

has increased in recent years, and has taken on an increased security (internal and inter-state) dimension.⁴ Although the region is host to (or part of) a wide range of security "dialogues," there is not a strong and coherent regional institutional presence, despite some potential for the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to develop in this direction.⁵ Perhaps the most important generalized threats to the regimes and states of the region arise from the societal and political pressures that have emerged as a result of rapid economic growth and social transformation, which have put authoritarian or unrepresentative structures under great pressure, (especially in places such as Vietnam or Myanmar), and which have even strained democratic transitions in relatively free states such as Thailand or the Philippines.

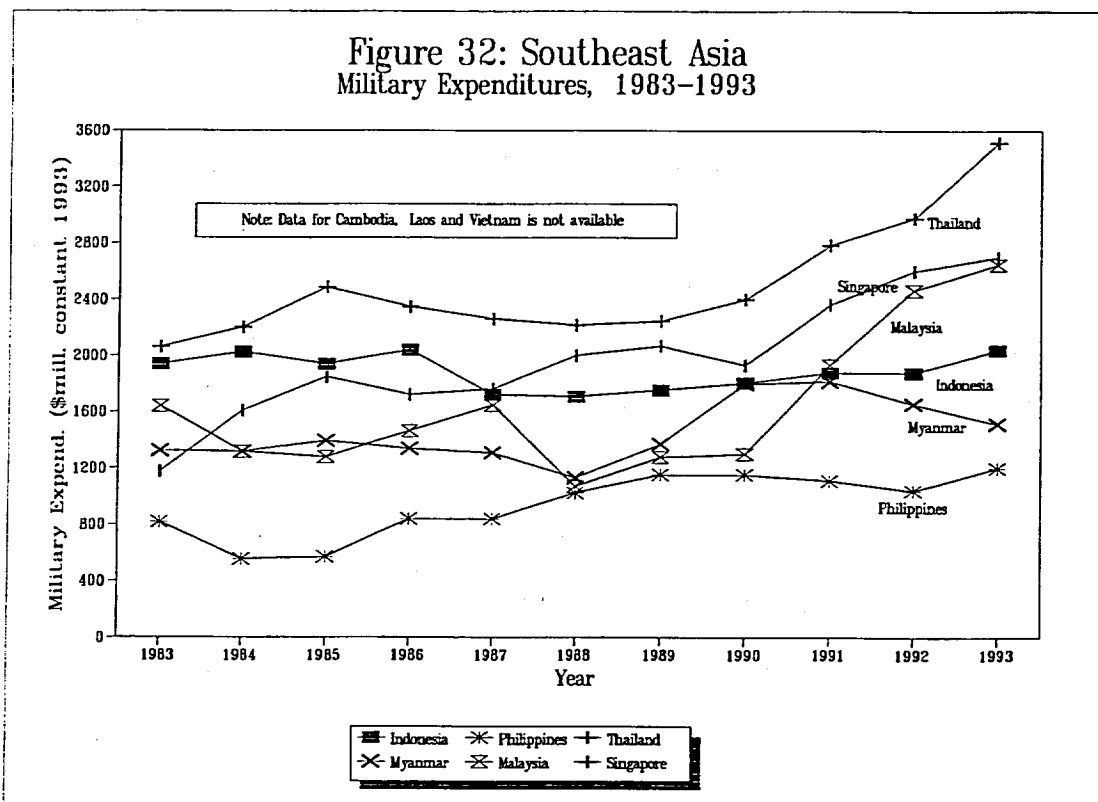


Figure 32 presents military expenditure data for six of the region's principle states. Consistent time series data for important states such as Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos is unfortunately unavailable, but the overall

⁴ ASEAN has been expanded with the entry of Vietnam in 1995, and the granting of observer status to Cambodia.

⁵ See, for details on the potential and weaknesses of the ARF, Michael Leifer, *The ASEAN Regional Forum*, Adelphi Paper 302, International Institute for Strategic Studies (London: IISS, 1996).