

DRAFT - NOT TO BE CITED

SOUTHEAST ASIA, TAIWAN AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

by

Zakaria Haji Ahmad  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

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INTRODUCTION

The region known as "Southeast Asia", itself a term that gained currency only in the Second World War, could be said to have had contacts and relations with China as a culture and society as far back as recorded travel had taken place between the "Middle Kingdom" and the region known in Chinese as the "South Seas". Because of the considerable influx of Chinese immigrants to Southeast Asia in the nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries, what can be said as the "Chinese impact" has been as profound as it had been consequential and is likely to persist as a salient factor and problem in the politics, economics and strategic considerations of Southeast Asia well into the twenty-first century. This state of relations would seem to depend, on the one hand, on the domestic developments with China and Taiwan - or perhaps, the "two Chinas" and Southeast Asian countries, and on the other, between Beijing, Taipei and the inter-state relations of Southeast Asia. In turn, because of Beijing's and Taipei's own external policies and roles, their policies can be seen as related to the actions of other power actors such as the United States, the Soviet Union and Japan, a consideration that is valid as well for the Southeast Asian countries.

At the same time, however, the question of China and Taiwan is one that is more germane to the consideration of the international relations of the geographic regions known as "East Asia" and "Northeast Asia" respectively; in this regard, it is possible to

postulate that these two countries are more like "distant lands" whose developments raise interest as arcane subjects to many in Southeast Asia. The salience, of course, is more than apparent. But it does lead to a significant observation: the level of expertise and knowledge of these two countries is at times a serious shortcoming in analysis and policy, albeit in part this is due to official restrictions and 'fear' of their potential impact.

The outstanding aspect of Sino-Southeast Asian relations relates to the issue of the so-called "Overseas Chinese" in the population and consideration of the Southeast Asian nations. Because of a population migration that took place in the late nineteenth and the early and mid-twentieth centuries, Chinese from China took residence in all parts of Southeast Asia for a variety of purposes. Over time, however, many settled down in these countries and in the process produced offspring who could be called "ethnic Chinese". The term "Overseas Chinese" itself is misleading since it refers to all Chinese resident in these countries and the connotation that they are "sojourners who will eventually 'return' to China".<sup>1</sup> Although many Chinese are now citizens of the respective Southeast Asian countries they are resident in, their status is still an issue in the effort at the creation of nation-states with its own distinctive identity in these very young countries as well as in the relations between them and Beijing.<sup>2</sup>

But the number of "Overseas Chinese" in Southeast Asia is by itself small when compared to the population at large. According

to Lee Lai-To, there are some fourteen million ethnic Chinese resident in Southeast Asia,<sup>3</sup> a figure that seems miniscule when seen against a total regional population of about 403 million Southeast Asians.<sup>4</sup>

Leo Suryadinata, however, provides a figure of about 18 million Chinese in 1981, comprising about 5.2 per cent of the total Southeast Asian population.<sup>5</sup> Table I provides a breakdown of the Chinese proportion of the population of Southeast Asian countries.

Table I: Number and Percentage of Ethnic Chinese in the Population of Southeast Asia (1981)

Country	Ethnic Chinese	Total Population	% of Chinese
Brunei	54,150	212,840	25.4
Burma	466,000	33,000,000	1.4
Indonesia	4,116,000	147,000,000	2.8
Kampuchea	-	5,000,000	-
Laos	-	3,200,000	-
Malaysia	4,214,282	12,736,637	33.1
Philippines	699,000	46,600,000	1.5
Singapore	1,856,237	2,413,945	76.9
Thailand	6,000,000	46,100,000	13.0
Vietnam	1,000,000	52,741,766	1.9
Total	18,405,669	349,405,188	5.2

Source: Leo Suryadinata, China and the ASEAN States: The Ethnic Chinese Dimension (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1985), p.6.

Small as their number may be for the region, it can be seen that in several countries their numbers are substantial. More importantly, however, their small number belies the extent of their influence, especially in economics in terms of their control of various sectors of commerce and business and their impact on politics. In Singapore, Chinese form more than three-quarters of the population and 'exercise' political control; the government there has assiduously attempted, however, to demonstrate it is a Singaporean and not a 'Chinese' state. To some extent, assimilation of Chinese into the indigenous mainstream has been quite successful (as in Thailand and the Philippines) but in a few countries this is still a problem. The issue is always whether their loyalty is to their country of residence or to China. This issue is probably sui generis in international relations, and for our purposes, it is a question of Chinese Southeast Asians and their connexions to either Beijing or Taipei. It is a question that relates to ethnicity, political and economic influence and the magnitude of these issues against the larger backdrop of Sino-Southeast Asian international relations.

What, therefore, can be said of the issue of China, Taiwan and Southeast Asia? Are there configurations of power between the "two Chinas" and the different states of Southeast Asia? How will developments in the "two Chinas" affect the relations of Southeast Asia beyond the region? Do countries in Southeast Asia see possibilities in balancing Beijing against Taipei, and/or this also related



to the role of other external actors such as the Soviet Union and the United States? Are there possibilities for cooperation between the region and the Chinese, or is there a greater potential for conflict? What forms of cooperation are possible, and is this related to the quest for modernization that both Beijing and Taipei are engaged in? How large does the "overseas Chinese" problem loom in the relations between Southeast Asia and China and Taiwan? It is the purpose of this paper, then, to attempt to answer these questions in order to throw light on the role of both China and Taiwan in the future development of Southeast Asia.

At the outset, it is necessary to distinguish "three Southeast Asias", namely:-

- (a) noncommunist Southeast Asia in the form of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN. Formed in 1967, this is a loose grouping of basically free market and free enterprise countries comprising Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand;
- (b) communist Southeast Asia, consisting of the Leninist and state-controlled economies of a unified North and South Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea, sometimes referred as "Indochina" under the leadership of Hanoi; and

(c) isolationist but 'socialist' Burma which does not even steer a middle path between the above two blocs but is economically stagnant.

For the most part, it could be said that the international relations of Southeast Asia revolve around the uneasy "co-existence" between ASEAN and Indochina,<sup>6</sup> but in this can also be singled out the related factor of China's role over the issue of Kampuchea which in 1978 was invaded by and continues to be occupied by Hanoi. Resolution of the Kampuchean problem at the moment seems remote in spite of concerted attempts to achieve a solution, but its impasse presents the challenge of regional order in Southeast Asia.

For our purposes, "China" shall refer to the People's Republic of China (PRC) or sometimes "Communist China". Since the advent of normalisation between the United States and Beijing and the onset of the PRC's "Four Modernizations" programme and its 'open door' policy, the word "China" has come into common usage, connoting either China is no longer communist (but socialist with Chinese features?) or that in fact there is the reality of only one China. The Republic of China or sometimes "Nationalist China" is now more referred as "Taiwan", a term that could be more realistic if there can only be one China, or that indeed Taiwan is after all part of China. However, there is the more valid reason that Taiwan's status as its own entity may render its name a more realistic one.<sup>7</sup>

"ONE CHINA"

If the PRC is "China" and the Republic of China is "Taiwan", then it can be assumed that there is only one China. Virtually all the Southeast Asian countries have accepted this as the reality, and in so doing have to all intents and purposes precluded any consideration of the issue of which government in Beijing or Taipei has the de jure right as to its rule of China. Although most of the ASEAN countries viewed China as a "threat" in the 1950s and 1960s, in large part because of Beijing's links with the outlawed communist parties in their countries who had waged insurrection (and still do), in the 1970s, in the light of Washington's normalisation process with its heretofore Asian communist enemy, they began to give recognition by the establishment of diplomatic relations.<sup>B</sup> In the thinking of the then Malaysian prime minister, the late Tun Abdul Razak, "how could we neglect a quarter of the world's people?"

Malaysia recognized China in 1974; Thailand and the Philippines in 1975. Brunei, being a new country having gained independence only in 1984, is still to establish relations with Beijing, but this appears to be more a logistical problem because of her recent foray into the international arena. Indonesia is still to re-establish diplomatic relations with Beijing which were broken off after the 1965 coup in which China was seen to be a culprit in aid of local communists. Singapore has established that it will have relations only after Jakarta has done so.



Because of its ideological affinity, communist Indochina has only recognized the PRC and has never subscribed to the legitimacy of Taipei. This position is not likely to change even in spite of Hanoi's presently conflictual relationship with Beijing. As for Burma, which shares a common border with China, there is also one China in the form of the government in Beijing.

Nevertheless, for the ASEAN countries, recognition of Beijing as the government of China does not appear to have led to a curtailment of ties with Taiwan. Two general factors may account for this. First, because of economics, commerce and trade, the externally-oriented ASEAN countries see no validity in cutting off its links with Taipei. Taiwan in other words does serve as an important trading partner. Second, because of the political legacy of the cold war, there is still a view that Taipeh as an anticommunist regime is more "welcome" to the noncommunist or more accurately anticommunist ASEAN states. In contrast, several ASEAN countries still continue to harbour suspicions of Beijing's real intentions towards them. In addition, there are other factors which have led individual ASEAN countries to continue to allow contacts with Taiwan.

It is provided for that recognition of China stipulates non-recognition of Taiwan. But a country like Malaysia for the reasons alluded above has not severed all its ties with Taipei. Any "official" contact, if at all, is only permitted by Kuala Lumpur to be conducted through the facilities of the Malaysian Airlines (MAS) office in Taipeh, and only tourist traffic is allowed between the two countries.

In 1987, however, there was a relaxation of these restrictions in view of Malaysia's interest to attract Taiwanese tourists. Officially, however, no Malaysian officials are allowed to visit Taiwan without permission. But Taiwan is also one of the 'model' countries as part of prime minister Dato Seri Dr. Mahathir's "Look East" policy in which the other East Asian countries of Japan and South Korea are to be "emulated". It is believed that PETRONAS (Malaysia National Petroleum Company) has extensive contacts with Taiwanese petrochemical firms, and Malaysia's private television station recently concluded an agreement for joint production and exchange with Taiwan's television company. Since the 1950s, there has been a constant stream of Malaysian visitors to study Taiwan's successful land reform programme, and in 1985, a team of Taiwanese academics and policy analysts were in Kuala Lumpur to discuss what Malaysia could learn from its modernization experience.<sup>9</sup>

The Malaysian relationship with Taiwan, though not under the aegis of diplomatic relations, is not dissimilar from that practised by Thailand and the Philippines. Taiwan, in turn, has been active in sending out its "technical" teams for the purpose of economic cooperation with ASEAN countries, as shown in Table II.

The facilities with which Taiwan/ASEAN relations are carried out is what Lai Lai To<sup>10</sup> calls "realpolitik par excellence" since the absence of diplomatic relations has not meant that ties cannot be maintained. But this facility, though never brazenly acknowledged,

Table II: Technical missions sent out by Taiwan to some of the ASEAN states, 1970-1982

Year	Philippines	Thailand	Indonesia
1970	-	18	-
1971	-	16	-
1972	2	19	-
1973	2	18	-
1974	2	9	-
1975	-	-	-
1976	-	-	10
1977	-	-	9
1978	-	-	7
1979	-	-	14
1980	-	-	20
1981	2	3	22
1982	-	4	22

Source: Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of China 1983 (Director-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan Republic of China, 1983), p.171, as reported in Lee Lai To (footnote 3).

is due to two important factors:

- (a) that Taiwan is not "China" and can be seen in its own right as a "political entity". Because of Taiwan's own external free market orientation, which suits the philosophy of ASEAN's own development, good economic ties can be forged to mutual benefit;
- (b) that Taiwan is not seen as a "threat". In this regard, Taiwan is not only anticommunist (and as such acceptable to noncommunist ASEAN) but also perceived as "less Chinese" and maybe "more Taiwanese".

The ASEAN countries are of course acutely aware of the sensitivities of Beijing in any ASEAN/Taiwan relationship. Thus far, however, there has not arisen any issue about the strong commercial linkages between ASEAN and Taiwan, largely, to begin with, because of ASEAN's own acceptance that only Beijing represents China. Thus, the disappearance of a "2-Chinas" issue has made it possible for ASEAN Southeast Asia to cultivate proper ties with Beijing on the one hand, and commercial/trade ties with Taipei on the other.

#### THE ETHNIC CHINESE PROBLEM

As has already been discussed, a significant feature of Southeast Asian relations with both Beijing and Taipei is that of a Chinese component in the former's populations. The assumed link is described by an American observer as that of the Chinese community



"naturally turning to China for protection, whether Taipei or Peking (sic)".<sup>11</sup> Part of this problem is historical and reflects the pre-World War Two feud between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Kuomintang (KMT) struggle for power in mainland China. In terms of 'Chinese politics' in virtually all Southeast Asian countries, then, what developed were elements who were either pro-Beijing (pro-communist) or pro-Taipei (anti-communist). This categorization still exists today, but its salience appears lost, in large part because of the recognition of a "1-China" stand in Southeast Asia. Nonetheless, there is still the question of where ethnic Chinese loyalties lie - to China or to their respective Southeast Asian states.

Suryadinata<sup>12</sup> has argued that the neat categorization of the Chinese in Southeast Asia being divided into two groups is inaccurate and that even the assumption of their homogeneity is faulty. Thus, for instance, it can be readily admitted that there are significant elements of "Overseas Chinese" who now know less and hold little affinity to China except as to accept a cultural legacy. But it is this 'cultural legacy' that is sometimes held as their potentiality as a 'fifth column' in terms of Beijing's and Taipei's policies toward Southeast Asia. In the ASEAN countries, Suryadinata has identified their heterogeneity as the following:- in Indonesia, there are the pro-Jakarta, pro-Beijing and pro-Taipei groups; in Malaysia, a Group A that identify themselves with China, both politically and culturally, a Group B concerned with 'low-profile



and indirect politics of trade and association', a Group C 'committed to some sort of Malayan loyalty'; in the Philippines between pro-Beijing, pro-Taipei, pro-Manila and uncommitted groups; in Singapore, there are Chinese-educated and English-educated Chinese in which the former's orientation is toward China; and in Thailand, a high degree of assimilation has obscured their identification, though most are now pro-Bangkok.<sup>13</sup> It is not known how the Chinese in Brunei can be identified.

Because of the sensitivity of the Chinese in the politics and economics of Southeast Asia, there is no such thing as a "pro-Taiwan lobby" as there is in the United States. This development can be seen as a 'pragmatic' one as, after all, most of Southeast Asia have accepted that there is only one China. As already seen in the earlier discussion, this has not precluded ties with Taiwan/ASEAN ties.

Not much is known of the pro-Taipei groups after the acceptance of Beijing's legitimate status in the international community in the 1970s. According to Suryadinata, "the pro-Taipei group was strong prior to the establishment of PRC-Philippines diplomatic ties, but after the ties, the group by no means disappeared".<sup>14</sup> He does not, however, explain what has happened to this group except as to obliquely refer (presumably) that the Chinese influence in the economy is still significant. It is most probable that pro-Taiwan groups are still in existence but their activities are low-key. Lee Lai To has argued that, in turn, the Taipei

government should also adopt a "low profile" in its approach to the ASEAN states.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, Lee Lai To has argued that the pro-Taipei element is influential in Indonesia and has been instrumental in influencing Jakarta's slow moves toward the re-establishment of diplomatic ties (apart from the military's fears of China and a nationalist sentiment).<sup>16</sup>

Those who are pro-Beijing might be classified into two types, although these categories are not mutually exclusive, namely, those who look to Beijing as its political model and those who accept the cultural heritage of Chinese civilization, and therefore Beijing as the inheritor and guardian of this heritage. But it is those who are pro-Beijing who caused the largest headaches in Southeast Asia, either because of their resistance to assimilation or by virtue of an open political challenge to the authorities or a combination of both. Significantly, the pro-Taipei groups are not viewed as engaged in overthrowing the governments of Southeast Asia.

The manifestation of the pro-Beijing affinity has been the existence of communist parties which in large part were influenced by or actually initiated by elements of the CCP. In the ASEAN countries, these communist parties are pro-Beijing; in the Indochina countries, however, they are pro-Moscow.<sup>17</sup> For the most part, the communist parties in ASEAN countries have a large ethnic Chinese membership in their ranks and this in turn has led them to be regarded as alien, if not anti-national, movements. It is aggravated

by their open challenge to government by force of arms and through subversion. In the case of Malaysia and Singapore, the communist party there - the CPM (Communist Party of Malaya) and its splinter elements - still deny the independent and sovereign status of these two countries.<sup>18</sup>

The fact that there has been significant Chinese involvement in the communist challenge to authority, Southeast Asia tends to obscure the existence of anti-communist feeling among the Chinese, however. Thus, Suryadinata writes:

It is true that ethnic Chinese dominated communist parties are pro-Beijing (for instance those in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore) but some non-ethnic Chinese-controlled communist parties are also pro-Beijing (as in Indonesia prior to 1965, in Kampuchea before Heng Samrin, and in the Philippines and Burma). It is also crucial to note that after the unification in Vietnam (in 1976) and the occupation of Kampuchea (1978), Indochinese communist parties had been largely under the domination of Hanoi. Over-emphasis regarding ethnic Chinese involvement in communist parties tends to obscure the fact that there are also many militant anti-communist Chinese. Even in Malaysia, for instance, the strongest ethnic Chinese party is the right-wing Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), a component of the ruling National Front (Barisan Nasional). The People's Action Party (PAP), the ruling party in Singapore, is also anti-communist.<sup>19</sup>

It must be observed, nonetheless, that one issue that the governments in ASEAN wish to avoid is in-fighting between their resident Chinese, between the pro-Beijing and pro-Taipei groups. This problem is still present, though not as salient as in the pre-independence period for most of non-communist Southeast Asia.

A continuing irritation in Sino-ASEAN relations is the stand of Beijing to continue to provide "moral support" to communist parties in their countries even though there has been the advent of diplomatic relations. This irritation, though, depends on the nature of the communist challenge itself as perceived within ASEAN and the former's orientation to Beijing or Moscow. Beijing rationalises its position by saying that there is a distinction between 'government-to-government' and 'party-to-party' relations and that their moral support to Southeast Asian communist parties is related to their solidarity in communist. The paradox for Southeast Asia is that these very communist parties Beijing continues to have ties with aims to overthrow them. One Southeast Asian leader has labelled this 'sweet-and-sour' diplomacy, albeit it can also be observed that there is no known provision of other than moral support from Beijing to ASEAN communist parties.

Among the ASEAN countries, it is Malaysia that questions strongly the paradoxical Chinese policy. In large part, this can be attributed to the threat the CPM offers and the low level of assimilation of the ethnic Chinese population. In Thailand, largely because of the emasculated status of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), the high level of assimilation of the ethnic Chinese in Thai society, and Bangkok's own strategic analysis of the region, there has resulted in an alignment of outlook between Thailand and the PRC.<sup>20</sup> In Singapore, although subversive communism is still regarded



as a threat, the high premium accorded to trade and of course the non-existence of diplomatic ties have not caused a problem in bilateral relations. In the Philippines, as in Thailand, the high level of assimilation of ethnic Chinese and the split orientation of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), have not caused any irritation in Beijing/Manila ties. Indeed, there is probably concern in Beijing that a communist take-over may be inimical to its interests, especially if there emerges a pro-Moscow regime. For Indonesia, which is yet to establish diplomatic relations with Beijing, the issue is salient because of the pro-Beijing orientations of its communist elements and Jakarta's belief that there had been a heavy Beijing hand in the 1965 attempted communist coup.

As long as local communist parties with a strong Chinese connexion either in terms of their membership or their orientation to Beijing continue to pose a security threat to Southeast Asian countries, it can be expected that this will be a salient parameter in Sino-Southeast Asian relations. Even in a country as Vietnam, which sees Beijing as China, the deterioration of its relations after 1975 with Beijing, its previous ally and supporter, there is an ethnic coloration in their relationship. Vietnamised, as it were, in the ranks of its communist party and its population - meaning there is no real problem of assimilation - the deterioration of Sino-Vietnamese relations, highlighted by China's 'teach a lesson' military adventure against Vietnam in 1979, led to an exodus of Chinese nationals from



Vietnam to China. In ASEAN, for the most part, racial chauvinism is linked to communist - to wit, to be Chinese is communist and to be communist is Chinese.

Nevertheless, the preceding categorization of ethnicity and regime challenge has not denied the existence of a different permutation, namely that of ethnicity and regime collaboration. In this regard as well, one may see the relevance of ideology as an important element of this nexus. Thus, one can posit the Chinese connexion or collaboration with the regime in ASEAN as related to an "anti-communist" stand, whilst the Chinese challenge as basically being pro-communist. Anti-communism and the Chinese connexion can also be seen as being part of a capitalist orientation. Against this background, it can be seen that the good relations that ASEAN countries had with Taiwan during the era of the 'cold war' had to do with shared notions of the threat of communism and their reliance on a capitalist mode of production in their economies. When the 1-China policy was adopted, however, this did not mean a reversal of their heretofore positions on communism and capitalism but rather a realization of realities as well as a desire for co-existence with communist countries, in some part influenced by detente between the Soviet Union and the United States, and American initiatives to "normalise" its relations with Beijing.

The role of ethnic Chinese in business and the economics of ASEAN Southeast Asia has either been portrayed positively or negatively. Singapore's high performance in economic growth in the 1960s and 1970s and its emergence as one of the "Four Dragons" of

the Asia-Pacific region, for example, has been explained by its Confucianist element and the business acumen of its predominantly Chinese population. On the other hand, other ASEAN governments have viewed Chinese expertise in business and their control of the indigenous economy as a threat and therefore a negative force. That in turn, has resulted in the pariah function of the Chinese business community in the societies of Southeast Asia. For their own survival, and reflective of their ability to recognise opportunity in threat, Chinese business interests have allied with prevailing non-Chinese political groups throughout non-communist Southeast Asia. Again, to cite Suryadinata:

The most well-known is the Cukong system in Indonesia in which wealthy Chinese businessmen cooperate with the military elites in their joint ventures and split the profits. In Thailand this form of cooperation - between the ethnic Chinese businessmen and the Thai generals - is also an open secret. In Malaysia, a kind of Ali-Baba system has been developed in which ethnic Chinese businessmen cooperate with the indigenous power elite and form joint ventures with them.<sup>21</sup>

Because of the 'Chinese connexion' in the economics of Southeast Asia, Sino-Southeast Asian relations also has to do with economics and not just the politics of diplomatic recognition. It might even be argued that the betterment of economic relations could be a significant step towards the establishment of diplomatic relations. On the other hand, such an absence of the latter need not mean there cannot be good economic ties. Thus, Singapore has trading

ties with both Beijing and Taiwan, and Singapore businessmen are very active in the China market. In Indonesia, the view is that any advancement in non-official trading links between Indonesia and China should not be seen as a prelude to diplomatic ties.<sup>22</sup> But a stumbling block in Sino-ASEAN trading ties is that of a Chinese preference (both Beijing and Taipei) to deal with "traditional" partners, meaning local Chinese. This has complicated not only the attempt to have better trade on a direct, bilateral basis but also provided more room for suspicion in Southeast Asian governments of their own Chinese populations. At the same time, "with the exception of Indochina, many Chinese in Southeast Asia have been aware their prosperity and safety depend largely on the local authorities rather than on Beijing or Taipei. This is especially so with Taipei which has no power to give meaningful protection to the ethnic Chinese."<sup>23</sup>

#### THE GEO-STRATEGIC FACTOR

In spite of the "normalization" process in train since 1974 between ASEAN and China, Beijing is still regarded with some fear. This fear of a "long-term threat" as expressed by Malaysia and Indonesia has not been mitigated by the post-Mao development in China and the advent of the "Four Modernizations" and a "Opening-up" policy under Deng Xiao Peng, and the fear that there is a convergence in position between Beijing and ASEAN on the Cambodian (Kampuchean) issue. These considerations are related to a recognition that China

is a regional power in Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific, and that the role of major powers such as the United States, the Soviet Union and Japan cannot be excluded from an appreciation of the changing geo-political and strategic environment. In addition, most of Southeast Asia, save for Indochina and Burma, have chosen their future paths as related to interdependence in Pacific Asia and the world.

As the PRC proceeds with its modernization and becomes more of a "capitalist" state, one wonders whether the Chinese threat is more economic than military in nature. The PRC could become a serious competitor, particularly in manufactured goods already produced by the ASEAN countries. In addition, the PRC may draw away investments that otherwise would find their way to the ASEAN countries. A frequently asserted fear is that the United States may be using the "China card" in its global rivalry with the Soviet Union, thus sacrificing the interests of the ASEAN states in the process. There is also the fear that a continuing Chinese interest in Southeast Asia means Soviet involvement because of Sino-Soviet rivalry. Thus, the Chinese presence makes it more difficult to remove great power competition from the region.<sup>24</sup> In addition, there is also concern that a US-PRC-Japan consortium of interests is developing in order to thwart Soviet expansionism in Southeast Asia and the western Pacific.

Paradoxically, fear of the Chinese has not precluded a coincidence of position between ASEAN and the PRC on the situation



in Cambodia. Both ASEAN and the PRC believe that the Vietnamese invasion and occupation is illegal and that Vietnam should withdraw and allow for a process of self-determination by the Cambodian peoples. This coincidence of position does not mean that ASEAN agrees with the PRC's "final solution" for Cambodia. However, by maintaining a relationship with the PRC on the Cambodian issue, ASEAN has obtained a means for restraining the Chinese input into local communist parties. In order to maintain ASEAN's support on Cambodia, the PRC may be required to tone down, if not virtually halt, assistance to the pro-Beijing communist movements in noncommunist Southeast Asia. Indeed, at the close of the 1970s, counterinsurgency operations in ASEAN posted significant gains because government propaganda could state that the PRC, the "mentor" of the indigenous communist parties, had, in fact, sided with ASEAN over Cambodia. On the other hand, ASEAN has not yet fully resolved the question of the role of the Khmer Rouge in post-Vietnam Cambodia, an issue that is related to the PRC's continuing support of this strongest partner of the Cambodian resistance.

Within ASEAN, there has been concern that frontline state Thailand may be tilting in the Chinese direction against its traditional and historical enemy, Vietnam. In this regard, US aid to Thailand (and to the PRC as well) indicates a Sino-US-Thai consortium of interests against that of Vietnam and the Soviet Union. It may be argued that ASEAN support for its frontline partner forecloses many of the possible diplomatic solutions to the Cambodian



issue and that Thailand has the most to gain from the ASEAN position on Cambodia. Furthermore, it may be posited that in Thailand, the PRC has gained its entry into Southeast Asia and ASEAN.<sup>25</sup>

From the perspective of ASEAN, it can be surmised that Taiwan has no role to play in the regional security situation, especially in terms of the rivalries between the four great powers. However, from the angle of national security, several ASEAN countries are not unaware of the contributions that can be forthcoming from Taipei. Where this has happened it is discreet and little information has been made available, especially in those countries that have established diplomatic relations with Beijing. But a country like Singapore which has accepted that it will be the last ASEAN country to establish diplomatic relations with Beijing has maintained security links with Taiwan even as it proceeds to have excellent economic relations with the PRC. Singapore troops train regularly in Taiwan and Taiwanese expertise has been utilised in the planning and maritime strategy of Singapore's small navy.

On the whole, Taiwan presents no 'threat' to Southeast Asia since it is not a major power actor in Southeast Asia whereas Mainland China is seen both as a threat and opportunity. Because of the 1-China stand, there is little or no opinion on the proposed "1 country, two systems" formula proposed by Beijing for Taiwan's unification in ASEAN, although it is plausible that any violence perpetuated by the former to achieve its goal will be seen as a vivid illustration of

China's role as a power that will resort to non-peaceful resolution of conflict. In large part, this will be dependent on the changing of the guard taking place in China and whether its present modernization policies will continue.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Because of Southeast Asia's divisions between communist Indochina, noncommunist ASEAN and neutralist Burma, the role of China and Taiwan will depend on a variety of factors that has to do with the strategic environment, ethnicity, history and the challenge to national security. With a reduced threat from insurgency which has a strong ethnic Chinese flavour, and the normalisation of ties between Washington and Beijing, the question of "two Chinas" is no longer a parameter in the considerations of Southeast Asian governments. But the recognition of Beijing as the rightful government of China has not precluded the pursuit of ties, largely economic, between ASEAN Southeast Asia and Taipei. On the other hand, although the Indochinese countries do not recognize the status of Taiwan, yet its biggest security threat now comes in the form of the PRC.

Ethnicity emerges as a principal factor in Sino-Southeast Asian relations and is likely to persist at least into the next decade. The paradox is that while ethnic Chinese business acumen is feared in Southeast Asia, Taiwanese success in economic development in both industrialization and agriculture are regarded as 'models'

for emulation by these countries. In a different vein, while China's modernization efforts are welcomed as conducive to Asia-Pacific stability, yet there is a perceived inevitability that the PRC will be a "competitor" to the externally-oriented economies of Southeast Asia in time to come.

The reality of Sino-Southeast Asian relations is that there is actually "one country and two systems", with the qualification to the Beijing formula that Taiwan as an independent system is not under the control of the PRC. Thus, there is China and there is Taiwan. From Taipei's perspective, this may be a better strategy to pursue if it wants to improve its relations with Southeast Asian (that is, ASEAN) countries. This itself will present problems to Beijing's desire that Taiwan not be recognized as an independent entity but any foreclosure on its part on this issue will retard its own advance in having been "accepted" as a legitimate and non-threatening actor (for the moment) in the region. What will happen in the future is contingent as well on developments within Taiwan (the mainlanders versus native Taiwanese) and within China (if it becomes capitalist or neo-Maoists return to power).

For Southeast Asia, especially ASEAN countries, this is a prospect that has received little or no attention.

## NOTES

1. Leo Suryadinata, China and the ASEAN States: The Ethnic Chinese Dimension (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1985), p.1.
2. See the expended discussion in Ibid., pp.1-9.
3. Lee Lai To, "Taiwan and Southeast Asia: Realpolitik Par Excellence?", Contemporary Southeast Asia, Vol.7:3 (December, 1985), p.209.
4. Calculated from population figures provided in The Military Balance 1986-1987 (London: International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1986). This figure is naturally not realistic given the discrepancy in the years chosen. It should also be noted that how a "Chinese" is defined may differ from place to place.
5. Suryadinata, op.cit., pp.5-6.
6. See M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra, "The Challenge of Co-existence: ASEAN's Relations with Vietnam in the 1990s", in Zakaria Haji Ahmad, ed., "Special Focus Issue - ASEAN in the 1990s: From Adolescence to Adulthood", Contemporary Southeast Asia, Vol.9:2 (September, 1987, in press).
7. Some indication of this is to be found in a recent analysis of Professor Lucian Pye of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. See his "Taiwan's Development and its Implications for Beijing and Washington", Asian Survey, Vol.XXVI:6 (June, 1986), pp. 611-629.
8. See also John Wong, The Political Economy of China's Changing Relations with Southeast Asia (Hong Kong: MacMillan, 1984).
9. See Lessons From Taiwan: Pathways to Follow and Pitfalls to Avoid (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Strategic and International Studies, 1986).
10. Op.cit.
11. James Rosenau, Of Boundaries and Bridges: A Report on the Interdependencies of National and International Political Systems (Princeton: Princeton University, Center for International Studies, January 1967), p.42.



12. Op.cit., pp.10-22, ff.
13. Ibid., pp.11-15.
14. Ibid., p.13.
15. Op.cit., p.218.
16. Ibid.
17. Suryadinata, p.20.
18. Zakaria Haji Ahmad and Zakaria Hamid, "Violence at the Periphery: A Survey of Armed Communism in Malaysia" in Lim Joo-Jock and S. Vani, eds., Armed Communism in Southeast Asia (Singapore: Gover for the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984), pp.51-65.
19. Suryadinata, pp.20-21.
20. M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra, From Enmity to Alignment. Thailand's Evolving Relations with China (Bangkok: Institute of Security and International Studies, Chulalongkorn University, ISIS Paper I, 1987).
21. Suryadinata, p.22.
22. Author's interviews with senior government officials in Jakarta in 1986.
23. Suryadinata, p.23.
24. Pacific Forum, Pacific Forum ASEAN Trip Report (Honolulu: Pacific Forum, 1984), passim.
25. Zakaria Haji Ahmad, "ASEAN and the Great Powers", in Karl D. Jackson, Sukhumbhand Paribatra and J. Soejati Djiwandono, eds., ASEAN in Regional and Global Context (Berkeley, University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies Research Papers and Policy Studies No.18, 1986), pp.351-352.