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**FIVE
POWER
DEFENCE
ARRANGEMENTS
AT FORTY**

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FIVE POWER DEFENCE ARRANGEMENTS AT FORTY

EDITED BY

**IAN STOREY
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**S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL
OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

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Foreword

This volume has its genesis in a conference co-organized by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in March 2011 entitled the “Five Power Defence Arrangements at Forty”. The conference celebrated the FPDA’s contribution to regional security over the last four decades and explored its response to changes in the strategic environment.

The FPDA was set up in 1971 at a time of considerable geopolitical uncertainty. It was not just Singapore-Malaysian relations that were touchy at the time, after the Separation of 1965. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was also new, having been established only a few years earlier, and its members were still in the early stages of building confidence to work together to face the common security challenge of the time, namely communism. The war in Vietnam was not going well for the non-communist side, and a US withdrawal seemed inevitable at some point. US President Richard Nixon had already announced the Guam Doctrine in 1969, according to which American involvement in wars on the Asian mainland would be limited to a supportive role while allies and friends would be expected to bear the main burden of defending themselves by providing ground troops.

In 1971, nobody could tell how long the FPDA would last. Sceptics dismissed it as an impotent successor to the Anglo-Malaysian Defence Agreement (AMDA), a mere figleaf to cover the British military withdrawal from the region. They were proved wrong, given the fact that it has lasted 40 years and its five members continue to attest to its ongoing relevance. It has proved to be a valuable confidence-maintaining mechanism and its built-in flexibility allows it to adapt to a changing security environment.

Since its inception in 1971, the FPDA has played a critical confidence-building role in Singapore-Malaysian relations. Before its formation, the Malaysian and Singaporean armed forces had long been comfortable with working with British, Australian and New Zealand forces. Despite some difficulties in bilateral ties, the close defence cooperation has been sustained

over the years through the FPDA and its military exercises. Rather than deliberately examining Malaysia and Singapore as two separate strategic entities, the FPDA has worked on the premise that pursuing the security of one nation separately of the other would be counter-productive. The late Professor Michael Leifer forcefully argued that the Arrangements were precisely “predicated on the indivisibility of the defence” of the two Southeast Asian nations.

Furthermore, the FPDA has provided Singapore and Malaysia with a useful avenue to maintain and deepen strong defence ties with Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. Singapore, in particular, has sought to cultivate relations with external powers with the aim of deepening their benign involvement in Southeast Asian security. The FPDA has played such a “cultivating” role.

The complexity and scope of the FPDA exercised have been significantly expanded over the years to address a series of new challenges, ranging from maritime security to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The combined exercises have enabled the five powers to enhance professionalism, personal relationships, capacity building and interoperability. The exercises are designed to enhance the capability of the five powers to plan and execute complex multi-national operations. Through its combined annual exercises the FPDA provides a form of military collaboration absent from other regional cooperative arrangements.

Today we are again facing geopolitical uncertainty arising from shifting power balances and various territorial disputes, especially in the maritime domain. There are also a host of non-traditional security threats to address. Compared to 1971, there are more cooperative security mechanisms available to tackle these issues, mostly centred around ASEAN and ASEAN-led institutions. Nevertheless, the FPDA at 40 remains a valuable component of the overall security architecture at a time of change and uncertainty. We trust that the FPDA will continue to play an important role in Southeast Asian security, as long as it preserves its inherent flexibility and consultative nature.

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Glossary

AAW	anti-air warfare
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADEX	Air Defence Exercises
ADF	Australian Defence Force
ADMM-Plus	ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus
AMDA	Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement/Anglo-Malaysian Defence Agreement
ANZAM	Anglo-New Zealand-Australia-Malaya Agreement
ANZUK	Australia-New Zealand-United Kingdom
AOC	Air Officer Commanding
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASW	anti-submarine warfare
ASUW	anti-surface warfare
CBM	confidence-building measure
CPEX	Command Planning Exercise
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EEZ	exclusive economic zone
GMP	Global Maritime Partnership
HA/DR	Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief
IADS	Integrated Air Defence System/Integrated Area Defence System
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IFC	Information Fusion Centre
IMO	International Maritime Organization
ISC	Information Sharing Centre
ISPS	International Ship and Port Security
JCC	Joint Consultative Council
MDA	maritime domain awareness

MOEC	Multinational Operations and Exercise Centre
MOOTW	Military Operations Other Than War
MPA	Maritime and Port Authority
MSP	Malacca Straits Patrols
NAM	Non-aligned Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NTS	non-traditional security
NZDF	New Zealand Defence Force
PAS	Islamic Party of Malaysia
PCG	Police Coast Guard
PKO	peacekeeping operations
PSI	Proliferation Security Initiative
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
ReCAAP	Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia
RIMPAC	Rim of the Pacific
RMAF	Royal Malaysian Armed Forces
RMSI	Regional Maritime Security Initiative
RN	Royal Navy
RNZAF	Royal New Zealand Air Force
RNZN	Royal New Zealand Navy
RSN	Republic of Singapore Navy
SAF	Singapore Armed Forces
SEACAT	Southeast Asia Cooperation Against Terrorism
SEANWFZ	Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone
SEATO	South-East Asia Treaty Organization
SLOCs	sea lines of communication
SMSC	Singapore Maritime Security Centre
UK	United Kingdom
UMNO	United Malays National Organization
WMD	weapons of mass destruction
WPNS	Western Pacific Naval Symposium
ZOPFAN	Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality

Introduction

Ian Storey, Ralf Emmers and Daljit Singh

On 2 March 2011, the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) and the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) convened a joint conference in Singapore to mark the fortieth anniversary of the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), the military pact linking two Southeast Asian countries, Singapore and Malaysia, with three external powers, the United Kingdom (UK), Australia and New Zealand. The conference, which was attended by regional and international scholars, senior security practitioners, diplomats and journalists, had three aims: to examine the origins of the FPDA and especially the primary motivations of the five powers; to assess the FPDA's contribution to regional security over the past four decades; and to explore possible future roles for the alliance in the context of emerging geopolitical trends and security challenges in the twenty-first century.

While the speakers offered varied assessments of the origins, utility and future of the FPDA, a consensus emerged on the following points. First, the FPDA's flexibility and adaptability to changes in Asia's security environment over the past 40 years remains its core strength. Second, the FPDA has functioned as an important confidence-building measure (CBM) between Singapore and Malaysia and that it continues to facilitate interoperability, professionalization and cooperation among the armed forces of the five countries. Third, that there is neither a compelling strategic rationale, nor a political desire either within or outside the FPDA, to expand its membership beyond the current five members. Fourth, regional perceptions of the FPDA are generally positive because the Arrangements are not seen as directed against a third party.

The FPDA superseded the 1957 Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement (AMDA) in 1971. The origins of the alliance lay in the British Labour government's announcement in 1967 that it intended to withdraw its military presence "East of Suez" due to financial difficulties. In 1970 the newly-elected Conservative government decided to maintain some military engagement in the region by proposing a successor to AMDA which would take the form of a "loose consultative political framework".¹ Consequently, the defence ministers of Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and the UK concluded the formation of the FPDA in London on 16 April 1971. On 1 September 1971, the Integrated Air Defence System (IADS) was established within the FPDA framework to safeguard the air defence of the Southeast Asian states. The FPDA formally entered into force the day after the AMDA ceased to exist on 31 October 1971.

The commitments undertaken by the FPDA were restricted to mere consultations and should thus be distinguished from the ones formerly provided by the AMDA. In contrast to its predecessor, the FPDA simply linked the security of the two Southeast Asian nations to a loose and consultative defence arrangement with Britain, Australia and New Zealand, and did not provide concrete security guarantees. In particular, the automatic commitment to respond to an external attack under the AMDA was substituted under the FPDA by an obligation to consult in such an event.² Furthermore, the FPDA did not include a commitment to station troops in Malaysia and Singapore.

Nonetheless, despite the absence of clear military commitments, analysts have often referred to the political and psychological deterrence provided by the FPDA to Singapore and Malaysia. The formation of the FPDA followed Indonesian President Sukarno's opposition to the formation of the Federation of Malaysia in September 1963. And despite the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in August 1967, relations with Jakarta continued to be characterized by mistrust. Indonesia was therefore a clear referent of the FPDA when it was first established.

Beyond offering some form of psychological deterrence, the FPDA was also expected to play a confidence-building role in Singapore-Malaysian relations. Singapore's traumatic separation from the Federation of Malaysia in 1965 continued to affect its ties with Kuala Lumpur and the city-state perceived the FPDA as an additional means to regulate its relations with its immediate neighbour.

The structure and activities of the FPDA remained limited in the 1970s and 1980s. The Joint Consultative Council (JCC) was initially established

to act as a senior consultative group, bringing together senior officials from the Ministries of Defence of Malaysia and Singapore as well as the High Commissioners of Australia, New Zealand and the UK. The FPDA was organized around a regular series of combined but limited exercises. Its central operational structure was the IADS, located at the Royal Malaysian Air Force Base Butterworth in Malaysia, and put under an Australian commander and the supervision of an Air Defence Council. However, the FPDA remained under-institutionalized during most of the Cold War period.

The role of the FPDA has been strengthened since the end of the Cold War.³ The FPDA has, since the late 1980s, gradually deepened and broadened its institutional structures and activities. In 1988, it was decided that the FPDA Defence Ministers' Meeting would be held every three years while the FPDA Chiefs' Conference would meet more regularly. The latter have coincided since 2001 with the annual International Institute for Strategic Studies' (IISS) Asia Security Conference (better known as the Shangri-La Dialogue) held annually in Singapore. The IADS was upgraded into the Integrated Area Defence System, integrating air, naval and land forces, with its headquarters in Butterworth in the late 1990s. These institutional transformations have been matched by more sophisticated and encompassing military exercises ranging from maritime security to military preparedness and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

This volume contains nine perspectives on the establishment, development and possible future contributions to regional security of the Five Power Defence Arrangements. Geoffrey Till examines the establishment of the FPDA in his chapter but predominately from a British perspective. According to Till, Britain wanted to formalize defence cooperation among the five countries for five reasons: first, to play a continuing defence role in Southeast Asia; second, to provide support to regional Commonwealth members; third, to contain the threat posed by communism; fourth, to support US policy in the Far East; and finally, to protect its economic interests in the region. Till identifies the obstacles that stood in the way of the FPDA's formation, including differences between Malaysia and Singapore, wariness in Australia and New Zealand concerning the resources that would be required to contribute to a multilateral security arrangement, and disillusionment in the UK over the Commonwealth and the "lure of Europe". Till describes how these obstacles were eventually overcome and highlights the successes of the FPDA. These include the easing of frictions between Malaysia and Singapore, contributing to the defeat of communism

in Southeast Asia, and enabling the five countries to maintain and expand defence cooperation. Till concludes by noting that it remains unclear at this point how the defence cuts announced in 2010 will impact the UK's ability to contribute to FPDA exercises in the future.

In his chapter, Ang Cheng Guan re-visits the circumstances under which the FPDA was established by examining in detail the 15-month period leading up to its formation in October 1971. Ang describes how the UK was keen to forge new arrangements in Southeast Asia in the light of its financial difficulties and its review of the East of Suez policy. In April 1970, Secretary of State for Defence Denis Healey disclosed that the British government had proposed a new five-power framework to replace AMDA and that he hoped that formal talks could start soon. A newly-elected Conservative government subsequently engaged in a consultative exercise with Canberra, Wellington, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur concerning its future contribution to Commonwealth defence arrangements for the region. The consultations paved the way for more detailed discussions on basing, training and rental issues. After the five parties had met in London in April 1971, Ang observes that the remaining unfinished business involved the negotiations with Malaysia and Singapore on the Annexes. With the Malaysians, the British spent much time discussing the Jungle Warfare Centre whereas with the Singaporeans the issue was over rent and training facilities. As Ang notes these discussions sometimes proved difficult, but all outstanding issues were eventually resolved, paving the way for the FPDA to come into force on 1 November 1971.

Johan Saravanamuttu examines the FPDA in the context of changes in Malaysia's defence and foreign policies after the end of AMDA in 1971. He also touches on the earlier domestic debate in Malaysia over the AMDA, in the process highlighting the important dimension of domestic sensitivities to alliances with Western powers. The author implies that the same sensitivities would prevail today. He sees the FPDA as one instrument in the more flexible and multi-faceted foreign and security policies of Malaysia since 1971, with its loose consultative character enabling it to synchronise well with these policies. The FPDA will continue to be useful as a confidence-building measure between Singapore and Malaysia, for maintaining historic Commonwealth ties and in meeting the broad security needs of Malaysia. However, Saravanamuttu ends on a note of caution: in the changing strategic circumstances of Southeast Asia it is not clear how much importance it will be accorded by the main participating countries in the future. He also flags some "unresolved thorny issues", among them

whether the FPDA should cover East Malaysia, whether other ASEAN members should be included and how the FPDA should relate to other ASEAN states like Indonesia.

In his chapter, Carlyle Thayer shows how FPDA exercises have become progressively more complex and sophisticated over the years and outlines the benefits that the FPDA provides to each member country. Thayer sees the FPDA as a credible deterrent in conventional military terms in the rapidly changing security environment in Southeast Asia, even as it has recently developed military capacities to deal with non-conventional or non-traditional threats. The FPDA's move towards complex combined joint exercises coupled with the upgrading of the IADS command and control means that the armed forces of the five states can effectively operate under a single command. Thayer concludes that the FPDA thus plays more than a limited role in its contribution to regional security, particularly through the development of the conventional capabilities of Malaysia and Singapore, both strategically located on choke points on vital waterways linking the Indian and Pacific oceans, and of interoperability between them and Australia, New Zealand and Britain.

Sam Bateman traces the evolution of the FPDA to an increasing focus on the maritime dimensions in recent years because of the greater salience of non-traditional security threats in the maritime domain, especially after 9/11, and the rise of Asian naval powers whose strategic competition is likely to be played out in the maritime theatre, including in the seas in and around Southeast Asia. However, Bateman posits that the value of FPDA has declined in recent years. Two of its members, the UK and New Zealand, now have significantly reduced military capabilities, while Canberra's most important security relationship in Southeast Asia is now with Indonesia which raises the question whether Australia can contribute to a significant contingency involving the FPDA in the Straits of Malacca and the southern part of the South China Sea without Indonesian participation or approval, bearing in mind Jakarta's sensitivities on territorial and archipelagic waters. Meanwhile, Malaysia and Singapore have developed cooperation outside the scope of the FPDA, with Indonesia and Thailand, for providing security in the Straits of Malacca. Further, both countries now have other opportunities for developing their military professionalism, for example through participation in maritime exercises and other activities hosted by the United States, thereby depriving the FPDA of its once unique role in this respect. Nevertheless Bateman does not write off the FPDA. It has, he concedes, not "entirely lost its relevance" and still offers some benefits

to the participants in different ways and it serves as “an accepted entry point into the defence and security environment of Southeast Asia” for the three non-Southeast Asian states.

In the next chapter Jim Rolfe addresses how the FPDA might approach the issue of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR). While Rolfe challenges some of the central assumptions regarding the role of the military in the realm of HA/DR, ultimately he recognizes that due to the scale and frequency of natural disasters in the Asia Pacific, regional governments will continue to rely on the armed forces as “first responders” given that they fulfil a valuable role in terms of their ability to mobilize manpower and material support and provide specialist capabilities. Accordingly, he advises that the debate should not be framed in terms of *whether* armed forces should be used in HA/DR operations but *how*. Rolfe goes on to identify the clashes of culture and the disconnects between civilian and military agencies and cautions that FPDA defence ministers should ask themselves a series of searching questions before contemplating a formal role in HA/DR training and operations. These questions include: How and where can the FPDA add value? How will the five countries work together at the operational level? And could other agencies do the job more effectively and cheaply than the armed forces?

Zakaria Ahmad sees the FPDA as of enduring value and a significant factor in the strategic calculations of its three principal partners, namely Malaysia, Singapore and Australia. For Malaysia and Singapore, the FPDA provides a measure of insurance and deterrence in the event of external aggression which cannot be entirely ruled out. While some importance has now been accorded to non-traditional security (NTS) issues, FPDA military exercises continue to reflect largely traditional security concerns. Indeed, there appears to be no consensus within policy circles as to how the FPDA should approach NTS challenges. There have been internal debates within the Malaysian defence community about the FPDA, but its deterrent value is appreciated and it has remained an important consideration in Malaysia’s defence planning. Malaysia is also satisfied with the FPDA’s relatively low profile and its gradual consolidation.

Mark Rolls examines New Zealand’s evolving perceptions of, and attitude towards, the FPDA over the past four decades. His chapter begins by noting Wellington’s initial ambivalence and desire to avoid over committing itself to the defence of Singapore and Malaysia when the Arrangements were first mooted, and, thereafter, differences of opinion

between the foreign and defence ministries regarding the FPDA's usefulness. However, the salience of NTS threats in the 1990s, and especially in the first decade of the twenty-first century following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, increased New Zealand's interest in, and support for, the FPDA even as successive governments continued to put a premium on Wellington's active participation in multilateral regional institutions. Rolls concludes that in today's uncertain strategic environment, in which governments are faced with an array of complex challenges, the FPDA still has an important role to play in areas such as enhancing maritime security and HA/DR operations.

In the final chapter Tim Huxley ponders the future of the FPDA. He begins by noting the continued importance of the FPDA's unspoken rationales, namely as a hedge against an assertive Indonesia (which although the author concedes is unlikely cannot be ruled out) and as a mechanism to maintain channels of communication between the Singaporean and Malaysian armed forces during periods of tension, and to build strategic trust between the two countries. In surveying threats to stability in the Asia Pacific — ranging from growing rivalry among the Great Powers, changes in the distribution of power, competition over natural resources and the unforeseen challenges of climate change — Huxley concludes, as many other contributors to this volume do, that the FPDA's "proven adaptability" and "non-provocative form of hedging" will guarantee its relevance well into the future.

Notes

- ¹ Chin Kin Wah, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements: Twenty Years After", *The Pacific Review* 4, no. 3 (1991): 193.
- ² Paragraph 5, Communiqué issued at the conclusion of the Five Power Ministerial Meeting on the External Defence of Malaysia and Singapore, London, 15–16 April 1971.
- ³ Andrew T. H. Tan, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements: The Continuing Relevance", *Contemporary Security Policy* 29, no. 2 (2008): 292–95.