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SOUTHEAST ASIAN AFFAIRS 1977

Southeast Asian Affairs 1977
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**SOUTHEAST
ASIAN
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1977**

INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES
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Established as an autonomous corporation by an act of the Parliament of the Republic of Singapore in May 1968, the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies is a regional research centre for scholars and other specialists concerned with modern Southeast Asia. The Institute's research interest is focused on the many-faceted problems of development and social change in Southeast Asia.

The Institute is governed by a twenty-four-member Board of Trustees comprising representatives from the University of Singapore and Nanyang University, appointees from the Government, as well as representatives from a broad range of professional and civic organizations and groups. A ten-man Executive Committee oversees day-to-day operations; it is *ex officio* chaired by the Director, the Institute's chief academic and administrative officer.

FOREWORD

Southeast Asian Affairs 1977, fourth in the series, is a review of significant developments and trends in the region, with particular emphasis on ASEAN countries. The publication aims primarily at giving the enquiring reader and student a broad grasp of current regional affairs. Readable and easily understood analyses are made of the major political, economic, social and strategic developments within Southeast Asia.

The contributions can be divided into two broad categories. There are those of a background nature, which attempt to review and where necessary comment upon and explain major developments during 1976 in individual Southeast Asian countries and for the region generally. Then there are the articles of more specialized current interest. These are not necessarily focused on events in 1976 alone. They deal with topical problems of concern to those who desire to know more about the region and its affairs than is possible from the background articles.

As in previous issues, authors have been encouraged to aim at accuracy and readability and to handle their subjects in a direct manner. And if the publication helps to generate an enlivened interest in the affairs of the region, then its purpose would have been well served.

I take this opportunity to thank the authors and the members of the Editorial Committee, as well as all others who have, in one way or another, helped to make this publication possible. While encouraging all points of view, needless to say, the individual authors are exclusively responsible for the facts and opinions expressed in their respective contributions, and their interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Institute itself or its supporters.

15 January 1977

Kernal S. Sandhu
Director
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	v
INTRODUCTION	ix
THE REGION	
Southeast Asia 1976: The Handling of Contradictions <i>Chan Heng Chee</i>	3
The Economic Scene: An Overview <i>Anne E. Booth</i>	22
Two Cheers for Nonalignment <i>Obaid ul Haq</i>	39
ASEAN-EEC Relations <i>Malcolm Subhan</i>	49
The Soviets and Southeast Asia <i>Geoffrey Jukes</i>	64
Southeast Asia's Offshore Petroleum Resources and the Law of the Sea <i>Corazon M. Siddayao</i>	73
CAMBODIA	
Democratic Kampuchea: An Updated View <i>Mean Sangkhim</i>	93
INDONESIA	
Indonesia in 1976: A Year of Challenge <i>Leo Suryadinata</i>	109
What was the Pertamina Crisis? <i>Anthony Goldstone</i>	122
Indonesia's Annexation of East Timor: Political, Administrative and Developmental Initiatives <i>J. Stephen Hoadley</i>	133
MALAYSIA	
Malaysia: A Troubled Legacy <i>Lim Yoon Lin</i>	145

UMNO: 30 Years After <i>Subky Latiff</i>	160
Some Comments on the Eradication of Poverty under the Third Malaysia Plan <i>Ishak Shari</i>	173
THE PHILIPPINES	
The Philippines: A Survey for 1976 <i>M. Rajaretnam</i>	185
The Philippine Energy Situation <i>Lido P. Gonzalo</i>	198
SINGAPORE	
Singapore: Towards a National Identity <i>Jon S. T. Quah</i>	207
The Singapore Economy: Past Performance, Current Structure and Future Prospects <i>Chua Wee Meng</i>	220
Social and Psychological Consequences of Household Crowding <i>Riaz Hassan</i>	230
THAILAND	
Thailand in 1976 <i>Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian</i>	239
The April Elections and Prospects for Democracy in Thailand <i>Kramol Tongdhamachart</i>	265
Primary Exports of Thailand and Its Balance of Payments Outlook <i>Juanjai Ajanant</i>	275
VIETNAM	
Year One of Postcolonial Vietnam <i>Huynh Kim Khanh</i>	287
Foreign Policy Orientations of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam <i>Carlyle A. Thayer</i>	306
The U.S. and Vietnam: Between War and Friendship <i>Gareth Porter</i>	325

INTRODUCTION

Southeast Asian Affairs 1977 has two objectives: first, to provide a background understanding to the major developments in Southeast Asia during the year 1976 and second, to review and assess these developments in the light of events in the region as well as in the other parts of the world. The volume is not primarily a record of events; rather, it is concerned with interpreting the trends of events and the forces which have shaped and are continuing to shape the diverse societies of the region. As in earlier issues of our annual review, two types of articles are presented here: those which provide a general overview of the principal social, economic, and political developments in the region as a whole and within individual countries, and those which deal with topics and issues of current interest, the significance of which goes beyond the confines of the year in review. Also, as an editorial policy, we requested that the authors limit the number of footnotes and bibliographical references, including them only where absolutely necessary.

Mostly Southeast Asian, the contributors to this volume represent a broad spectrum of disciplinary interests—economics, history, political science, sociology, and so on. Also, it is worth noting that the articles published in this volume do not represent a consensus of viewpoints or methodological approaches. While exercising a firm control over the choice of the material to be included, we consciously did nothing to inhibit the free flow of contending ideas and views.

However, this should not be interpreted as a lack of an overall framework for the volume. Discerning readers will find implicit a pattern of concern and interest among the authors. Except for the overview articles which are largely “backgrounders”, reviewing the major developments in the individual countries, most of the other articles relate in various ways to the changing circumstances of international politics as well as the specific aspects of the individual countries in the region. They reflect the diminution of the U.S. role in Southeast Asia in the aftermath of the American débâcle in Indochina. This pattern of concern and interest in itself gives unity to the otherwise extensive scope of the subject matter covered in these pages.

The dominant concern of the contributors to the present volume appears to be the emergence of a new assertiveness among the Southeast Asian nations in the “post-Vietnam War era”. Explicitly or implicitly, their articles reflect a continuity of awareness and interest. The transitional character of contemporary Southeast Asian politics, after all, has attracted the notice of several authors in our previous volume, *Southeast Asian Affairs 1976*. In that earlier collection, Philippe Devillers on “The New Indochina”, V. Kanapathy on the “Achievements and Prospects for ASEAN”, Lau Teik Soon on “ASEAN, North Vietnam and the Communist Challenge”, among others, all viewed the communist victory in Indochina as representing the end of an era—the postwar era, or as some would have it, the “American era”, of Southeast Asia.

This “American era” began in 1945 when, in the aftermath of the collapse of the old colonial systems, former dependencies reemerged one by one as independent

states, and American political and economic influence for all practical purposes replaced direct European tutelage. It has been a turbulent—and bloody—era for the region. Caught in a vortex of conflicting ideological values, models of development, and national interests—and because of its geopolitical position—Southeast Asia often appeared during the past thirty years as an object of external manipulation rather than an agent of change in the world context. Three fundamentally conflicting forces appear to have converged in the region during the era just ending: first, the endeavour of the newly independent countries to assert their individual identities and achieve rapid social and economic development; second, the influence of Asian communist régimes (China since 1949, and North Vietnam since 1954) and their models of economic and social development; and third, the attempts of Western countries, especially the U.S., to channel and control the contending forces. Whatever else may be its consequences, the collapse in April 1975 of the American intervention in Indochina and the subsequent reduction of U.S. military presence in the region signified the end of this era.

In the present volume several authors pay attention to developments—largely reconsiderations of priorities and readjustments of policy objectives—in the region since 30 April 1975. Although conscious that it is probably too early for any new pattern of regional politics to appear and rash for anyone to say anything with certainty at this stage about the likely character of “post-Vietnam War” Southeast Asia, nevertheless several contributors do examine the various factors and underlying forces which are at work and have important implications for the future political configurations of the region. For instance, Chan Heng Chee and Anne E. Booth, authors of the two regional overviews—political and economic, respectively—posit the emergence of two distinct regional groupings of countries, the Indochinese-states and the states affiliated with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The two authors further see the rapid consolidation of ASEAN partly as a consequence of the communist victory in Indochina. While Chan seems to be interested in factors of change, Booth is much more concerned with the continuing problems of the region. Chan’s paper, for instance, focuses on the issues associated with the “confrontation of contradictions” between the two regional groupings due to the differences in their ideological orientations and socio-political régimes. On the other hand, Booth’s paper places emphasis on the perennial social and economic problems that “affect all the nations in the region, regardless of political orientation.” These problems, for Booth, include “the closely related issues of poverty, unemployment and maldistribution of income and wealth.”

The other papers under the rubric of “The Region” offer a discussion of some of the other dimensions of the new era in Southeast Asia. Obaid ul Haq examines chronologically the significance of developments in the Nonalignment Movement and sees the Colombo Summit Conference of the nonaligned countries as an expression of continuity of the Movement, even though the Conference itself was of limited success. Malcolm Subhan reviews the relationships between EEC and ASEAN and sees a growing importance in these ties. Meanwhile, Geoffrey Jukes looks at the nature of Soviet activities in the region, especially in the light of the so-called “vacuum” created by the withdrawal of U.S. forces in the region and the continued preoccupation of the People’s Republic of China with its own internal problems. Finally, Corazon Siddayao discusses the implications of restructured ownership rights, existing and proposed, in the Law of the Sea on the development of offshore petroleum resources.

Most of the articles on the individual countries, while focusing on the internal problems of the countries concerned, relate in some ways to the “post-Vietnam War” issue. Mean Sangkhim offers an unusual treatment of contemporary Cambodia. While refusing to accept as fact all the stories of atrocities in Cambodia as reported

INTRODUCTION

in the Western press and at the same time having few illusions about the new Khmer authorities, he provides a Khmer insight of the institutions and leaders of today's Cambodia. Anthony Goldstone examines what appears to be the important issue of the year for Indonesia — the Pertamina crisis. Stephen Hoadley's piece on Timor is another witness to the changing political configurations in the region. It stands out as a lucid analysis of the final fate of a lingering European possession in Asia. Two topical articles on Malaysia reflect some of the continuing problems of nation-building in that country. While Subky Latiff presents a personal view of the vicissitudes of UMNO in the last thirty years, Ishak Shari carefully lays out some of the continued difficulties in the Malaysian economy as reflected in the country's campaign against poverty. Lido Gonzalo looks at the Philippine energy situation in the context of the increased petroleum prices and the economic development needs of the Philippines.

With regards to Singapore, readers will find in Chua Wee Meng's article a concise analysis and presentation of the many-sided difficulties of social and economic development in a city-state and of building a successful economy within limited boundaries and without a rural hinterland. Riaz Hassan looks at the housing conditions in Singapore and sees adverse effects on mental balance as a consequence of household crowding in high-rise flats. Kramol Tongdhamachart's essay (together with that of Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian) provides a useful assessment of internal Thai politics in the very difficult year under discussion. The October 6 *coup de force* in Bangkok had been in some way foreseen in his analysis, prepared in the summer, of the trends in Thai party politics. The *post script* to his article discussed the aftermath of the *coup*. Juanjai Ajanant reviews for us the significance of the primary exports of Thailand in the context of the country's balance of payments. Finally, we have two contributions on Vietnamese foreign affairs by well-known specialists on contemporary Vietnam. While Carlyle Thayer, using primary sources, gives us an overview of Vietnam's foreign policy orientations, Gareth Porter, based largely on his first-hand experience and interviews, reports on thorny postwar U.S.-Vietnamese relations.

It remains for me, on behalf of the *Southeast Asian Affairs 1977* Editorial Committee, to thank all the authors for their valuable contributions and also all others who have in one way or another made the production of this volume possible.

Huynh Kim Khanh
Co-ordinator
Southeast Asian Affairs 1977 Editorial Committee