

political differences. Some of the key issues of domestic conflict are change and rising expectations and demands as the result of national development and modernization in a transitory society. As this creates an unstable situation, which may lead to social disturbances over what may be perceived as acts of injustice, discrimination, inequality, or simple failure to meet the rising demands and expectations of the people.¹⁶

Secondly, there is the intra regional dimension, arising from ideological fanaticism, political, territorial, and jurisdictional disputes, such as the Cambodian conflict, the overlapping of territorial claims in the South China Sea, the Sabah issue and the unsettled delimitation of boundaries between states. Conflicts arising out of territorial disputes are a legacy from the arbitrarily drawn boundaries of the colonial period, or from traditional ethnic rivalries of the pre-colonial period. They may also have their roots in excessive and radical nationalism and problems associated with the survival of newly won independence. These problems are often allied to internal stability and political struggle, which become complicated if neighbouring countries or extraregional powers became involved.¹⁷

Finally, there is the extraregional dimension. South-East Asia has always been subjected to outside interference and intervention because of its geostrategic position astride the vital sea lanes between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The compartmentalization of the region during the Western colonization remained even after the emergence of independent nation-states following the Second World War. This reflects the great ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity as well as the lack of a shared history.

Hence, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) was conceived in a region of crisis. The Vietnam war was raging. Relations between Singapore and Malaya were declining until they reached the breaking point when Singapore left the Malaysian Federation and proclaimed itself the free and sovereign Republic of Singapore. The Philippines laid claim to Sabah. Indonesia had launched the "crush Malaysia campaign" against the creation of the Malaysian Federation by the United Kingdom, perceived by the Indonesia as a British neocolonialist plot threatening its independence and sovereignty, and Burma was in domestic turmoil caused by separatist movements. The whole region was in turbulence. The communist threat was very real, in both Indo-China and in Indonesia, until the communist coup of 1965 was decisively smashed in Indonesia.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 228-229.

¹⁷ Ibid., pg. 229.