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THE IMPACT OF REGIONAL COOPERATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PHILIPPINES- MALAYSIA BILATERAL RELATIONS, 1957-2010

This article examines the impact of regional alliances in the shaping of Philippines-Malaysia relations. Philippines-Malaysia bilateral relations have been predominantly driven by the Philippines' Sabah claim. This is a long-held misconception that warrants a reevaluation by considering other driving factors such as regional cooperation, which has played a big part in Philippines-Malaysia relations which is indeed the novelty of this article. A shared vision by Philippine and Malaysian leaders was the key factor in the formation of the ASA and ASEAN. Their involvement in initiating regional cooperation began when President Garcia met Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Malaysia Prime Minister, in Manila in January 1959. This effort led to the formation of the Association of South-East Asia (ASA) in July 1961 which was the first regional body established in Southeast Asia. Garcia and Tunku shared a vision to establish a regional organization to counter communist threats and enhance mutual security in the region. The establishment of ASA has been a factor in the establishment of ASEAN. Through ASEAN, concepts such as musyawarah and muafakat are accepted by the Philippines and Malaysia to resolve the Sabah issue. This article also discusses the geopolitical situation in the region during the 1960s and beyond, influenced by the spread of communist ideology was an important factor for non-communist countries in Southeast Asia to stay united. This article will explore the extent to which commitment to regional alliances such as ASA, MAPHILINDO (Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia) and ASEAN emerged as driving forces in the development Philippines-Malaysia bilateral relations. Philippines and Malaysia have cooperated in various regional initiatives which have generated many and tremendous mutual benefits. Successful cooperation and collaboration in many areas brought positive impacts and significance in bilateral ties which have been overlooked in other studies. Furthermore, this article also contributes to the understanding that regional cooperation was and is the cornerstone of the Philippines' and Malaysia's foreign policy direction.

Keywords: Regional cooperation, ASA, MAPHILINDO, ASEAN

Introduction

Relations between the Philippines and Malaya (Malaysia) began in 1957 as soon as the latter attained independence. The Philippines is among the earliest countries in the region to recognize the government of independent Malaya. Official relations began in 1959 with the opening of the Philippine Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. Ever since regional cooperation was an important aspect of Philippine-Malaysia relations. Since the 1950s starting with the administration of President Elpidio Quirino, the Philippine government initiated the formation of regional alliances to enhance security in Southeast Asia. Quirino was aware that it was in the best interest of the Philippines to establish a policy of pro-regionalism and good relations with neighbouring countries.

Countries in the region had been critical of Philippine foreign policy which has always been overshadowed by the US. As such, Quirino wanted to cultivate closer ties with Asian neighbours.¹ He was convinced a regional alliance would be beneficial politically, economically and socially for countries in Asia. Thus, Quirino hosted the Baguio Conference in May 1950 which was attended by representatives from Indonesia, Thailand, India, Pakistan, Ceylon, and Australia. This was a significant turning point in the Philippines' active involvement in regional affairs. Efforts to forge better ties with countries in the region continued during the Ramon Magsaysay presidency.

However, the most significant effort by the Philippine government toward pro-regionalism began in the late 1950s during the presidency of Carlos P. Garcia. This effort began when Garcia met Tunku Abdul Rahman (hereafter, Tunku) the Malaysian Prime Minister, in Manila in January 1959. In a joint communique by Tunku, Garcia, and Felixberto M. Serrano the Philippine Foreign Secretary, the idea of a regional alliance was put forward for the first time.²

During this period there was urgency in the Philippines to build better relations with neighbouring countries. Economic ties with the US angered and caused discontent among Filipinos, mainly middle-class businessmen who continuously had to compete with US investors and businessmen in the Philippines. Contentious developments encouraged Philippine President Garcia to forge closer relations with neighbouring countries and work towards a regional alliance. During Tunku's visit to the Philippines, significant emphasis was placed by both leaders on their common goal of establishing a regional alliance and intra-country cooperation. These early discussions were followed up by the formation of the Association of South-East Asia (ASA) in July 1961. The ASA was the first regional body established in Southeast Asia.³

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Philippines' and Malaysia's roles in building cooperation in the region as well as in the formation of a regional alliance in Southeast Asia. The impacts of regional cooperation in defining Philippine- Malaysia relations will also

be addressed. This research is divided into eight main sections: First, the literature review is presented. Second, efforts by the Philippines and Malaya (Malaysia) in establishing the ASA and MAPHILINDO. Third, a discussion and analysis of Philippines-Malaysia role and commitment to ASA initiatives. Fourth, the formation and development of ASEAN. Fifth, the importance of ASEAN in defining and strengthening Philippine-Malaysia relations. Sixth, is the significance of ASEAN Solidarity in dealing with the Indochina crisis. Seventh, a discussion and analysis of economic cooperation among ASEAN countries. Finally, a conclusion is presented.

Literature Review

Philippines - Malaysia bilateral relations have attracted the attention of historians and political scientists. However, no research has covered bilateral relations within the time frame in this study of 53 years (1957-2010). The majority of research studies focused only on the Sabah claim, especially during the Presidencies of Diosdado Macapagal and Ferdinand Marcos. There are some works on the overall foreign policy of the Philippines and Malaysia during different administrations.

Lela G. Noble argues that between 1969-1975 two major developments affected Philippine-Malaysia relations. The first development was the formation of ASEAN in 1967 which the author stresses was only possible after the normalization of relations between the Philippines and Malaysia on 3 June 1966 after Marcos took office.⁴ Noble's study, however, ends in 1975, and other areas such as security, economy and trade were not addressed. This article has addressed these as factors constituting greater degree of importance than the Sabah claim in Philippine-Malaysia bilateral relations which was overlooked by Noble. Jose D. Ingles⁵, explains the direction of Philippine foreign policy since the country attained independence from the US. Detailed assessments of every issue related to external relations are provided. Lengthy explanations of the problems that arose in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly the conflict in Indochina as well as the refugee issue are analysed in Ingles's work. Ingles argues that the conflict in Indochina became a complicated problem for ASEAN member states.

Man Mohini Kaul, has a chapter dedicated to Philippines-Malaysia bilateral relations, providing a historical perspective. However, Kaul's discussion did not go beyond 1969. The role of ASEAN the perspectives of member states in addressing the tensions between the Philippines and Malaysia, mainly the Sabah claim is provided. However, there was no mention of the role of ASEAN from the economic point of view, especially with regard to bilateral trade.⁵ This article on the other hand reviews the role of ASEAN in Philippine - Malaysia relations for the span of over six decades.

Isagani de Castro Jr. describes the development of Philippines-Malaysia relations since the independence of Malaya in 1957 until 2001". This article provides a brief overview of relations from the Philippine Executive administrations of Diosdado Macapagal to Gloria Macapagal-Aroyo. The author describes bilateral relations between the Philippines and Malaysia as being 'abnormal' for more than half a century due to the Sabah claim which led to the closure of embassies of both countries several times. ASEAN played an important role in preventing an escalation in tensions between the two countries. At that time, ASEAN had only been established seven months earlier. The Philippines and Malaysia had to be cautious in handling the Sabah claim as they did not want to cause an ASEAN failure. At the same time, Castro Jr. might have overlooked the existence of other equally, if not more prominent, factors involved in the eventual normalization of Philippine-Malaysia relations.⁶ This article on the other hand shows, although the Sabah claim was indeed an issue that plagued relations between both countries, it soon dwindled in importance when regional security, trade and alliance-formation led to regional stability.⁷

Salvador P. Lopez's has provided a comparison of Philippine foreign policy directions by assessing the most dominant historical factors or geographical factors. Lopez argues that the historical factor was more dominant in Philippine foreign policy because it was very much influenced by US relations. As such, the need to foster closer ties with countries that were geographically close took a back seat. He argues that the 1960s as a separating line for change in foreign policy direction from a priority towards the US to the priority to foment regionalism. Although the author argues that the Marcos administration embarked on regionalism, there was no detailed explanation of Philippine relations with Malaysia.⁸ On the other hand this article fills the gap on the importance of regionalism in Philippines-Malaysia bilateral relations

It is, therefore, compelling to study Philippine-Malaysia relations from a historical perspective because both countries had been connected long before the Americans became aware of their interests in the region. However, the most glaring deficiency in many works on Philippines-Malaysia relations is that there is no detailed discussion of the Philippines' relation with Malaysia. This paper, on the contrary, emphasizes how Malaysia gradually became an important participant in the Philippines' regional initiatives, leading to advancement in bilateral relations.

The Formation and Development of the ASA and MAPHILINDO

During Tunku's visit to Manila in 1959, Philippine President Garcia suggested the idea of forming a regional body in Southeast Asia. Garcia was keen to form a *barangay* or "village" among independent Asian countries. His aim was to form an alliance in the region to counter the communist threat. This idea was

fully supported by Tunku who shared the same vision and desire to establish a regional organization to prevent the spread of communism. Malaya and the Philippines had endured bloody campaigns against communist insurgency).⁹ Together Garcia and Tunku reached out to leaders of other countries in the region to accept their proposal to form a regional organization to enhance mutual security in the region.¹⁰ This was the first step towards forming the first regional organization in Southeast Asia.

Upon his return to Malaysia from his visit with Garcia in Manila, Tunku took serious efforts towards the establishment of the ASA (Association of South-East Asia). In April 1960, Tunku sent Mohamad Sopicie, his special envoy, to Manila for talks with Narcisco Ramos, the Philippine Foreign Secretary, to take the necessary steps towards forming a regional alliance. In an effort to gain support from other countries in the region to join the ASA, official letters were sent to the respective governments of Thailand, Indonesia, Laos, South Vietnam, Cambodia and Burma. A working committee proposed that the new organization give priority to cooperation in the fields of economy, social, education, technical, and the arts between members. In addition, the committee agreed that the organization would not be political in nature, remain neutral in ideology and accept the principles adopted in the Afro-Asian/Bandung Conference in 1955.¹¹

However, there were stumbling blocks in their efforts to establish the ASA. One of the challenges was that both Malaya and the Philippines were each subject to a defence agreement with the former colonial powers of Britain and the USA respectively. As such, it was not entirely possible for the new regional body they had planned, to be completely neutral as Britain and the US were staunchly anti-communist. The Garcia-Tunku plan generated mixed reactions among regional leaders. The ASA failed to garner support from the Non-Allied Movement (NAM) member countries. Indonesia expressed severe doubts about the ASA, which seemed unrealistic in the opinion of Indonesian President Sukarno, although Sukarno claimed that he theoretically supported closer regional ties in Southeast Asia. Sukarno believed that the provisions that existed in the Afro-Asian Conference or the Bandung Conference of 1955 were adequate and that it was unnecessary to form a new alliance. He reiterated that the provisions accepted during the Afro-Asian/Bandung Conference, were recognized and well accepted in the eyes of the world.¹²

However, it is undeniable that Sukarno refused to support the ASA because he felt that his position in the region would be threatened. If the ASA was successful Tunku would replace Sukarno's place and become more influential than Sukarno in Southeast Asia.¹³ Sukarno had the notion that any idea of a new regional organization should come from him. He regarded himself as a world leader and believed that he was responsible for the success of the Bandung Conference of 1955.¹⁴

Burmese officials initially agreed to the idea proposed by Garcia and Tunku but later insisted that their government had to focus on domestic problems first. Burma finally decided not to join the ASA and claimed that they did not want to give up their neutrality policy by joining a multilateral organization such as the ASA. Cambodia also refused to join the ASA because doing so could affect their neutrality policy. Cambodian leaders believed that the joint formation of a regional political and economic organization would divide the countries of the world based on blocks.¹⁵

Eventually, Thailand was the only Southeast Asian country that was interested in this new organization and supported the idea primarily due to the fear of a growing and widespread communist influence in Indochina. Thailand had been constantly exposed to subversive influences from its neighbours. The Thai government also believed strongly that membership in the ASA was an attempt to compensate for its move to join the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) founded on 19 February 1955, which was a paramilitary organization. The ASA on the other hand was set up as non-military in nature that would help Thailand to strike a balance.¹⁶

Despite the lack of support for and challenges to his plans to form the ASA, Carlos Garcia made an official visit to Malaya in February 1961. During the visit, important decisions were taken to increase trade and cultural relations between the Philippines and Malaysia as a first step towards establishing the ASA. The Thai Foreign Minister was also present in Kuala Lumpur during Garcia's visit to show support. During a joint press conference, an announcement was made that Malaya, the Philippines and Thailand would establish a regional organization in Southeast Asia. A working committee was formed. The ASA was finally and officially established in Bangkok based on the Bangkok Declaration of 31 July 1962. The Bangkok Declaration was an executive agreement signed by Thanat Khoman the Thai Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman of Malaya and the Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Felixberto M. Serrano.¹⁷ The ASA aimed at promoting stability and cooperation in the economic and cultural fields. The ASA members were Malaya, the Philippines and Thailand.¹⁸ Emmanuel Palez, the Philippine Vice-President eloquently said:

“Mabuhay ang ASA” — Long life to the ASA. May it not only keep alive the hopes of Malay in kampong, the Thai by riverside and Filipino in Barrio but beyond that, may it help to bring about the realization of these hopes in order that it may help to bring about these hopes in order that the millions of people in our countries may find a true brotherhood...in limitless opportunity for development, enrichment and fulfillment of human personality”.¹⁹

Despite facing many challenges and stumbling blocks in establishing the first regional alliance in Southeast Asia. Garcia-Tunku's efforts were successful due to their unwavering commitment to their shared vision.

Philippines-Malaysia Role And Commitment To ASA Initiatives

ASA's goal was to maintain the security and freedom of countries in the Southeast Asian region, to promote social justice and enhance cooperation and progress in the economic sphere among member countries as well as in other countries in the Southeast Asian region. As a first step, there was an official announcement that as of October 1959 the status of the Malaysian consular office in Manila would be upgraded to Embassy level.²⁰

To strengthen partnerships, several projects were undertaken in 1962. The projects aimed to encourage and initiate collaboration within the ASA. Member countries pledged to contribute funds to cover ASA-proposed projects. The ASA fund was established with Thailand's one-million ringgit contribution followed by Malaya's contribution of the same amount.²¹ A special meeting of the ASA foreign ministers was held in Cameron Highlands in 1962. During the meeting, a decision was made to change the ASA format by dividing the ASA into three committees – economic, social and cultural, and finance. In order to achieve goals set by the committee, member countries agreed to host the ASA foreign ministers' meeting once every year on a rotation basis among the three member countries. Within the first three years of its formation, the ASA foreign ministers' meetings were held in Bangkok (1961), in Kuala Lumpur (1962) and in Manila (1963).²²

The ASA countries conducted cultural exchanges and education programs. The Philippine government agreed to send medical doctors to Malaya to assist with health programs.²³ The Philippine government and Malaya entered into an agreement to recruit doctors from the Philippines to serve in Malaya for a limited period. To further enhance collaborations, efforts were made to simplify the process of immigration and abolish travel visa requirements for diplomatic officials. Visa fees for ASA nationals were abolished. Telecommunications integration among the countries of the ASA was established. High-frequency radio microwave telecommunication between the Philippines, Malaya and Thailand was established. One of the successful projects by the ASA was the launch of the ASA Railway Express Service in 1962. Express train service between Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur was launched and the inaugural train service from Kuala Lumpur to Bangkok was launched on 22 April 1962. On 27 April 1962, the inaugural ASA Railway Express train service from Bangkok arrived in Kuala Lumpur. On board, the train from Bangkok were twelve Thai government officials, an entourage led by the Communications Ministry Deputy Secretary, Mr. Surind Viseshakul. Furthermore, Viseshakul stressed that this success was significant because the

project was launched a mere three weeks after the Working Paper was tabled. The ASA Express service has undeniably strengthened close ties among ASA member nations, especially between Malaya, Thailand and the Philippines.²⁵

In education, academic and university undergraduates were encouraged to enhance cooperation in various fields. However, this effort failed to be implemented effectively because of language barriers between member countries. The Thais did not use the kind of English as practised in Malaya and the Philippines. Different levels of education among members of the ASA were another factor that hindered academic cooperation, which made collaboration and cooperation challenging.

In November 1961, Diosdado Macapagal defeated Garcia in the Philippine presidential election. Macapagal's administration attempted to distance itself from the US and attempted to change policy by declaring solidarity with neighbours in Asia.²⁶ Macapagal expressed his commitment to the ASA. However, initial cordial relations between President Macapagal and Malaya went through a challenging era after Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku proposed the formation of the Federation of Malaysia in 1961. On 22 June 1962, the Philippine government led by Macapagal officially submitted the Philippine claim to Sabah. This marked the beginning of the end of the ASA. All ASA projects and initiatives were halted and Tunku did not attend the ASA conference scheduled for Manila in December 1962.

The formation of Malaysia triggered tensions in the region when Indonesia launched the *Konfrantasi* (Confrontation Movement/Crush Malaysia). Macapagal started to forge stronger relations with Sukarno. When the situation became increasingly tense between the three neighbour countries, as a last effort to revive the ASA, Philippine President Macapagal suggested establishing MAPHILINDO to unite Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia, as countries with Malay roots. He had hoped MAPHILINDO would be the formula to resolve the tense situation. Macapagal, Tunku and Sukarno attended the summit meeting, held from 30 July to 5 August 1963. The Manila Accord was signed on 5 August 1963 and MAPHILINDO was established. On 16 September 1963, the Federation of Malaysia was formally established but the Philippines and Indonesia did not recognize Malaysia.²⁷

Macapagal suggested a meeting between himself, Tunku and Sukarno hopeful that MAPHILINDO could be revived and that relations between the three neighbours could be strengthened again (Proposed Tripartite Conference February 1964). However, the Philippine and Indonesian resistance to recognize Malaysia was the reason MAPHILINDO never truly got off the ground.²⁸ This non-recognition of Malaysia eventually led to the failure of MAPHILINDO.²⁹ Despite the failure of the ASA and MAPHILINDO, leaders in the region were never discouraged and continued to hope to form a strong regional body in Southeast Asia.

Formation and Development of ASEAN

Foreign ministers from Southeast Asian countries attended a conference in Bangkok on 5-9 August 1967. This conference was attended by foreign ministers from Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore. Narciso Ramos, the Philippine Foreign Secretary presented Marcos' proposal to establish a larger organization of Southeast Asian countries to create more effective regional and economic cooperation. Marcos suggested the name, Southeast Asian Association for Regional Cooperation or SEAARC.³⁰ This idea received support from the Indonesian government, which was keen on forming SEAARC.

Finally, with the support of all five foreign ministers attending the conference, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established in Bangkok on 8 August 1967. ASEAN founding members included Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.³¹ Brunei joined ASEAN in January 1984 and Vietnam joined in July 1995. Laos and Myanmar joined in July 1997 and Cambodia joined in January 1999.³² ASEAN was formally established based on the ASEAN Declaration or Bangkok Declaration. ASEAN's main objectives were to create a peaceful, prosperous and resilient community through joint efforts to strengthen economic and social stability in member countries.

The formation of ASEAN was possible because diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Malaysia were restored after Marcos replaced Macapagal.³³ For Malaysia and the Philippines, ASEAN was an opportunity to enhance their national prestige. The Philippines also hoped that ASEAN would strengthen Filipinos' Asian identity and trading links, thereby counterbalancing the Philippines' relationship with the United States.³⁴ Razak (Malaysia's second Prime Minister) stated that ASEAN would be able to reduce disputes and maintain peace among the countries in the region. He stressed that small countries should defend regional peace and security in order to achieve excellence in development.³⁵

Narciso Ramos, the Philippine Foreign Secretary, expressed confidence that it was possible to find solutions to common problems. In a joint statement, Ramos and Razak agreed that the Philippines and Malaysia should strive to achieve the objectives and goals of ASEAN. At the same time, the Indonesian *Konfrantasi* campaign ended in 1965 and General Suharto replaced Sukarno after a coup d'état.³⁶ Suharto's government wanted to reduce regional conflicts. His attitude towards regional organizations was very different from his predecessor. Suharto was a major supporter of regionalism.³⁷ Relations between Malaysia and Indonesia were restored when the *Konfrantasi* formally ended in May 1966. This made the formation of ASEAN possible.³⁸

ASEAN Impact On Philippines-Malaysia Bilateral Relations

During the 1960s and onward, countries in Southeast Asia were dealing with the rise of communist influence from China, which was actively spreading its ideology to local communist parties. Ghazali Shafie, the Malaysian Foreign Minister, said that Southeast Asian countries had no other option but to stand united in facing the communist threat from China.³⁹ This period was at the height of the Vietnam War between North Vietnam supported by its communist ally China, and South Vietnam supported by the US and other anti-communist states.⁴⁰ The founding members of ASEAN (Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore) feared that the communist tide would overwhelm them.⁴¹ The stability and security of the region were of utmost priority for the ASEAN founding members.⁴²

Between 1967-1975 ASEAN experienced modest progress due to internal difficulties. This was largely due to renewed conflict between the Philippines and Malaysia that renewed tensions and ruptured diplomatic ties on 19 September 1968 triggered by the Corregidor incident and Philippine Senate Bill No. 954 (FCO 24/ 263 HQ 3/10). For nearly eight months after the Corregidor incident, all ASEAN activities were suspended.

Thailand and Indonesia played important roles in mediating a compromise between Malaysia and the Philippines. President Suharto met Razak and Marcos separately to express concern over the conflict. Through active intervention from other ASEAN leaders, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting was held in Jakarta on 8 August 1968. The Philippines and Malaysia agreed to a cooling off period suggested by other member nations to prevent the situation from worsening (FCO 15 /311 DP ¾). Finally, on 16 December 1969 with the intervention of other ASEAN leaders, the Foreign Ministers Meeting was held in Cameron Highlands, Malaysia, where the Philippines and Malaysia agreed to revive diplomatic relations (FCO 15 /311 DP ¾).

Despite the Sabah claim not being resolved, it is important to note that Marcos and Tunku realized that the tensions caused by the Sabah claim would threaten and undermine ASEAN. The Sabah claim was indeed an issue that plagued relations between both countries, it soon dwindled in importance when regional security, trade and alliance-formation led to regional stability. It is mainly within this framework that bilateral relations were normalized, in which the Sabah claim was a comparatively less significant factor.⁴³ Both leaders were cautious to not jeopardize the future and survival of a fledgling ASEAN. It is without a doubt that ASEAN's political cooperation was in its infancy stage when this crisis happened. However, political cooperation achieved its first success when the Malaysian-Philippine conflict was resolved. This success was a result of the culture and custom of *musyawarah* and *muafakat*, which is an Indonesian custom that essentially means consultation and consensus.⁴⁴ ASEAN played an important role in preventing an escalation

in tensions between the two countries. At that time, ASEAN had only been established seven months earlier. The Philippines and Malaysia had to be cautious in handling the Sabah claim as they did not want to cause an ASEAN failure.

Since the 1970s, Philippine-Malaysia relations have been shaped and heavily influenced by membership in ASEAN and regional solidarity. Since 1971, in line with the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, Razak (Malaysia), Adam Malik (Indonesia), Carlos P. Romulo (Philippines), S. Rajaratnam (Singapore) and Thanat Khanom (Thailand) accepted the ZOPFAN (Zone of Peace Freedom and Neutrality) (Zone of Peace Freedom and Neutrality Declaration (Kuala Lumpur Declaration) in Kuala Lumpur on 27 November 1971). This idea was put forward by Razak with the hope that it would be a safety program for ASEAN countries. This declaration was meant as a reminder to external forces that Southeast Asia is a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality, free from interference by outside powers mainly the US, the Soviet Union and China.⁴⁵ However, Razak's idea to create Southeast Asia as a completely neutral zone was questionable. There were foreign, US military bases in the Philippines, which was a barrier to making the ASEAN region neutral.⁴⁶

Marcos was well aware of this matter, and he did not want to be seen as a barrier to a safer, independent and neutral Southeast Asia as suggested in ZOPFAN. Thus, Marcos had to take several steps in that direction, especially with regard to Philippine-US relations. The Philippine government insisted that the US naval bases in the Philippines were temporary. During the Marcos administration, relations with ASEAN were an important foreign policy agenda throughout his presidency, which lasted more than two decades.⁴⁷ In 1968 during a speech that he called, "We must survive in Asia", Marcos said that, "despite our western orientation and outlook and a forced affinity towards European culture and values imposed by colonial bondage, our foreign policy has now become firmly rooted in Asia. Our stakes are highest in Asia".⁴⁸ In a statement, Philippine Foreign Secretary Narcisco Ramos said that, "today, as never before, we need a new orientation toward Asia. We must intensify the cultural identity with our ancient kin and make common cause with them in our drive toward prosperity and peace".⁴⁹

The year 1975 was a turning point in ASEAN and the region due to ongoing conflicts in Indochina, especially the Vietnam War. ASEAN countries watched Communist forces steadily gaining ground in Cambodia, Laos and South Vietnam. The US withdrew from South Vietnam after the Paris Peace Treaty was signed on 27 January 1973. However, North Vietnam violated the ceasefire, attacked South Vietnam and Saigon fell to the communist North in 1975.⁵⁰ The darkest moment in the minds of ASEAN leaders occurred when Saigon fell with dramatic scenes in the media of American diplomats and soldiers evacuating from the rooftop of the US Embassy in Saigon. This worried ASEAN leaders that the communists would overrun Southeast Asia.⁵¹

The non-communist leaders of the five founding members of ASEAN were fearful as this development was very worrying for the security and stability of the region. By May 1975, the communist regime had taken over Laos and Kampuchea. This development led to the first summit meeting of ASEAN leaders in Bali, Indonesia on 23-24 February 1976, a year after the fall of Saigon.⁵²

During the succeeding months after the fall of Saigon, ASEAN officials, ministers and heads of government scheduled frequent bilateral meetings and debated the direction of ASEAN and cooperation in dealing with the conflict.⁵³ Leaders strengthened their solidarity towards ZOPFAN and the UN Charter. This summit was important as all ASEAN leaders agreed to uphold peace in the region and to work together towards prosperity, development and stability.⁵⁴

During the Bali Summit, The Declaration of ASEAN Concord and Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia was signed. The ASEAN Concord covered economic and political cooperation while the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation was aimed at regulating the solution of disputes between ASEAN countries.

It is important to note that discussions and negotiations on the contents of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation had been ongoing since May 1975 before the Bali Summit. One of the contents of the draft treaty was Article IV, a provision that stated that disputes within ASEAN were to be settled by mediation even if one of the parties to the dispute could not agree on this course. The Malaysian government was worried that the Philippines would use the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation to revive the claim on Sabah and therefore, Malaysia objected to the original draft.⁵⁵ However, a compromise was finally reached a day before the Bali Summit whereby Article IV stated that the settlement of disputes foresaw the constitution of a “High Council” that would be cognizant of disputes and recommended solutions. The “High Council” as constituted under the Treaty would only serve as mediator with the agreement of all parties, and offer their offices and possible good solutions. Furthermore, Article 16 provided that all parties to a dispute must agree to use the procedure before mediation be invoked. The mutual suspicion that resurfaced between the Philippines and Malaysia just before the summit showed how deep the scars of earlier conflicts ran. However, consensus agreement on the major issues was a significant development that contributed to the success of the Bali summit and raised the status of ASEAN to a level of regional political maturity.⁵⁶

It is also important to highlight that Marcos chose to announce his government’s decision to abolish all claims to Sabah during the ASEAN Leaders Conference in Kuala Lumpur in 1977. Marcos hoped that this move would ensure continued harmony within ASEAN. It was no surprise that the Sabah claim was a hindrance to ASEAN’s integrity and therefore dropping the claim was significant to preserving harmony.⁵⁷ He said the move was taken to

ensure harmony in the ASEAN organization and stressed that this action meant that he had contributed greatly to ASEAN's unity, integrity and prosperity. Marcos admitted that the Sabah issue was a barrier to ASEAN's integrity. Hence, as Marcos' own words were a sign of sacrifice and commitment to the development of ASEAN, the Philippines would therefore eliminate the burden borne by ASEAN over the years.

...the Philippines is taking definite steps to settle her claim to Sabah to preserve the harmony in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. It is our hope that we will be making a permanent contribution to the unity, strength and prosperity of ASEAN....⁵⁸

It is notable that the success of ASEAN from its formation until the discussion endpoint of this study was very much based on the culture and custom of *musyawarah* and *muafakat* or upholding the principles of *consultation* and consensus.⁵⁹ A very good example of this practise occurred in 1987. The Philippine government led by President Aquino, was to host the 3rd ASEAN Leaders Summit. However, Aquino faced difficult challenges on the domestic front. There were serious security problems in the country.⁶⁰ The Aquino government was battling security concerns from communist elements as well as disgruntled military personnel.⁶¹ In spite of the perceived security problems, President Suharto called on other ASEAN leaders and urged them to attend the summit to show support and solidarity to their ASEAN neighbour most especially to President Corazon Aquino. Suharto and other leaders pushed ahead with the summit to show Aquino that the Philippines belonged to the ASEAN family.⁶²

When Philippine President Corazon Aquino took office in 1986, the Sabah issue continued to drag on. Two years into her presidency, Corazon Aquino adopted a policy to drop the claim by revising legal and constitutional provisions under the power of the legislative branch.⁶³ Senator Leticia Ramos-Shanani, a member of the legislature, filed a bill on 19 November 1987 to drop the claim.⁶⁴ As a result, the Philippines constitution of 1987 does not include the phrase, "by historical and legal rights", as part of national territory.⁶⁵ Instead, the phrase is replaced with, "territories over which the Philippine has sovereignty or jurisdiction."⁶⁶ There were also efforts to pass Senate Bill No. 206 which redefined Philippine archipelagic baselines that no longer include Sabah. This bill called for amendments to Republic Acts 5546 and 3046 that Sabah be excluded from Philippine territory.

Corazon Aquino wanted the Senate bill to be passed as soon as possible and certified it as an urgent bill. Corazon Aquino hoped that the bill would be passed before the ASEAN Summit that was due to be held in Manila on 14-16 December 1987. Additionally, Corazon Aquino Coincidentally, Aquino was also under pressure from Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir to drop the Sabah

claim. Aquino attempted to amend Republic Acts 5546 and 3046 but was not successful in her bid to amend the legislation. Her sincere efforts were very much appreciated by the Malaysian government particularly Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir who attended the ASEAN Summit in Manila in December 1987.⁶⁷ Mahathir stated that he was not disappointed that the Philippine Congress did not pass the bill to drop the Sabah claim as he was convinced that Corazon Aquino was sincere in settling the claim.⁶⁸

Political support from ASEAN elites attending the summit was important to note.⁶⁹ This gesture made a huge impact on Philippine leadership. Since that summit, subsequent ASEAN leaders have deepened their countries' ties with the Philippines.⁷⁰ Aquino's successor, Fidel Ramos, clearly gave importance to ASEAN in the formulation of his foreign policy direction. Ramos said that Filipinos identified primarily with ASEAN and that relations with other Asia-Pacific countries was the cornerstone of his foreign policy. He believed that to strengthen the external defence of the Philippines and to maintain stability in Southeast Asia, it was important that a united Southeast Asia expand ASEAN. He was not keen on a collective defence alliance.⁷¹ Rather, Ramos stressed that, "unification will strengthen Southeast Asia as a whole against strategic uncertainties and that unification will prevent our countries from once again becoming pawns in politics of great powers, as our countries were during colonial period".⁷²

During Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's presidency, good relations with ASEAN and inter-regional cooperation were priority pillars in her foreign policy. In 2006, the Philippines chaired ASEAN, thirty-nine years since its formation. During the opening of the 40th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Arroyo emphasised strong adherence to the spirit of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia enabled ASEAN to settle disputes through peaceful means.⁷³

Since 11 September 2001, ASEAN-US relations have been very important due to the major geopolitical event of 9/11 and ASEAN countries have been working with the US to fight global terrorism. Moderate Muslim countries like Malaysia and Indonesia became valuable strategic partners and assets for the US. With the US, Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia have been working toward strengthening cooperation in counter-terrorism, cyber security and battling human trafficking.

The discussion above has clearly shown that ASEAN had played an important role in Philippine-Malaysia relations. Unity in ASEAN became essential and as such, the handling of the Sabah claim and other contentious issues had to be dealt with through consensus. Both countries have been working together to maintain integrity, safety and security within the region for mutual benefit. Both nations were founding members of ASEAN who were committed to unity and stability in the organization and the region. As such, both countries decided to move past thorny issues such as the Sabah claim in

order to build a stronger and united ASEAN.

ASEAN Solidarity in dealing with the Indochina Crisis

In December 1978, the war in Vietnam and Cambodia reached a state of turmoil. Vietnam had invaded Cambodia on December 1978 to end the reign of the Pol Pot regime supported by the Chinese government. Vietnam supported Heng Samrin, a pro-Vietnamese government which was established while the Pol Pot regime supported by the Chinese continued to attack Vietnam.⁷⁴ ASEAN countries showed full solidarity in responding to the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and played an important role via a global campaign to reverse the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. This created a deep sense of community among ASEAN leaders, when they took a firm and united stand opposing this occupation. Since 1979, ASEAN nations had been very vocal in their condemnation of Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia and demanded that Vietnamese troops leave Cambodia. ASEAN thus brought this matter to the United Nations (UN) in November 1979.

Prior to 1979, the situation in Indochina had become increasingly serious so that ASEAN leaders offered to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. Malaysia and Indonesia offered to negotiate with China and Hanoi to prevent the situation from worsening. With the Vietnamese 1978 invasion of Cambodia in 1978, thousands of Indochinese refugees and displaced persons sought refuge in ASEAN countries.⁷⁵ The continuous arrival of refugees by sea was a serious concern. Nevertheless, ASEAN countries continued to support the refugees on humanitarian grounds and ASEAN leaders wanted the international community to guarantee that refugees and displaced persons would be resettled in third countries or that they would be voluntarily repatriated to their countries of origin. ASEAN leaders were vocal and reaffirmed the importance of international burden-sharing in relieving the plight of refugees and displaced persons.⁷⁶

Malaysia and Thailand had to deal with large numbers of refugees from Indochina. The situation became critical due to the inability or refusal of other ASEAN and non-ASEAN countries to accept the refugees. Between January and June 1979, the number of Indochinese refugees increased whereby ASEAN leaders requested that the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) and other relevant agencies take immediate action to expedite refugee resettlement efforts in other countries. Compared to Malaysia and Thailand, the number of Indochina refugees reaching the Philippines was low due to difficulty in navigating the South China Sea especially during the monsoon season.

Malaysia and Thailand were the most vocal and critical on the issue of Vietnamese refugees. The presence of these refugees caused economic, political, social and security impacts. In Malaysia, political leaders feared the

influx of Vietnamese refugees would possibly lead to the spread of communist ideology that would cause serious problems.⁷⁷ During the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Conference in Bangkok in early 1979, other ASEAN countries issued a harsh remark that the Vietnamese government should be responsible for its people and questioned the government's motives expelling its people to other countries.⁷⁸ Marcos also supported Malaysia's push upon world leaders to address the Indochina refugees issue as a threat to the stability of ASEAN countries. While the number of refugees arriving in the Philippines was considerably lower compared to Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand, Marcos stressed that the international community should not expect ASEAN countries solely to find solutions to this problem. The Philippines offered Tara and Bataan islands as refugee processing centres before they were to be sent to third countries. Tara Island accommodated 60,000 refugees and by the end of 1981, the refugee centre in Marong was completed to accommodate a total of 20,000 refugees.⁷⁹

Refugees at the Thai-Cambodian border were a huge burden to the Thai government with approximately 288,000 refugees. There was a total funding deficit of USD3.5 million in United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) relief operations in holding centres at Thai-Cambodia border. By the end of 1982, the deficit reached USD9.5 million, thus, international aid and assistance were needed to prevent the centres from closing down.⁸⁰ ASEAN governments were committed to the plight of the refugees as well as alleviating the burdens faced by the Thai government. ASEAN attempted to solicit assistance from other countries, mainly ASEAN dialogue partners. The Japanese Foreign Minister at that time, Yoshio Sakurauchi, attended the ASEAN Foreign Ministers and Dialogue Ministers Meeting 1982 held in Singapore. Sakurauchi stated that Japan would support the voluntary repatriation of Cambodian refugees in Thailand to their homes in western Cambodia by air. He promised mutual aid and assured ASEAN of Japan's continued support in its efforts to secure comprehensive re-settlement to Cambodia. The Foreign Minister also made a commitment that his government would establish a meaningful dialogue with Vietnam.⁸¹ Canadian Secretary of State, MacGuigan, who attended the 1982 ASEAN Ministers meeting, also stated that his government fully supported ASEAN efforts and would follow ASEAN's lead on Cambodia and the crisis in Indochina.

ASEAN worked for a comprehensive political settlement in Indochina in accordance with the UN resolution that called for the establishment of an independent and neutral Cambodia. With ASEAN involvement there was hope for all factions in Cambodia to move positively towards a successful union. ASEAN actively attempted to form a coalition of Anti-Vietnamese Cambodian resistance groups and ASEAN leaders hoped that they could also cooperate with Vietnam to ensure stability in Southeast Asia. Although ASEAN initially believed that Vietnam would welcome cooperation, it became obvious that

Vietnam was hoping the world would forget what was happening in Cambodia. As such, ASEAN's effort to mediate peace and end the conflict in Cambodia was not successful.⁸²

By 1986, the situation in Indochina worsened due to continuing Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, which by then had been ongoing for eight years. Thousands of Cambodians were uprooted from their homes and suffering continued for hundreds of thousands of people.⁸³ There was also cross-border bombing from occupied Cambodia into Thailand by Vietnamese troops since 1985. This concerned ASEAN as the number of casualties among the civilian Cambodian population in shelters along the Thai-Cambodian was significant. In one incident on 29 May 1986, Vietnamese troops attacked a civilian Cambodian evacuation camp that was under the care of the United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO) at Khao Yai, located four kilometres inside Thai territory. This incident was strongly condemned by ASEAN. ASEAN demanded that Vietnamese authorities stop attacks against Cambodian civilians in Thailand.

During The ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting on 23-28 June 1986, leaders agreed that the continuing exodus of asylum seekers from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia was evidence of the hardship and suffering in those three countries. Thousands of Vietnamese were still fleeing by sea and ASEAN countries believed that the only way to manage this was to institute the Orderly Departure Programme (ODP). ASEAN leaders agreed that the ODP would be the most effective avenue for refugee resettlement in third countries. ASEAN countries were relentless and united in highlighting the Indochina refugee crisis in the international arena. ASEAN thus received support from the UNHCR.⁸⁴ The United Nations Cambodian Emergency Relief Programme received generous contributions from the international community, saving millions of refugees from famine and disease. ASEAN leaders were grateful and expressed appreciation to the United Nations Secretary-General for his continuing support to the plight of Indochinese refugees and the United Nations Secretary General's Special Representative for Coordination of Cambodian Humanitarian Assistance Programmes established and led by Tatsuro Kunugi. ASEAN leaders were also in solidarity against landmines found in Thai territory and along the Thai-Cambodian border. They urged the international community to support their call on Vietnam to stop planting landmines.⁸⁵ The Vietnam occupation of Cambodia finally ended in 1991 after the signing of the Geneva Treaty.

Since the 1970s, ASEAN's actions to bring peace in Indochina showed the organization's strong desire for Southeast Asian nations to live in peace, amity and to work together for their common progress and prosperity. ASEAN's unified stand on the Cambodia crisis is definitely one of the most notable successes of ASEAN. A sense of community and mutual regard for safety and stability in the region was among the pillars that ASEAN member

countries held on to in dealing with the crisis, and clearly demonstrated ASEAN leaders' proactive commitment towards building peace in Indochina and the region.⁸⁶

ASEAN Economic Cooperation : Impact on Philippines-Malaysia relations

Multilateral economic cooperation in ASEAN played an important role in Philippine-Malaysia relations. Both countries depended on cooperative economic efforts to further develop and enhance their respective country's economy. Starting in 1967 when ASEAN was established and until 1975, political and security issues dominated the association's agenda. However, during this period economic cooperation among ASEAN countries was not encouraging. This was mainly due to the ongoing war in Vietnam and associated security issues so that political harmony in the region took priority.⁸⁷ Thus, economic cooperation and ASEAN's economic direction were unclear.

In 1970, the United Nations Secretariat set up a team of experts to research ASEAN economic cooperation. The study team was established to make recommendations regarding economic cooperation in ASEAN.⁸⁸ This group of experts was led by Professor G. Kansu, who was tasked to produce a detailed report on cooperative possibilities among ASEAN countries for mutual benefit.⁸⁹ The team completed their assignment and submitted their findings on June 1972. The report highlighted that, privately, it is difficult for ASEAN countries to achieve progress in industrialization because none of its member states have considerable economic progress to accommodate industrial development in their respective countries. Although ASEAN countries have raw materials they have no market power. Only large-scale industries would be able to cover the costs of manufacturing and capacity to market goods at attractive prices. Among other recommendations, the report proposed that ASEAN implement an ASEAN free trade zone policy and a more liberal trade policy.⁹⁰

As a step to further industrialization in the region, ASEAN member states were advised to work together in creating a moderate-sized industry.⁹¹ The industrial projects that were identified included urea plants to be established in Indonesia and Malaysia, diesel engine plants to be established in Singapore, soda ash plants in Thailand and super-phosphate plants in the Philippines. These projects would be open to private companies in member countries with assistance from foreign investors as joint ventures. ASEAN members were to cooperate in providing finance, raw materials and labour for these projects.⁹²

The ASEAN government heads agreed that countries would give priority to each other during times of crisis by supplying basic commodities, particularly food and energy.⁹³ A major shift in ASEAN's economic direction occurred during the first ASEAN Summit in Bali in 1976. ASEAN head of states made commitments to focus on economic growth in the organization

by implementing right strategies that would develop the region's economy.⁹⁴ All five ASEAN governments realized that major differences in levels of economic development between the member states would limit the speed at which economic cooperation could be promoted.⁹⁵

The Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore were keen on taking concrete steps towards establishing the Free Trade Area and Preferential Trading Agreement.⁹⁶ In his speech during the conference, Malaysian Prime Minister Hussein pointed out that at that moment, the world faced various economic crises such as shortages of raw materials and energy, rising poverty and uncontrolled population growth. He stressed that all these problems can only be addressed via cooperation among countries in the region. Hussein urged that economic cooperation must be ASEAN's priority and that member countries must work together toward reaching that goal.⁹⁷ Philippine President Marcos also shared the same sentiment during his speech. He said that two important issues threatened ASEAN countries: subversive elements and economic crisis. Marcos stressed that finding solutions to economic problems was the best way to prevent subversive elements from further threatening stability in Southeast Asia.⁹⁸

The Bali Summit had been a major driver for more meaningful cooperation in the economy as recommended in the UN report. During the conference, member countries agreed to sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation also known as the ASEAN Concord, on 24 February 1976.⁹⁹ This agreement outlined four important aspects of economic cooperation between member states: First, close cooperation between ASEAN partners was primarily in the basic commodity trade, especially food and energy. In the event of commodity shortages, member countries would give priority to ASEAN partners; second: cooperation in industry, especially the construction of large factories for skilled labour; third: trade agreements prioritize tariffs, long-term contracts and reducing barriers; fourth: joint efforts to increase entry into markets outside ASEAN as well as cooperation in addressing international economic issues.¹⁰⁰

Integration into the larger economic ecosystem was the key reason for ASEAN's successful development which benefited the Philippines and Malaysia. In the 1980s ASEAN countries had to deal with serious economic problems, especially tin producing countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand due to the fall in tin prices. Tin-producing nations needed support from other ASEAN countries. During the 1981 Foreign Ministers Conference, Malaysian Foreign Minister Tengku Ahmad Rithaudden pointed out that the key issue to be resolved at that conference was to gain the support of the US, Japan and European Economic Countries (EEC) for the Sixth International Tin Agreement.¹⁰¹

In 1980, Malaysia was the world's largest producer of tin with 35.15% of the global supply followed by Thailand at 19.28% and Indonesia at 18.62%.

Importers on the other hand such as the US, accounted for 26.91%, followed by the European Economic Community (EEC) at 27.15% while Japan constituted 17.20% of tin imports. However, the US was the only country that resisted this effort while all ASEAN Foreign Ministers were in solidarity and publicly criticized the US by stating that, “if the US has sincere intention to assist in the development of the Southeast Asian region then it should support the attempt to realize The Sixth Tin Agreement”.¹⁰²

The Philippines was not a tin producer but on the basis of ASEAN solidarity, the Philippines fully supported Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. When The US took steps to flood the world’s tin market with its stockpile, Roberto V. Ongpin, the Philippine Trade and Industry Minister, issued a strong rebuke that, “ASEAN members would take a united stand against harmful trade policies of the industrialized countries”.

Another ASEAN initiative to further enhance the economy in this region was the Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines East Asian Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) which was established in 1996. BIMP-EAGA was founded to develop the provinces of Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Maluku, West Papua and Papua in Indonesia, Sabah, Sarawak, Labuan in Malaysia and the island of Mindanao and the province of Pahlawan in the Philippines.¹⁰³ This was an effort initiated by Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir, Philippine President Fidel Ramos, Indonesian President Soeharto and Brunei Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah. The Philippine government under Fidel Ramos identified national security as a key factor in his administration. Within this framework, he inaugurated the “Mindanao 2000” plan, which aimed to build peace and reconciliation in war-torn Mindanao by eliminating poverty and joblessness among the people there. The Philippine government invested heavily in infrastructure and basic services in Mindanao. Huge investments in various sectors were brought into the region under the EAGA.¹⁰⁴ The Ramos government counted on the other leaders, Dr. Mahathir, President Soeharto and Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah who were BIMP- EAGA partners, to support his plans to revive Mindanao, which lies at the heart of the East ASEAN Growth Area. This project aimed to provide economic momentum and inject vigour into ASEAN and the entire Asia-Pacific region. Strong cooperation in the economy and trade among ASEAN countries during the period of study has been an important factor in bringing prosperity to the region. Multilateral economic cooperation in ASEAN was an important element in defining Philippines-Malaysia relations. It was generally accepted that ASEAN nations should resolve pending disputes and collectively accelerate the economy in the region. The Philippines and Malaysia benefited from many multilateral economic cooperation efforts collectively so that both countries’ economies grew rapidly.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that intra-regional cooperation has made a huge impact in defining relations between the Philippines and Malaysia, especially in outshining controversies surrounding the Sabah claim. Several important conclusions can be derived from this paper. First, it is undeniable that the shared vision of Garcia and Tunku to establish a regional organization to counter communist threats and enhance mutual security in the region led to the formation of the ASA in 1963. The ASA was the first ever regional organization in the region. Despite many stumbling blocks in their efforts to achieve their vision, Garcia and Tunku did not give in to pressure from other leaders in the region, particularly Indonesian President Sukarno who thought that the ASA would be unrealistic and useless. Garcia's and Tunku's commitment led to the successful establishment of the ASA. It is no doubt that the ASA was short-lived and only achieved moderate success, yet its importance cannot be understated. The ASA was the starting point in regional cooperation and ASEAN was the sequel to the ASA and MAPHILINDO.

The second conclusion that can be derived is the importance of ASEAN as one of the driving factors in Philippine-Malaysia relations. Membership in ASEAN, along with its objectives and values served as guides in handling difficult issues such as the Sabah claim. Values such as *musyawarah* and *muafakat* were accepted by both the Philippines and Malaysia to handle the Sabah claim. Both countries were willing to take cooling off periods as advised by other ASEAN partners, especially in 1968, which was the period when the Sabah claim which was a thorn in Philippine-Malaysia relations.

ASEAN leaders have also adopted the practices of consensus and consultation as a way to develop regional nations by maintaining good relations with each other. It is without a doubt that Philippines-Malaysia relations were very much tied and connected to ASEAN's value of bilateral relations. One instance of the Malaysian government's adhering to this value was in dealing with the insurgency in the southern Philippines. In this particular instance, the OIC sent a delegation to the southern Philippines to examine the situation and assess the plight of the Muslim Filipinos. Despite being an important member of the OIC, Malaysia did not send any representative to the mission on the basis of an ASEAN core value stipulating that members do not intervene in the domestic problems of another member country, as a sign of solidarity and loyalty among ASEAN members.

It was no coincidence that Marcos used the ASEAN Summit in 1977 to announce his country's decision to drop the Sabah claim. In fact, during the announcement, Marcos stated that his government's decision to drop the Sabah claim was made in order to preserve harmony in ASEAN. This clearly shows the commitment of both countries towards ensuring that ASEAN unity and

solidarity be upheld at all times. Neither the Philippines nor Malaysia wanted to be the cause of ASEAN failure. It should be noted that S. Dhanabalan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Singapore, said that the key to ASEAN success was the willingness to solve problems whether territorial or otherwise by peaceful means. The Sabah claim was one such example.¹⁰⁵

The third conclusion that can be derived from this paper is that the geopolitical situation in the region during the 1960s and beyond, influenced by the rise of communism's threat and the spread of communist ideology were important factors for non-communist countries in Southeast Asia to stay united. The Philippines and Malaysia were fully aware that in the midst of the Vietnam War it was of utmost importance for countries in the region to unite as a strong organization such as ASEAN. Stability, security and unity were of utmost importance for ASEAN's founders to be able to handle a seemingly overwhelming communist tide at the time. The ZOPFAN was key in ensuring that ASEAN countries would be free from interference by outside powers such as the US, the Soviet Union and China. The fall of Saigon in 1975 was a wake-up call for ASEAN countries to prepare for a possible communist takeover of Southeast Asia. Security and stability of the region was at stake and as such, unity was a must. In the midst of such regional political insecurity, the Sabah claim was quickly perceived to be an unnecessary confrontation. The fall of Saigon spurred ASEAN leaders to make their regional association more effective. Thus, ASEAN leaders accepted the Declaration of ASEAN Accord and the "Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia" during the Bali Summit in 1976 further strengthening unity and cooperation in ASEAN. The signing of the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) by ten ASEAN countries in Bangkok on 15 December 1995 further enhanced security and stability in the region. Conflicts and solutions to disputes among member countries were regulated within the principles of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. This treaty has been key for ASEAN members to solve problems at a conference table. This is indeed proven by the fact that since ASEAN was established in 1967, no member countries have engaged in armed conflict with each other.

The fourth conclusion that can be derived from this discussion is that ASEAN leaders were in solidarity to find solutions to ending the Vietnam War and Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia. ASEAN leaders took a firm stand to oppose the occupation and demanded that Vietnamese troops leave Cambodia. ASEAN was relentless in its effort to highlight this issue to the international community and ASEAN leaders spoke in terms of solidarity and unity in bringing the matter to the UN in November 1979. ASEAN's efforts in handling this crisis included the offer to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. ASEAN also played an important role in assisting and handling thousands of Indochinese refugees and displaced persons who dispersed to different ASEAN countries.

The fifth conclusion that can be derived in this paper is that economic cooperation in ASEAN was important in defining Philippine-Malaysia relations. The commitment of all ASEAN countries to accelerate the pace of economic development in their respective countries as the main weapon against security threats, was the key to ASEAN economic success. After the Bali Summit in 1976, a major shift in ASEAN's economic direction occurred when member countries decided to implement strategies that would develop the region's economy. The Philippines and Malaysia together with Singapore took steps toward establishing the Free Trade Area and Preferential Trading Agreement. While the rest of the world faced various economic crises at the time, cooperation among the ASEAN countries was the only way to cushion the effects of the economic crisis. Since 1977, ASEAN has expanded and intensified economic relations with other countries or groups. Year after year, the number of ASEAN dialogue partners grew and dialogue has been quite successful in bringing financial assistance and investments to ASEAN countries. This is a fact demonstrated by growth so that in 2009, the value of FDI to ASEAN countries exceeded USD \$1.1 trillion. Additionally, intra-ASEAN trade also grew significantly and by 2010 the AFTA successfully reduced and abolished tariffs for more than 54,457 items.¹⁰⁶

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