharto government opposed the FPDA, Indonesia might have further isolated itself from the international community and its ASEAN partners, as it did during the Sukarno presidency. Furthermore, for Indonesia, the FPDA's existence was preferable to a potential power vacuum in Southeast Asia if the ANZUK nations completely withdrew from Malaysia and Singapore. Some Indonesian officials recognized that the ANZUK presence also signified an indirect U.S. interest in Southeast Asia, indicating Indonesia's acceptance of U.S. influence in the region.

Indonesia's foreign policy toward China, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand exhibited a clear pro-U.S. bias during the Suharto regime. The military leaders, who dictated Indonesian foreign policy, viewed China as a threat and argued that the American withdrawal from Indochina would embolden China to take on a more assertive role in Southeast Asia. Suharto's New Order Government adopted the same language as Prime Minister Lee, claiming that the U.S. war effort bought time for Indonesia to develop its economy. The Suharto regime also ardently supported Cambodia's Lon Nol, working to legitimize him as Cambodia's sole leader. Like Singapore and Malaysia, Indonesia viewed Thailand as the buffer state protecting the rest of non-communist Southeast Asia. During the Vietnam War, Indonesia was not the neutral and non-aligned partner it typically portrays itself to be.

Indonesia benefitted from the Vietnam War as it became integral to U.S. foreign policy in Southeast Asia. At the start of Suharto's presidency, Indonesia was in dire need of assistance as its economy was in shambles. With the ascendancy of Suharto, the United States had a chance to pull Indonesia into its sphere of influence. However, Indonesia was not an unwitting or unwilling participant in the U.S.-led

regional and international order. The Suharto-appointed Berkeley Mafia shaped Indonesia's economic development trajectory during the late 1960s and 1970s. In cooperation with U.S. officials, the Indonesians lobbied for economic assistance and private capital from multilateral institutions and other developed countries. The United States integrated Indonesia within this large economic network under the premise that if Indochina fell, at least the Americans would have had the Indonesians remain non-communist. Indonesia indirectly benefitted from the Vietnam War. Without the U.S. foreign policy position that Indonesia was interrelated to the struggle in Vietnam, Indonesia may not have received the same amount of economic assistance and connections to private capital as it did during the Vietnam era.

By exploring the foreign policies of Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, this dissertation has attempted to construct a history that distances itself from rigid descriptions of ASEAN—namely neutral, non-aligned, autonomous—as the Vietnam era has demonstrated that these three states were far from possessing these characteristics. Each ASEAN member state had an outward-looking foreign policy and did not necessarily rely exclusively upon regional cooperation autonomously or what, in today's language, would be described as South-South cooperation. The common theme amongst the leaders in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia was that they considered the ANZUK nations and the United States to have a crucial role in helping them buy time to develop their domestic capabilities by either maintaining a military role in Indochina or by encouraging the continued political and economic engagement with the non-communist countries of the region. Applying the terms non-aligned and neutral to the three ASEAN states requires evidence that they followed or attempted to pursue such policies of rejecting the reintroduction and growth of extra-regional influence. On the contrary, during the Vietnam War, there was a vigorous effort to uphold and sustain U.S. power in Southeast Asia.

By examining the ways in which Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia adopted the buying time rhetoric—urging the United States to maintain its power in Southeast Asia—this dissertation set out to answer whether the Vietnam War contributed to the development of these states. It also sought to identify the agency of the ASEAN states in upholding the networks or power structures in Southeast Asia. Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia advocated for a network that consisted of the ANZUK and

the U.S. governments taking on the responsibility of the economic and military burden of Southeast Asia. The three ASEAN member states were also active participants in the U.S.-led global networks consisting of multinational corporations, private foundations, and multilateral institutions. By adopting the buying time rhetoric, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia were essentially endorsing and legitimizing the notion that U.S. intervention, influence, capital, and integration into global economic networks were the paths to modernization and regional stability.

influence.

Discussions between ASEAN and the United States over the regional structure where Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia advocated for the purpose of creating the space for U.S. hegemony in Southeast Asia to provide the time needed for regional political and economic stability continued after the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam in 1975. The buying time thesis which called for U.S. power over Southeast Asia had laid the groundwork for continued negotiations over how the ASEAN states and the United States would continue to negotiate the American role over the region in the post-Vietnam era. As the United States withdrew from Vietnam, it shifted its focus from dictating the regional structure of Southeast Asia to creating the “space for regional states” to shape the regional order of Southeast Asia.⁵⁸¹ In other words, it supported the idea of creating the space for the regional countries to dictate the regional order by supporting ASEAN members indirectly to establish their own diplomatic and military efforts to contain communism in Southeast Asia. The efforts by the ASEAN states to recognize the Lon Nol regime in the early 1970s at international forums was one example of diplomatic regional efforts against communism. The bilateral counter-insurgency efforts between Malaysia and Thailand and Indonesia and Malaysia were other examples of regional military efforts against communism. In the post-Vietnam era, the United States announced to the ASEAN states of its intentions to continue to play a “supporting” and “deterrent” role in the region through increased economic and military assistance despite it no longer being directly involved in Indochina.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸¹ Robert Yates, *Understanding ASEAN's Role in Asia-Pacific Order* (New York: Springer, 2019), 96.

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, 114-15.

Over the long run, a regional structure in Southeast Asia where ASEAN members continued to authorize U.S. influence and power made strategic sense as long as the ASEAN states sought to have the United States play a role in limiting and deterring the full hegemony of other extra-regional powers, such as China, over Southeast Asia. By the time President Carter had come to power in 1977, the United States had started to reduce its economic and military aid to the ASEAN states.⁵⁸³ During this period, Thailand increasingly turned to China due to doubts about U.S. reliability in its security role in the region, particularly after the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1978, which came to be known as the Third Indochina War.⁵⁸⁴ By the early 1980s, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia lobbied the United States to provide economic and military assistance to non-communist forces in Cambodia and the ASEAN states, fearing that China might become the sole power influencing the region. The United States responded positively, agreeing to support these countries. These efforts to involve the United States in regional affairs trace back to the Second Indochina War.

While the United States was willing to continue its involvement in Southeast Asian affairs in the late 1970s and 1980s, it's crucial to recognize that constructing a space for U.S. hegemony would have been unsustainable in the long run without ASEAN evolving into a genuine regional community capable of addressing conflicts independently, especially when the United States was either unable or unwilling to provide political, military, and economic support. Throughout the Cold War, the ASEAN states were dependent on U.S. economic and military power. Although the United States remained involved in the region to varying degrees through its assistance, a significant flaw in the foreign policies of Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia was the absence of clear discussions or negotiations on how long, in terms of years, and to what extent the United States would continue to serve as ASEAN's primary benefactor during periods of Southeast Asian instability, such as the Second and Third Indochina Wars. From the late 1960s to the late 1980s, the Cold War fostered a convergence of interests between the three ASEAN members and the United States in containing communism, enabling Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia to repeatedly turn to the U.S. for diplomatic, economic, and military

⁵⁸³ Ibid., 135.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid., 153.

intervention during conflicts. However, the sustainability of this regional order depended heavily on the U.S. willingness and capability to maintain its role, something the buying time thesis failed to account for when the United States was either uninterested or incapable of intervening in Southeast Asian affairs. Faced with this reality, ASEAN members had the option of choosing between replacing the United States with China—a prospect unacceptable to Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia—or attempting to create a regional community that was not dependent on U.S. support to address regional conflicts, an effort they only seriously pursued after the Cold War. By the end of the Cold War, ASEAN's concerns about diminishing U.S. interest in Southeast Asia and China's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea led to the creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994.⁵⁸⁵ The ARF was established as a platform for ASEAN members to engage with Pacific countries on regional security issues. The buying time thesis aimed to maintain space for U.S. hegemony was effective as long as the United States was willing to actively engage with the region. When American urgency diminished following the end of the Cold War, ASEAN had to attempt to become self-sufficient in regional security affairs as it was unwilling to replace the United States with another extra-regional power.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., 3.

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