

Arrangement), this paper deals with ASEAN as a regional organization and examines that organization's responses to the changing strategic situation in Asia Pacific.

Asia Pacific-security issues have been a major preoccupation for ASEAN since the founding of the Association. The often disparate views of member countries have made formal discussion of regional security at the Association level problematic, and ASEAN-level consideration of traditional security matters was often left to government-affiliated research organizations (most notably the Malaysian Institute for Strategic and International Studies-ISIS, the Indonesian Centre for Strategic and International Studies-CSIS, and the Singapore Institute of Southeast Asian Studies-ISEAS).

These institutes have held regular, well-attended symposia, roundtables, and conferences to discuss various aspects of regional security, with emphasis on traditional military security issues.¹⁴

ASEAN as a group was not in favour of either the Soviet, Australian, or Canadian forays into Asia Pacific security (the Mongolian and Korean initiatives were not seriously considered). While ostensibly discussing issues of regional scope, ASEAN's focus was understandably on South East Asia, particularly Indo-China, the growing influence of Japan, and the necessity of maintaining a stabilizing American military presence in the region.

The decline of the Soviet threat, the anticipated resolution of the Cambodian conflict, and the perceived willingness of the United States to reduce its military presence in the region contributed to a growing certainty within ASEAN that the Association should exert more influence on regional issues.¹⁵

A collective decision was reached (driven by Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand) that some serious re-thinking of ASEAN's approaches to regional security was needed and that ASEAN should counter "out-of-region" security initiatives with its own proposals. The result was an increase in government-directed research by the major think-tanks, paralleled by policy papers from several foreign ministries. This, coupled with ASEAN's determination to assume a higher regional profile, in turn lead to an invitation to the Soviet Union and China to attend the 1991 ASEAN-PMC.¹⁶

Through this action, the entire diplomatic equation in Southeast Asia changed. ASEAN Foreign Ministers announced that the Association was now in favour of using ASEAN as a forum to discuss Asia Pacific security issues, and was contemplating changes in the PMC structure to allow participation not only from the Soviet Union/Russia and China but, possibly the Indo-China states and Myanmar.¹⁷