

Finally, the "emergence of Suharto's New Order in Indonesia in 1966 enabled a period of detente to develop between Malaysia and Indonesia which facilitated the formation of a new regional grouping. ...[ASEAN's] real impetus [however,] sprang from the Indo-China conflict which was turning South-East Asia into a cockpit of great power rivalry."¹⁸

On August 8, 1967 the Bangkok Declaration establishing the Association of Southeast Asian Nations was adopted by the foreign ministers of Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand and the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia. Although its anti-communist orientation was clear, its goals and future role were not.

The preamble of Declaration stated that: "The countries of southeast Asia share a primary responsibility for strengthening the economic and social stability of the region and ensuring their peaceful and progressive national development and ...they are determined to ensure their stability and security from external interference in accordance with the ideals and aspirations of their peoples."¹⁹

For the first eight years of its existence ASEAN made only modest progress towards developing substantive co-operation. Progress was slow partly because of the need to achieve a consensus of opinion, which was necessary given that most of the members of ASEAN had so recently been highly suspicious of each other.

"Another major reason for ASEAN's limited progress in this period was that there was not widespread agreement among the members as to exactly how the Bangkok Declaration's goal of ensuring the stability and security from external interference of the region should be achieved."²⁰ In November 1971 The ASEAN members' foreign ministers agreed in Kuala Lumpur that the neutralization of Southeast Asia was a desirable objective and called for joint action to secure the recognition of the region as a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality, free from any form or manner of interference by outside powers. This formalization of the neutralization concept did not, however, lead to any concerted

¹⁸ Tim Huxley, "ASEAN Security Co-operation -Past Present and Future" in Alison Broinowski, (ed.) ASEAN in the 1990s, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London, The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1990, pg. 83.

¹⁹ Frank Frost, "ASEAN since 1967: -Origins, Evolution and Recent Developments" in Alison Broinowski, (ed.) ASEAN in the 1990s, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London, The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1990, pg 5.

²⁰ Ibid., pg. 6.