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Report



Research

New Zealand and ASEAN: A History

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About the author

Malcolm McKinnon is a Wellington historian who has written extensively on New Zealand's foreign relations and in particular its relations with Asia. Among his publications are *Independence and Foreign Policy: New Zealand in the World since 1935* (Auckland University Press 1993); *Immigrants and Citizens: New Zealanders and Asian Immigration in Historical Context* (Victoria University of Wellington, Institute of Policy Studies 1996); and *Asian Cities: Globalization, Urbanization and Nation-Building* (NIAS Press, 2011).

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Malcolm McKinnon
Wellington
December 2015

Introduction

In 2015, New Zealand and ASEAN commemorated 40 years as dialogue partners. The world of 2015 was different in immeasurable ways from the world of 1975 and it is reasonable to investigate the history of the relationship as a way of both understanding its present circumstances and considering its future. It is a history that falls into phases demarcated in part by time, but mostly by circumstances.

In a first period, to 1990, the relationship was inseparable from the postwar history of decolonisation and the Cold War. Both imposed fracture lines on Southeast Asia. Decolonisation put newly independent states at odds with former colonial powers; the Cold War put non-communist governments at odds with communist movements in their own countries and with communist states.

The fracture lines reached beyond Southeast Asia. Chinese communists had won power in their country at the end of 1949; the Vietnamese communists, who won power in the northern part of their country in 1954, shared a border with them. Behind both lay the power of the Soviet Union.

The leading non-communist power was the United States (US). It formed a network of alliances throughout Asia and the Pacific (the 'San Francisco system' after the city in which a peace treaty with Japan was signed in 1951), in which were included two Southeast Asia countries, the Philippines and Thailand. For its part Malaya, when it became independent in 1957, retained a close link with its former colonial ruler (and principal US ally), Britain.

Newly independent states sought self-reliance. At the Asian Relations conference in New Delhi in 1947 and at Bandung in Indonesia in 1955 they attempted to craft a world order free from former ties of empire and of Cold War alliances – hence the non-aligned movement. Within Southeast Asia, Indonesia was a leading proponent, Burma (now Myanmar) another; beyond it, India and Egypt.

At its formation ASEAN linked non-aligned and US-aligned states in Southeast Asia. That 'marriage' produced a creative response – the dialogue strategy that sought to engage well-intentioned great powers in the region but keep them at arm's length.¹

The end of the Cold War in 1989–91, the product primarily of events outside the region, brought many changes. Vietnam and Laos retained communist political structures but their economies were turned to capitalism. ASEAN drew in the former communist states and Myanmar, achieved regional universality and buried the former fracture lines.

Beyond ASEAN the threefold pattern gave way to a world of competing great powers. This was not so obvious in the 1990s – the US and the world's 'unipolar' moment – but became evident in the new century with China's rise especially. Could ASEAN have itself become one of those powers? It chose rather to adapt the dialogue model to the new environment.

New Zealand supported ASEAN from its inception. In the years to 1990 this meant support for an organisation which would stabilise the region and keep communism at bay. After 1990 it meant support for an organisation crucial to Southeast Asia itself but also for the pathway it provided to major Asia-Pacific powers – the US, China, Japan, India.

¹ 'Region' is used in this text to refer to both Southeast Asia on its own, and to the Asia-Pacific region as a whole. The word is qualified where the context does not make clear which is meant.

To 1990 — The Cold War Era

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The start

The ASEAN–New Zealand dialogue started in 1975 but ASEAN itself had been formed eight years earlier. Behind that event lay more than a quarter century of discord and strife in Southeast Asia – and it was far from over in 1967.

Indeed ‘Southeast Asia’ was in part a product of events that unfolded with the Japanese invasion and occupation of the region in 1940–42. The swift and merciless advance both overturned long-established colonial regimes and brought the sole independent state in Southeast Asia – Siam (Thailand) into a de facto alignment with Japan, whose forces had occupied all its neighbours. Japan therefore exercised hegemony over the entire region in a way no colonial power ever had. The defeat of Japan did not produce a return to the status quo ante. It ushered in the three-way competition (broadly understood) between the former colonial regimes; nationalist forces; and communist movements, for control of the various territories.

That contest had become particularly acute in Vietnam and Indonesia, the former the setting for a war between the communist North and the anti-communist South which was to spill over into neighbouring Laos and Cambodia, the latter the setting for a struggle for control of the state and government. Some of that struggle was externalised in Indonesia’s challenge – Confrontation or Konfrontasi – to the British-sponsored formation of Malaysia in 1963, a compound state which united the British territories of Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo (Sabah) with independent Malaya.

Indonesia wound down Confrontation in the aftermath of a bloody coup d’état in September 1965 that saw hundreds of thousands killed and the influence and power of the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) destroyed.

In 1966–67 Indonesia on the one hand and Malaysia and Singapore on the other sought to put their relations on a new basis in light of the end of Confrontation. At the same time, Singapore, newly separated from Malaysia (in August 1965) sought a stable regional environment. The Thai Foreign Minister (1959–71), Thanat Khoman, played a crucial role in fostering the transformation of the existing Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) which included Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines, into ASEAN, with two new members – Indonesia and Singapore. It was hoped that the fractious Philippine–Malaysia relationship (they disputed suzerainty over Sabah) would benefit from Indonesia being brought into the association.²

ASEAN member governments shared a wish to overcome their own differences and a wish to limit Soviet and Communist Chinese intervention in the region, while Indonesia particularly, although now anti-communist, remained cautious about the role of the US.³ The Bangkok Declaration which announced the formation of ASEAN, was anti-colonial as well as anti-communist, with ringing phrases about the temporary nature of foreign bases and a determination to ensure the stability and security of ASEAN countries ‘from external interference in any form or manifestation’.⁴

² Archives New Zealand, KL 203-2-1 part 2, SFA to posts 6 Nov 1967; part 5, Dick Wilson, *The Times* (London), 5 Aug 1972 on file.

³ Acharya 1997, 323, 328.

⁴ <http://www.asean.org/news/item/the-asean-declaration-bangkok-declaration>

New Zealand's support for the organisation was most focused on regional stability - 'When ASEAN was created, there was a real danger of military conflict among member states'⁵ - and the contribution that it could make to the anti-communist cause.

New Zealand policymakers sought a stability resting on both equitable development and forcibly limiting or expunging communism in the region be it indigenous or the product of Soviet or Communist Chinese actions or support.

The former goal, equitable development, had been pursued through schemes such as the Colombo Plan, a British Commonwealth-initiated programme that sought to combat communism through economic development. New Zealand was a reluctant initial 'subscriber' to Colombo Plan finance, but the approach was preferred to military involvement, to which it was even more reluctant to contribute. Walter Nash in particular, Labour prime minister 1957-60, was an enthusiastic visitor to Colombo Plan projects.⁶

The second goal was pursued through support for the military presence of the US and the United Kingdom (UK) in the region. The former had gained traction in the aftermath of the French defeat in Vietnam and the crafting of the Manila Pact and the associated South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)⁷ - from which sprang the first familiarity of the term 'Southeast Asia' to many New Zealanders. The pact committed member states to 'mutual defence' which meant in effect defence of Asian member and 'associated' states (among them South Vietnam) against communist powers.

The latter was expressed in New Zealand's support for the British position in its colony, then independent Commonwealth fellow member Malaysia, in particular during the Malayan 'Emergency' - the 1950s anti-communist campaign - and during Confrontation.⁸

In 1967, New Zealand's own military involvement in Vietnam and in support of Malaysia were concrete expressions of this and overshadowed the official response to the formation of ASEAN. The stress was on the potential rather than the actual value of the organisation: 'We are concerned to see that the nations of the area build up confidence in themselves and ultimately become sufficiently developed, stable and viable to withstand Communist pressures without excessive dependence on external support.'⁹

There was haziness about the pronunciation - 'we were told that Ramos [of the Philippines] was saying "Asian" and that therefore Malaysians prefer A-zee-an'. 'A-shorn' was apocryphally favoured by a diplomat of Irish descent.¹⁰ And also haziness about likely membership: 'as countries "of this part of the world" we were seen as having a future role in this type of regional trend. But for the same reasons as would at present make Japan too difficult to accommodate, New Zealand and Australia would for the present distort the pattern established so far.'¹¹

ASEAN competed in the New Zealand official mind with other new organisations. ASPAC, the Asia-Pacific Council, was lauded as the first genuinely regional organisation, that is, one that did not involve extra-regional powers, be they former European colonial powers or the US. It did however sit firmly on the anti-communist side of the Cold War divide, with all its membership bar Malaysia allies of the US. New Zealand, along with Australia, was however linked to Malaysia and Singapore through the Five Power Defence Arrangements (5PDA), a successor to Britain's bilateral post-colonial treaty with Malaysia.

⁵ Kamiya 1999, 232.

⁶ Sinclair 1976, 322, 326-327.

⁷ McGibbon 1999, 142-45; 172-173.

⁸ Malaysia came into being in September 1963, a union of independent Malaya (by far the largest component), the former British territories of Sarawak, Sabah (North Borneo) and Singapore. Singapore became independent of Malaysia in August 1965.

⁹ Archives New Zealand, KL 203/2/1 part 2, SFA to posts 6 Nov 1967.

¹⁰ Archives New Zealand, KL 203/2/1 part 2, NZHC KL to SEA and posts 15 Aug 1967; see also KL 203/2/1 part 2, SEA to posts 6 Nov 1967.

¹¹ Archives New Zealand, KL 203/2/1 part 2, NZHC KL to SEA and posts 15 Aug 1967, quoted words of Zainal Sulong of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia; see also Rolfe 2005, 39.

ASPAC was matched by economic initiatives. Hyper-aware of memories of the war time Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, Japanese politicians, officials, and business groups fostered regional associations which would counter any suggestion that Japan had hegemonic leanings. The Pacific Basin Economic Cooperation Committee (PBECC, later PBEC, Pacific Basin Economic Council) was set up by business groups in Japan, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand in 1967 but with the possibility of taking in less developed economies, including in Southeast Asia, later.¹²

Thus New Zealand's reaction to the inception of ASEAN distilled persisting themes in the history of the relationship:

- › First, that the role for New Zealand with regard to ASEAN itself was support not participation. Southeast Asian nations, pushed to a choice, would likely favour a more homogenous and less overtly anti-communist ASEAN over other arrangements.¹³
- › Second, that 'to withstand Communist pressure' meant, more than anything, pressure from Communist China, not therefore the economically powerful China of a half century later but the ideologically powerful China of the 1960s. Most significantly at this time, it meant turning a blind eye to the suppression of communist power and influence in Indonesia in 1965-66.¹⁴
- › Third, New Zealand's direct participation would be accomplished through broader organisations, often in concert with Australia and Japan, which were both also in ASPAC but not ASEAN. Behind such wider organisations lay the influence of the US, whose role in shaping regional order, even if at arm's length, was welcomed.

¹² Marris and Overland 1997, 20-24.

¹³ Archives New Zealand, KL 203/2/1, part 2, 8 Nov 1967, SEA to posts.

¹⁴ Green 2005, 168; Lim 2015, 101-103.

1968–1975

In its first years ASEAN struggled with both internal friction and the unstable regional environment, in particular the war in Vietnam. As an example of the inter-state friction, in October 1968, Singapore executed two Indonesian marines who had been arrested and charged with an attack on premises in Orchard Road in March 1965 that left three dead.¹⁵ Tension between the Philippines and Malaysia over the former's claim to the Malaysian state of Sabah also persisted.

The ASEAN states were thrown into more turmoil – as indeed was all of Asia – by the US détente with Communist China initiated by President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. What did such a move portend for the role of the US in the region? It was one thing for ASEAN to agree that all bases were temporary – another for the powers whose bases they were to withdraw. A British retreat, well under way, was one thing – a US one much more serious.

Even non-aligned (if anti-communist) Indonesia was anxious. At a meeting of foreign ministers in Kuala Lumpur in November 1971, ASEAN announced its goal of seeking a 'zone of peace, freedom and neutrality' (ZOPFAN) in Southeast Asia – in the words of one commentator it did not state anything new (and did not mean an immediate end to alliances with outside powers) but it was testimony to the uncertainty felt by the five nations in the changing international environment, one in which their putative ally (the US) was now talking to their putative adversary (China).¹⁶ Singapore for one was adamant

that existing defence security arrangements had to continue until the neutralisation was an accomplished reality.¹⁷

New Zealand and Australia also had to digest the implications of détente but the tenor of their relations with ASEAN and with Asia generally were shaped as much by the advent of Labour governments at the end of 1972 headed by Norman Kirk and Gough Whitlam respectively. Labour had been in office in neither country (bar the years 1957–60 in New Zealand) since 1949. Military intervention in Vietnam had become unpopular with electorates in both countries by the early 1970s and both parties wanted to disengage. ASPAC had withered on the vine. The Kirk government, like its Whitlam counterpart, established diplomatic relations with Beijing and wanted to downplay the role of SEATO, the treaty alliance under which the involvement in Vietnam had formally been conducted.

Events took a somewhat different course however. Kirk, the new prime minister, had had 'heart-wrenching experiences' when he visited Asia as leader of the Opposition in 1970. He also got to know Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore through shared participation in the Socialist International and they met whenever Kirk passed through Singapore.¹⁸ Lee later recalled Kirk as 'by far the most impressive New Zealand prime minister I have known. He was a heavyweight. He had "gravitas"'.¹⁹ When Kirk travelled through Southeast Asia as prime minister, at the end of 1973, one meeting with Lee lasted more than three hours.²⁰ Both in Singapore and elsewhere in the region, New Zealanders found that while Southeast Asians continued to canvass neutralisation schemes, some states, in particular Thailand and Singapore, did not want to see regional ties with the US weakened, certainly not in the short to medium term.²¹

Kirk kept New Zealand forces on the ground in Singapore and Malaysia, where in effect they played a 'trip wire' role, and did not push for SEATO to be wound up (in the event this did not take place until

1968

1973

¹⁵ The issue resurfaced in March 2014 when Indonesia named a naval vessel after the two marines.

¹⁶ Archives New Zealand, JKA 223/3/1 part 1, 5 Jun 1972, NZHC Canberra (Bruce Brown) to SFA, Wgtn; see also Archives New Zealand, KL 203/2/1 part 5, *The Times* (London), 5 Aug 1972 (Dick Wilson) on file.

¹⁷ Archives New Zealand, JKA 223/3/1 part 1, NZHC KL to SFA 10 Dec 1971.

¹⁸ Ross 2015, 19–20.

¹⁹ Corner 2001, 146.

²⁰ Corner 2001, 65.

²¹ Pearson 1989, 106–09; Archives New Zealand, KL 203/2/1 part 6, Indonesian home affairs minister Tan Sri M Ghazali bin Shafie reported 22 Oct 1974.

1977). But he was also convinced, as Nash before him, that development assistance was the best way for New Zealand to contribute to Southeast Asian security and that it was indeed the best way to ensure the region's future.²² The Whitlam Labor government in Australia had a similar outlook and embarked on a dialogue with ASEAN countries to this end in 1974. New Zealand followed suit in February 1975. Kirk had died and the economic climate had worsened but the underlying motive – to find a non-militarised and development-oriented way of assisting Southeast Asia – persisted.

This first dialogue meeting took place in Singapore and was attended by the 'secretaries-general' as they were called, handling ASEAN affairs, from each of the five member states. New Zealand envisaged contributing \$500,000 in 1975/76 (\$4.8-million in 2015 equivalent value); \$1-million in 1976/77 (\$10-million) and \$2-million+ in 1977/78 (\$20-million).²³ This was over and above bilateral aid. The second dialogue meeting took place in Wellington four months later. The five secretaries-general were hosted by New Zealand and toured the country, as well as having further discussions with their New Zealand counterparts on development projects, for example animal husbandry, trade expansion cooperation, dental health, reforestation and pine forest development and a survey on the end uses of timber: 'we came up with practical courses of action, based on specific projects'.²⁴

It is useful to recall therefore that the dialogue process started as way of recasting the nature of New Zealand's involvement with Southeast Asia in the wake of the disengagement from the Vietnam conflict.

But it could never be just that and officials themselves observed in a March 1975 briefing paper, that, 'as well as being a tangible expression of New Zealand's support for regionalism, economic cooperation with ASEAN will supplement a very useful working relationship that has developed between New Zealand and ASEAN on a number of political subjects, e.g. on UN questions involving Southeast Asia'.²⁵

²² Brian Lynch interview 4 Aug 2015.

²³ Archives New Zealand, KL 203/2/1 part 6, 28 Feb to 2 Mar 1975, heads of mission: regional cooperation.

²⁴ *NZ Foreign Affairs Review* Jul 1975 p 50; Brian Lynch interview 13 Aug 2015; see also Archives New Zealand, 434/12/4/1 part 2, programme for ASEAN-NZ meeting 15–16 Jul 1975.

²⁵ Archives New Zealand, KL 203/2/1 part six, ANZUS Council meeting, 14–15 Apr 1975: regional cooperation in Asia, background paper; see also Archives New Zealand, 434/12/1 part 6, 23–25 Mar 1975 briefing papers.

1973

1975

1975-1979

By the time of the second dialogue meeting, the fall of Saigon, the capital of non-communist South Vietnam, at the end of April 1975 had made a dramatic difference in the geopolitical map of Southeast Asia. The outcome which the US and its allies had sought to avert for twenty years – the installation of communist regimes in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia – was accomplished in that many weeks. The scenes of the American exit from the city did not increase the confidence of governments in the rest of Southeast Asia in the US or in their own security. Thailand and the Philippines, the two ASEAN members formally allied with the US, moved swiftly to open diplomatic relations with Beijing, a possible counterweight to Vietnam²⁶: in the wake of discord between the Soviet Union and China, Vietnam had drawn closer to the Soviet Union. But the change also prompted a drawing together on the part of ASEAN states themselves; it was ASEAN's 'significant moment' said S Rajaratnam, the Singapore minister of foreign affairs in November 1975.²⁷ A first ever ASEAN summit (of heads of government) took place in Bali in February 1976.²⁸ As in 1971 neutralisation was canvassed – one ASEAN diplomat told a New Zealand official that if the US had sent a message to the summit it 'would have been virtually the kiss of death'.²⁹ A declaration of ASEAN concord and a Treaty of Amity and Cooperation were signed, and a single Secretary-General for the organisation appointed for the first time.³⁰

New Zealand for its part now established diplomatic relations with North Vietnam but reassured the ASEAN states that this was a matter of opening up lines of communication not changing sides.

Consistently, New Zealand's ambassador to the US argued that that country should not turn its back on Southeast Asia in the wake of the fall of Saigon, but should take ASEAN seriously: 'we are putting our money on ... ASEAN ... we regard it as the best hope for regional stability in the future.'³¹

In 1975 as in 1965 stability was a loaded word.

New Zealand did not oppose the Indonesian invasion and subsequent annexation of the Portuguese territory of East Timor at the end of 1975, which the Indonesians claimed was otherwise likely to become a communist state.³²

Some of New Zealand's low profile on the issue can be attributed to its exactly coinciding with a general election and change of government. East Timor had declared independence on 28 November and Indonesia invaded on 7 December; the National Party under Robert Muldoon won the election held on 29 November 1975 and took office on 12 December.

But the new government held to the pro-ASEAN policy as the best bet for achieving New Zealand goals in the region and a hostile reaction to the Indonesian move was never likely. Muldoon had met President Suharto of Indonesia on a state visit to New Zealand some years before and admired the 'cold courage' he had displayed in his rise to power (in the wake of the 1965 coup).³³ Muldoon told Suharto when visiting Indonesia in 1975 as Leader of the Opposition that New Zealand 'would much rather see East Timor as a province of Indonesia than as a non-viable independent state up for grabs to whichever superpower could buy its allegiance'.³⁴

1975
1976

²⁶ And Malaysia had done so in May 1974.

²⁷ Archives New Zealand, 434/12/1/1 part 6, 25 Nov 1975.

²⁸ Archives New Zealand, KL 203/2/1 briefing for ANZUS official talks Wellington, 24-25 Feb 1976; see also Lim 1988, 22.

²⁹ Archives New Zealand, 434/12/1/1 part 1, NZHC KL to SFA Wellington, 4 Mar 1976; see also MFA memo of 13 Feb 1976; Acharya 2004, 256.

³⁰ Smith 2005b, 40.

³¹ *New Zealand Foreign Affairs Review* Jul 1975 p 50 (Lloyd White, 'A New Zealand view of US policy in Southeast Asia').

³² Brian Lynch interview 4 Aug 2015.

³³ Muldoon 1981, 94.

³⁴ Muldoon 1981, 94.

This was consistent with the New Zealand government's acquiescence in the suppression of communism in Indonesia itself in 1965–66.

Some diplomatic toing and froing took place over whether the prime ministers of Australia, Japan – and by inference New Zealand – would be invited to meet the ASEAN leaders at the end of the Bali summit.³⁵ This did not transpire but it was indicative of the way that ASEAN and wider Asia-Pacific security and economic issues – from which the US could not be divorced – were interwoven. The three countries were the US's principal allies in the wider region and their association with ASEAN had concomitant advantages. Indeed a senior Thai official was reported anonymously in a Thai language daily in November 1975 as saying that its foreign ministry intended to ask Australia, New Zealand and Japan to provide security for Thailand following the withdrawal of US troops.³⁶ While that was always unlikely, the new New Zealand government kept the force in Singapore: 'from the Singapore government's point of view we are there as a presence which has some psychological value even though we have no combat role.'³⁷

From the New Zealand official point of view ASEAN remained the best bet.³⁸

'Please accept my warm personal congratulations on the successful outcome of that important meeting,' wrote Muldoon to each ASEAN leader in the wake of the Bali summit.

'I applaud the spirit of understanding and compromise [demonstrated] in reaching agreement on a concerted approach to the further development of your cooperation in ASEAN. The signing of the summit's declaration of concord, and of the treaty of amity and cooperation, are events of profound significance in the history of the Asian-Pacific region. For New Zealand's part I can assure you of our continuing support for your collective endeavours in ASEAN.'³⁹

The message could hardly have been more unqualified in its support. In March and early April 1976, the new foreign minister, Brian Talboys, followed up with a lengthy visit to ASEAN, taking in all five ASEAN capitals, and was met with lavish welcomes. One of the accompanying officials recalled that each host country, in acknowledgement of the capital of their guest's country, put Beef Wellington on the menu for the official dinner.⁴⁰

The third ASEAN–New Zealand dialogue was held in Jakarta on 9–10 May 1977.⁴¹ Like the preceding two in 1975 it dealt with development but also paid more attention to trade. But the more significant event in 1977 was Muldoon's attendance, along with the prime ministers of Australia and Japan, at the ASEAN heads of government at Kuala Lumpur, in the wake of the second ASEAN summit – so the meetings that had been foreshadowed at the time of the Bali meeting had now happened. As in 1976 the selection of countries was significant – not the US itself but its three most self-reliant and steadfast allies in the wider region. Muldoon had foreshadowed the meeting during a visit to Singapore in March 1977: 'I told [Lee Kuan Yew] that if an invitation were extended I would be happy to attend the ASEAN summit in August.'⁴² Arguably it was at this meeting that the notion of dialogue took on its more longer-lasting meaning – an event which took place after a meeting of heads of government and/or foreign ministers.⁴³ (The official-level New Zealand–ASEAN dialogues continued nonetheless – the fourth in September 1979, the fifth in March 1981, the sixth in November 1983, the seventh in December 1985,

35 Archives New Zealand, 434/12/1 part 6, NZE Tokyo to Wellington 22 Jan 1976.

36 Archives New Zealand, 434/12/1 part 6, press cutting 19 Nov 1975 on file.

37 Muldoon 1981, 97.

38 Archives New Zealand, 434/12/4/1 pt 1, MFA memo 13 Feb 1976.

39 Archives New Zealand, KL 203/2/1 part 7, SFA to posts 7 Mar 1976, message approved for transmission

40 Brian Lynch interview, 4 Aug 2015; see also *NZ Foreign Affairs Review*, Mar 1976, 3–16. Talboys's visit went from 16 Mar to 6 Apr 1976.

41 Dates and location cited on Archives New Zealand, 434/12/4/1 part 6, background note for the 5th ASEAN–NZ dialogue Manila, 26–27 Mar 1981.

42 *NZ Foreign Affairs Review*, Jan–Mar 1977, 20.

43 *NZ Foreign Affairs Review*, Jul–Dec 1979, 33: 'It was at Kuala Lumpur

that the real dialogue between NZ and ASEAN began because it was there that the initiative was taken to invited the New Zealand Prime Minister ... to meet with the leaders'; see also Archives New Zealand, 434/12/4/1 part 7a, statement of leader of the NZ delegation, M.J.C. Templeton to the 5th NZ–ASEAN dialogue, Manila 26–27 Mar 1981; see also MFAT, 434/12/4/1 part 14, briefing, NZ and ASEAN, 22 Feb 1991.

the eighth in April 1987, the ninth in November 1988, the tenth in June 1990 and a 22nd in February 2015.⁴⁴)

At Kuala Lumpur Muldoon pledged development aid *and* enhanced trade opportunities for ASEAN states in the New Zealand market.⁴⁵ This latter may seem strange from the perspective of 2015 when two ASEAN states have higher standards of living than New Zealand and a third is not far off. But in 1977 the economic transformation of the region was only just under way. Senior Trade and Industry official Ted Woodfield's observations about the trade relationship at the time, though prescient about dominance of northern hemisphere markets for New Zealand (if not China) assumed a level of ASEAN interest in the New Zealand market which was hardly the case 35 years later.⁴⁶ Moreover at the time requests for liberalised access to the New Zealand market bumped up against the complexities of New Zealand's import regime: 'The aid and trade promotion activity has been carried out but we have not yet fulfilled our commitments on trade access.'⁴⁷ At the fourth dialogue in September 1979, New Zealand tried to broaden and balance the exchange by suggesting talks about energy, tourism and transport, in part because it had reached limits of what could be done through import liberalisation given its import regime at the time.

At a more subjective and personal level (never to be underestimated in ASEAN affairs) Muldoon developed a high regard for Singapore – 'of all the ASEAN countries we have the most relaxed relationship with Singapore', he wrote in 1981 – and in particular for prime minister Lee Kuan Yew.⁴⁸ Officials too found their Singaporean counterparts the most straightforward to deal with and the most responsive to ideas and initiatives. Muldoon was aware of another significant factor in the relationship and indeed in intra-ASEAN relations: the stability in leadership in the various countries. Suharto and Lee both led their countries for thirty years; and while there was more change in Thailand (including a number of military coups) the Crown and officialdom provided continuity.⁴⁹

1977

1979

44 Archives New Zealand, 434/12/4/1part 7a; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 434/12/4/1 parts 10-14; Severino 2007, 32; <http://www.asean.org/news/asean-secretariat-news/item/asean-new-zealand-discuss-future-direction>.

45 Archives New Zealand, 434/12/1/1 part 2, ASEAN relations with NZ; SFA to Min FA, 26 Mar 1979; see also Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Wellington, ASEAN and New Zealand, information bulletin no 17, Sep 1986), 4.

46 Woodfield 1979, passim; Rolfe 2005, 41 ('aid was the early and important issue in the relationship'), Hawke 2005, 71-72.

47 Archives New Zealand, 434/12/4/1 part 2 SFA to Min FA 26 Mar 1979.

48 Muldoon 1981, 97, 94.

49 Muldoon 1981, 96.

1979-1989

By the time of that 1979 dialogue meeting the geopolitics of Southeast Asia had again been transformed, this time by the Vietnamese invasion and occupation of Cambodia, prompted in part by accumulating evidence of genocidal actions being taken by the Khmer Rouge (communist) government.⁵⁰ Over the next decade ASEAN combated the Vietnamese move through supporting the opposing forces in Cambodia – even the ousted Khmer Rouge – and seeking to isolate Vietnam internationally.⁵¹ ASEAN's stance on the issue created a de facto alignment with China. Relations between the two communist states had gone into free fall. The Khmer Rouge had been to a degree a protégé of Beijing, and China was as adamant as ASEAN that the Vietnamese occupation should not be legitimised in any way. It responded to the Vietnamese with border attacks, triggering a brief but bloody war (while not to be compared with earlier Indochina conflicts, estimates of deaths on both sides were in five figures) in February and March 1979.

Naturally these developments affected New Zealand. There was no likelihood of New Zealand endorsing the Vietnamese action, although initially it was keen to find ways of opening a dialogue with Vietnam: 'we should continue to support ASEAN, and maintain close relations with its member governments. At the same time, we should encourage them to look for ways of reducing tensions and of coming to terms with Vietnam.'⁵²

As in the aftermath of the fall of Saigon the Vietnamese invasion saw a ratcheting up of intra-ASEAN diplomacy and relationships

with allies. New Zealand was drawn into this. Foreign minister Talboys attended an ASEAN dialogue at the beginning of July 1979 in the immediate aftermath of the ASEAN foreign ministers annual meeting, held at Bali. He reaffirmed New Zealand support for ASEAN and pointed to the country's record of standing by its friends.⁵³ New Zealand also agreed to help Thailand by taking 7,000 Cambodian refugees from camps on the Thai-Cambodian border.⁵⁴

At the annual General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) in New York in September and October 1979 – the first meeting of the General Assembly since the Vietnamese invasion – New Zealand diplomats held a series of urgent consultations with all the ASEAN foreign ministers, which led to New Zealand voting with all ASEAN countries in the General Assembly on both the Kampuchea credentials resolution and on calls for the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia. A few days later, Talboys embarked on a substantial 20-day tour of ASEAN capitals to underline New Zealand's support for ASEAN over the Cambodia issue.⁵⁵

That these were also Chinese wishes was not a big dilemma for the New Zealand government. Muldoon was much more hostile to the presence of the more powerful Soviet Union in the Pacific than to a seemingly détente-oriented China. Muldoon's visit to the Northeast Asian capitals in 1976 – he was the one of the last heads of government to meet Mao Zedong – had given him a regard for a China emerging from the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution.⁵⁶ Deng Xiaoping's talk of China taking the 'capitalist road' was also not unhelpful. In contrast, the Soviet Union was Vietnam's great power ally and therefore regarded as partly responsible for the invasion of Kampuchea.⁵⁷ The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 upped the stakes further. Moreover New Zealand officials did not see the ASEAN enthusiasm for China as deep-rooted: 'if a settlement is reached in Kampuchea, the underlying ASEAN suspicion of China is likely to reassert itself.'⁵⁸

1979

⁵⁰ Cambodia was known as Kampuchea in English from 1975-1989 but other than when the state name ('Democratic Kampuchea') is specifically referred to I have used Cambodia.

⁵¹ See also Acharya 1997, 323 (i.e. emphasis on domestic as well as intra-ASEAN stability).

⁵² Archives New Zealand, 434/12/4/1 part 2, Min FA to Cabinet Committee on Foreign Policy, 20 Jun 1979, 'Policy towards Southeast Asia'.

⁵³ Archives New Zealand, 434/12/4/1 part 3 ASEAN and New Zealand relations, fourth ASEAN and NZ officials dialogue 3-4 Sep 1979, briefing paper: review of ASEAN developments since 1977 dialogue.

⁵⁴ Smith 2005b, 97.

⁵⁵ Archives New Zealand, 434/12/4/1 part 3, 3-4 Sep 1979; NZ *Foreign Affairs Review* Jul-Dec 1979, 33-34.

⁵⁶ Brian Lynch interview 13 Aug 2015.

⁵⁷ NZ Foreign Affairs Review Jan-Mar 1980, 12 (ANZUS Council communique 27 Feb 1980); Apr-Jun 1981, 30 (address by Minister of Foreign Affairs in Singapore, 16 Jun 1981).

⁵⁸ Archives New Zealand, 434/12/4/1 part 2, Min FA to Cabinet Committee on Foreign Policy 20 Jun 1979.

Chinese vice-premier Li Xiannan visited New Zealand in May 1980. The public record of the visit makes no mention of it but a primary reason was to buttress New Zealand's support for the ASEAN stance on Cambodia.⁵⁹

The scale of the genocide carried out by the Khmer Rouge had become apparent through 1979 and public opinion in many countries was hostile to any action which could be construed as endorsing the Khmer Rouge's crimes. The UK had 'de-recognised' the ousted government in November 1979 and Australia was debating the same course of action.⁶⁰

The ASEAN position itself on Cambodia was not rock solid. Vietnam–Thai rivalry over Cambodia long antedated the Cold War; conversely the more distant Southeast Asian states were not as wedded to the strong line against Vietnam, being more suspicious of Chinese than of Vietnamese power.⁶¹ But a border incident in late June 1980 when 1,500 Vietnamese soldiers crossed into Thailand and clashed with Thai army units changed the atmosphere. The ASEAN foreign ministers meeting, held a week later, roundly condemned Vietnam.⁶²

In Australia, foreign minister Andrew Peacock was at odds with the government's stance in support of ASEAN, even though it involved continuing acknowledgement of the Khmer Rouge. However after the general election in October 1980, the re-elected government de-recognised the ousted government.⁶³

Would New Zealand now follow suit? The Thai Ambassador to the Philippines conveyed ASEAN anxieties that it would to New Zealand diplomats in Manila late in 1980.⁶⁴ ASEAN visitors headed to Wellington in the new year – a 'charm offensive'

one scholar reckoned.⁶⁵ The Thai foreign minister visited in February 1981, the Thai prime minister in August 1981 (poorly timed in terms of the turmoil in New Zealand at the time over a South African rugby tour) and Lee Kuan Yew holidayed in New Zealand for a week in September but had meetings with Muldoon.⁶⁶ New Zealand did not follow its Commonwealth allies in altering its stance but adhered to the ASEAN position throughout the 1980s, despite the widespread abhorrence of the Khmer Rouge.⁶⁷

Why was this so? A number of reasons can be suggested. First, though the issue attracted controversy in New Zealand it was on a much more modest scale than other protest movements, notably that of rugby ties with South Africa, and the anti-nuclear movement. Neither of these causes (or analogues of them) was as significant in the UK or Australia. Second, Muldoon exercised a strong steering influence over New Zealand foreign relations and, once having decided to stick by ASEAN, he was unlikely to change his mind despite the discomfort the stance involved: 'certainly the vote should not be seen as a support for Pol Pot. There is evidence to the effect that he practised genocide on his own people. Our reasons were totally related to ASEAN wishes.'⁶⁸ Third, New Zealand did continually look for ways to modify the painful contradiction of between its outright opposition to the perpetrators of the Cambodia genocide and its opposition to the Vietnamese occupation. It did this principally by supporting all efforts to construct an opposition government, taking in non-communist forces.

This approach had a modest success with the formation of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) in June 1982, which took in not just the ousted Khmer Rouge but former Cambodia leader Prince Sihanouk's FUNCINPEC party and Son Sann's Khmer People's National Liberation Front. In the vote on credentials at the General Assembly later that year, the CGDK government gained much more support than the ousted Khmer Rouge had the year before. Son Sann visited New Zealand early in 1983.

1979

1983

⁵⁹ NZ *Foreign Affairs Review*, Apr–Jun 1980, 39; Smith 2005b, 100.

⁶⁰ Smith 2005b, 103.

⁶¹ Narine 2008, 415–416.

⁶² Smith 2005b, 102.

⁶³ Smith 2005b, 103.

⁶⁴ Archives New Zealand, 434/12/4/1 part five, 2 Feb 1981. Pol Pot was the head of the Khmer Rouge government.

⁶⁵ Smith 2005b, 40.

⁶⁶ Smith 2005b, 105–106; NZ *Foreign Affairs Review* Jul–Sep 1981, 57.

⁶⁷ Bellamy 2008, 20.

⁶⁸ Archives New Zealand, 434/12/4/1 part 3, *New Zealand Herald* 5 Nov 1979 on file. Pol Pot was the leader of the ousted Khmer Rouge.

The National government lost office in mid-1984. How would the new Labour government deal with ASEAN in general and the Cambodian issue in particular? Vietnamese operations in 1984 and 1985 largely destroyed the military effectiveness of the two non-communist forces but the CGDK continued in existence and continued to be recognised as the government of Cambodia by the UN. A Labour government preoccupied with many issues, both domestic and foreign, other than Southeast Asia, had no reason therefore to change its stance on Cambodia. Moreover Vietnam, which was relatively isolated diplomatically and economically, had not stood in the way of negotiations between the government in Phnom Penh and the CGDK that began late in 1987. New Zealand along with other interested parties was kept informed. At a colloquium in 1988, while Foreign Minister Russell Marshall acknowledged that the policy of support for the ASEAN stance on the Cambodian crisis had been criticised, he reiterated his government's adherence to it as did his successor in the National government elected at the end of 1990, Don McKinnon.⁶⁹

Cambodia had resurfaced as a public issue in New Zealand at the end of the decade in part on account of television reportage on the Khmer Rouge 'killing fields' of 1975-78. The Labour government announced a change of stance on the credential issue in June 1990.

This was not however controversial with ASEAN as it would have been years earlier. Vietnam had pulled all its forces out of Cambodia in September 1989 and negotiations for a political settlement in that country were well under way.⁷⁰

The principal New Zealand foreign policy preoccupation in the first term of the fourth Labour government was its disagreement with the US and Australia over its hostile stance on nuclear weapons. In part on this account, Prime Minister David Lange, who was also

minister of foreign affairs, did not attend the ASEAN PMC in Kuala Lumpur in July 1985.⁷¹ ASEAN member states thought the conflict, which led to the suspension of the US security guarantee to New Zealand under the ANZUS treaty, might undermine the tripwire utility of New Zealand's deployment in and commitments to the region. But by the end of the decade they did not think so.⁷² The withdrawal of New Zealand forces from Singapore in 1989 was uneventful, the SPDA remaining as active after that redeployment as before.⁷³ Nor did the new government challenge the Indonesian occupation of East Timor.⁷⁴

New Zealand was fortunate that ASEAN disquiet at the lack of progress on economic liberalisation was overshadowed from 1979 by its concern to secure New Zealand support over the Cambodia issue.⁷⁵ The inception of the Closer Economic Relations between New Zealand and Australia (CER) in 1983 rekindled trade concerns and there was bad feeling over New Zealand's removal of developed country status from Singapore and Brunei for trade purposes in 1985 and also over New Zealand's stance on private student fees.⁷⁶

But the dynamism of the ASEAN economies blunted concerns: 'The six nations of ASEAN have often been regarded as an "oasis" where growth and general prosperity were maintained, even during the global recession of 1981-1983 ... Japan and the Newly Industrialised Countries (NICs) of East Asia have opened the path of modernisation and ASEAN comes close on their heels.'⁷⁷ Integration, it could be said was enterprise led rather than organisationally led, reflecting in part multiple networks that criss-crossed the region.⁷⁸

1983

1989

69 Marshall 1988, 14; Bellamy 2008, 21; MFAT, 434/12/4/1, part 14, statement at ASEAN PMC 22-24 Jul 1991, 6+1.

70 Smith 2005b, 111; Bellamy 2008, 21-22.

71 Archives New Zealand, 434/12/1/4, 24 May 1985, transcript of post-caucus press conference conducted by Lange.

72 Brian Lynch interview 13 Aug 2015, commenting on Lee Kuan Yew in particular.

73 Sutton 2007, xv; Hensley 2012, 12.

74 Archives New Zealand, 434/12/1/4 part 8, O'Flynn meeting with Dr Mochtar, Indonesian foreign minister, 11 Jul 1985.

75 Archives New Zealand, 434/12/4/1 part 5 briefing paper 6 Oct 1980.

76 Archives New Zealand, 434/12/4/1 parts 7a, 7b, passim; part 9 (a formal protest from Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the New Zealand High Commission, 26 Jan 1985); part 11 (note of 20 Oct 1988; the regime

for Singapore and Brunei was modified later in 1985 and in 1987, see press statement at end of ASEAN-New Zealand dialogue meeting, 7-8 Apr 1987).

77 Archives New Zealand, KL 203/2/1 part 11, Tengku Razaleigh Ramzah at PBEC meeting, Auckland [13] May 1985. Brunei joined ASEAN as its sixth member in 1984.

78 Gary Hawke, personal communication, 7 Sep 2015.

Perhaps because of that, formal economic cooperation amongst ASEAN member states lagged: 'ASEAN countries have been able to stop fighting each other but not to sacrifice economic self-interest'.⁷⁹ Institutionalised economic collaboration advanced more rapidly across the larger region, remaining, as in the 1960s and 1970s, a reflection of Japan's economic dynamism. In the aftermath of a more ambitious initiative by Japanese Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira, Australia and Japan jointly promoted a track two Pacific economic cooperation committee (PECC) which brought together officials, business people and scholars.⁸⁰

PECC paved the way for APEC, another Japan–Australian scheme but in this instance a 'track one' initiative.⁸¹ It was in part a product of Australian dissatisfaction at ASEAN being in the driver's seat on regional cooperation but accomplishing little. It gained traction when taken up by Japan and then won ASEAN endorsement. Its structure was not ASEAN-centric in the way that the system of dialogues had made familiar but it did, like the dialogues, locate ASEAN in a larger regional framework, something that was to prove a precursor to other developments after 1990.⁸²

1983

1989

⁷⁹ Brownowski 1988, 165
⁸⁰ <http://www.pecc.org/about/pecc-introduction-and-history>; for the Ohira initiative and New Zealand see Muldoon 1981, 98–99.

⁸¹ <http://www.pecc.org/about/pecc-introduction-and-history>
⁸² Ravenhill 2001, 58–89.

The Cold War Era in retrospect

At the end of the 1980s New Zealand could look back on 15 years of dialogue with ASEAN and a near quarter century of support for the organisation. Politicians could be lyrical: 'In the 1950s and 1960s New Zealand saw Southeast Asia through British and American eyes ... in the 1970s and 1980s we New Zealanders have come to see our place in the world rather differently ... once we saw [Southeast Asia] as through a telescope, looking past the intervening lands and seas; now we look at them through a wide-angle lens.'⁸³

Scholars were more sceptical. 'Few New Zealanders,' said Terence Wesley-Smith in 1979, 'have felt an identity of interest with, or an affinity for, the peoples of the region.'⁸⁴ 'It remains the case,' said Ralph Hayburn nearly a decade later, 'that we have very little contact, trade or otherwise, with this region, with its population of close to 300-million ... I believe that as things stand at present, the average New Zealander would have difficulty naming more than a couple of ASEAN member states.'⁸⁵

Did that matter? Not necessarily. First, the relationship was in the hands of experts, not the public. A cohort of New Zealand diplomats and officials had become skilled in the conventions of Asian diplomacy – the relatively low premium placed on formal, clause-heavy agreements; the much greater weight put on networks and contacts whether in business, academic life, officialdom or politics.⁸⁶

Second, with the disengagement from Vietnam, New Zealand's Cold War diplomacy in Asia had become relatively uncontentious at home, as it had been before 1964. New Zealand ASEAN diplomacy both contributed to and benefited from that. ASEAN was endogenous to the region and it continued to call for ZOPFAN. But it also allowed the US and its allies to quietly maintain their bases and deployments in the region.⁸⁷ Beyond ASEAN the New Zealand government supported regional initiatives that fostered cohesion and cooperation within a broadly US-centred system. APEC was an expression of that, as were the mesh of US alliances and understandings across the region.

Cold War diplomacy was not for the faint-hearted. The bloody history of post-colonial Southeast Asia cast a long shadow over the first years of the New Zealand-ASEAN relationship. New Zealand support for the US in Vietnam, for Suharto in Indonesia, and for Indonesia in East Timor, was followed by an awkward endorsement at the UN of the ousted Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, a regime responsible for one of the 20th century's most horrific genocides. New Zealand-ASEAN diplomacy to 1990 was a problematic means to a desired end. It used rhetoric of benign, pragmatic pathways to development and self-reliance but those pathways were built over many hundreds of thousands of ruined or violently destroyed Southeast Asian lives.

In 1989–91 the world changed. The transformation in Europe and the Soviet Union reverberated in Asia. The scope existed for a very different region and a different role for ASEAN than had been the case in the preceding 15 years. Would ASEAN indeed even have a role?⁸⁸ Whatever the outcome, that in turn would shape New Zealand's relations with the organisation, with its member states and with the region.

1967

1989

⁸³ Marshall 1988, 8–9.

⁸⁴ Wesley-Smith 1979, 8.

⁸⁵ Hayburn 1988, 3.

⁸⁶ Hawke 2005, 64–66.

⁸⁷ Archives New Zealand, KL 203/2/1 NZHC KL to SFA and posts 13 Sep 1984.

⁸⁸ Acharya 2004, 257; Narine 2008, 417; MFAT, 434/12/4/1 part 14, briefing paper for Minister, NZ and ASEAN.

1990–2005 — After the Cold War

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Introduction

Cranleigh Barton is one of many New Zealanders who has toured extensively in Southeast Asia. His three-month trip took in Java, Singapore, Bangkok, Cambodia (including a visit to Angkor), Saigon, back to Singapore via Bangkok, Penang, Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur and Malacca, a second visit to Java and home via Australia. The prosperous, settled Southeast Asia Barton visited was a world away from the disorder and destruction of the war and Cold War years.

But Barton did not visit in the 1990s or 2000s; he had travelled through Southeast Asia in the last three months of 1930.⁸⁹ In many ways the end of Cold War in Southeast Asia saw not the crafting of a new world but the restoration of an old one. Like their predecessor colonial regimes of the pre-Second World War era the post-1990 states of Southeast Asia were (mostly) authoritarian, bureaucratic, capitalist and development oriented. Their boundaries followed with exact precision those of their colonial predecessors (in the case of former French Indochina and the former British Malay territories some internal boundaries as well). They were open to trade and investment with the rest of the world as those colonial regimes had been. Among those traders and investors before 1940 had been South British Insurance and New Zealand Insurance – two Auckland companies which had developed a network of offices across Southeast Asia and beyond. The first South British agent in the region had been appointed in Singapore in 1882; the company also expanded in the Dutch East Indies (the future Indonesia), with both territories showing ‘exceptional returns’ on the eve of World War II.⁹⁰

New Zealand officials speaking of the economic importance of the region to New Zealand in the 1990s could as usefully have looked back as forward.

Of course there were obvious differences between the two eras. The ruling elites were no longer Europeans or Americans but indigenous to the region. And democracy, if rare in practice, was honoured in the breach. Socialism and communism, which had posed a challenge to the colonial regimes and had been the rival claimant to non-communist nationalism for succession to colonial rule between 1945 and 1990, had been sidelined.

Relations with the Asia beyond Southeast Asia were even more different. In 1930, China, its imperial rulers overthrown less than 20 years before, was on the verge of civil war, and invasion by Japan. The Indian subcontinent was completely under British rule. By 1990 the People’s Republic of China and India had four decades of independent history behind them and Japan overshadowed Europe and the US in the economic life of Southeast Asia. In sum, while post-1990 economic and political order bore resemblances to the pre-1930 one, the guardians, the rulers of that order, had changed.

Asia and Asians had come into their own. Old or new, what would be the impact of the end of the Cold War on ASEAN and on the New Zealand-ASEAN relationship?

First, in defusing, almost at a stroke, the ASEAN-Vietnam conflict, the end of the Cold War opened the way for a new expanded ASEAN that might realise one promise of the Bangkok Declaration – a unified Southeast Asia.

⁸⁹ Alexander Turnbull Library, 77-166-6/21, Cranleigh Barton diary, 28 Sep 1930 to 5 Jan 1931.

⁹⁰ Vennell 1972, 121-125.

Second, it opened the way for an agenda of broader regional cooperation in economic matters and security far more ambitious than was envisaged before 1990, one that might take in the communist states.

Third, while the Soviet Union had ceased to be an actor in the region – indeed ceased to exist – China remained a significant alternative centre of power and influence to the US. China might largely have abandoned socialism as an organising device for its economy and society but the crushing of dissent in Tienanmen Square in June 1989 made it clear that the country's leadership had no intention of emulating the democratic transition being witnessed in the former-Soviet allies in Europe. It was therefore unlikely to be accommodated readily into a US-led regional order. India too, about to embark on its own economic liberalisation, was cautious.

None of these developments or circumstances was problematic for New Zealand. New Zealand had supported wider regional organisations as well as ASEAN, and if such organisations could be expanded and adapted so much the better. With respect to both China and the US there were particular dimensions that reverberated at the time in New Zealand-ASEAN relations. In respect of China, one New Zealand commentator wrote in 1995 that, 'more than any other single factor, the way Asia-Pacific manages the increasing ascendancy of China will influence every country. Individual ASEAN countries are prepared to explore long-term relations with China' and New Zealand needed to 'take a basic cue from this ASEAN disposition'.⁹¹ In respect of the US, would new Asia-Pacific initiatives provide ways of reinvigorating New Zealand contacts with that country post-ANZUS, even if indirectly?

⁹¹ O'Brien 1995, 7.

ASEAN and New Zealand in the 1990s

The Bangkok declaration of August 1967 had opened ASEAN to 'all States in the South-East Asian Region subscribing to the aforementioned aims, principles and purposes'.⁹² With the exception of Brunei's accession in 1984 the membership of ASEAN was the same in 1990 as at its formation. Change was now possible. In January 1990, the Thai Prime Minister publicly voiced his support for Vietnam membership.⁹³ Between late 1991 and early 1992, Vietnam restored relations with several member nations of ASEAN. The Paris peace agreements formally ending the Cambodia conflict were signed in October 1991.⁹⁴

New Zealand's endorsement was unqualified and the government was one of 45 which committed significant forces to UNTAC, the UN transitional authority in Cambodia, which operated in 1992 and 1993. New Zealand operations including de-mining activity, while there was one exchange of fire with Khmer Rouge forces as yet unreconciled to the new order.⁹⁵

The Cambodia crisis had not been resolved primarily by ASEAN, and indeed UNTAC had a neocolonial feel to it – the UNTAC head of mission was Japanese and the force commander for the duration of the operation was an Australian.⁹⁶ But given the depth of hostility within Southeast Asia which had to be overcome that might have been preferable. And ASEAN expanded. Vietnam joined ASEAN

as a full member in 1995 followed by Laos and Myanmar in 1997 and Cambodia in 1999. None of these states had democratic regimes – the closest to it, Cambodia, had witnessed in 1997 a de facto coup d'état within the government by which Hun Sen, of the Cambodian People's Party ousted Norodom Ranariddh of the rival FUNCINPEC from the prime ministership and the government.

New Zealand voiced its criticism through closed diplomatic channels rather than publicly, as a way of not compromising its overall support for ASEAN.⁹⁷ The same was true more generally, in respect of the regimes in all the new member states, not to mention the authoritarian regimes in the existing member states, notably Indonesia. ASEAN elites expanded their networks into the new member states without qualms.⁹⁸ New Zealand paid heed. The behind closed doors approaches were an acknowledgement, never entirely unselfconscious, of non-interference in domestic matters, of the 'ASEAN way'.⁹⁹

The rapprochement across Southeast Asia made headlines, but at a meeting of New Zealand heads of mission in Jakarta 1990 the main issue was economic growth in the region and what New Zealand could do to take advantage of it. One report reckoned that New Zealand was 'going to have to work hard at maintaining what we have ... we need the region more than it needs us'.¹⁰⁰ The Cairns group, which included Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia, provided a channel for cooperation in the Uruguay Round of global trade negotiations.¹⁰¹ But it did not directly address Australia–New Zealand and ASEAN trade relations. Scholars and officials made the case for a closer economic relationship between CER and ASEAN. A dialogue began in the mid-1990s, with an ASEAN–CER business summit held for the first time at APEC in 1997.¹⁰²

1990

1997

⁹² <http://www.asean.org/news/item/the-asean-declaration-bangkok-declaration>

⁹³ Thayer and Amer 1999, 3.

⁹⁴ Bellamy 2008, 21–22.

⁹⁵ Smith 2005b, 27–28.

⁹⁶ <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/untacfacts.html>

⁹⁷ Smith 2005b, 116.

⁹⁸ Acharya 1997, 342.

⁹⁹ For a full elaboration see Acharya 1997, 328–333.

¹⁰⁰ Hawke 2005, 75; for a coruscating view of New Zealand attitudes to ASEAN at this time see Vasil 1995, passim.

¹⁰¹ MFAT 1995, 41.

¹⁰² Hawke 2005, 78; see also O'Brien and Holmes 1995, 31–32, 41–42.

The established pattern of New Zealand support for ASEAN development (and therefore security) survived. The regular dialogues continued (the 15th in 2002 for example¹⁰³). But New Zealand's main development effort was reoriented to the new member states and it was the principal funder for the Mekong Institute, set up in Khon Kaen, Thailand, to coordinate projects across that part of ASEAN, the 'greater Mekong subregion'.¹⁰⁴

The Bangkok declaration of 1967 had spoken firmly of ASEAN states being 'determined to ensure their stability and security from external interference in any form or manifestation in order to preserve their national identities in accordance with the ideals and aspirations of their peoples'.¹⁰⁵ What did that signify in the 1990s? ASEAN states were no longer at direct risk of 'external interference' as that phrase was understood in 1967, and indeed in the crafting of dialogues since the mid-1970s ASEAN had forged a mechanism for engaging outside powers in the region on terms that were acceptable to ASEAN. Why not expand this?

Such an approach had two factors in its favour. First, the 'ASEAN way' of cooperation was non-confrontational, seeking commonalities, even if lowest common denominator ones, rather than contesting differences: 'consensus is considered to be a common feature of decision-making in many Asian societies, in the ASEAN context, the term is usually traced to a particular style of decision-making within Javanese village society. In its Javanese conception, consensus or *musjawarah* is a way by which a village leader makes important decisions affecting social life in the village'.¹⁰⁶ This had to be an advantage when many conflicts were submerged rather than resolved.

Second, beyond ASEAN there were no plausible alternative models of regional cooperation. In particular relations amongst the states of Northeast Asia were far too fraught (and had their own highly contested history) and those states would likely therefore welcome the triangulation involved in bringing ASEAN into the picture. The US, while not necessarily enthusiastic, was not averse. India would resist a formal arrangement but accept something looser – the spirit of Bandung persisted.

1990

1997

¹⁰³ Severino 2007, 32.

¹⁰⁴ Rolfe 2005, 35; Hawke 2005, 73.

¹⁰⁵ http://www.asean.org/news/item/the-asean-declaration-bangkok-declaration_preamble

¹⁰⁶ Acharya 1997, 330.

ASEAN and a wider regional economic order

In practice the evolution of regional order was different in respect of economic and security cooperation. As discussed above, APEC had taken off before the end of the Cold War. ASEAN's support for APEC was based on expectations, as Singapore's trade and industry minister then put it, that it will be a 'useful informal group for the purposes of the GATT Uruguay Round, of like-minded countries with a common interest in a successful outcome of the Round'.¹⁰⁷ But another potential contribution of APEC was seen to lie in countering some of the uncertainties in the regional investment climate caused by post-Cold War developments in Europe: 'At a time when Eastern Europe was attracting more attention from the developed countries, APEC would provide an extra incentive for Japan and other major regional economies to strengthen their ties with ASEAN.'¹⁰⁸

New Zealand was an enthusiastic supporter of APEC, described by one minister in the 1990s as New Zealand's 'most important economic relationship'.¹⁰⁹ It included all of New Zealand's then major trading partners bar the EU and with its potential for 'open regionalism' was bound to overshadow the economic ties between New Zealand and ASEAN, given that no ASEAN member state was at that time a leading trading partner.¹¹⁰

The formation of APEC was not deflected by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's enthusiasm for an 'East Asian economic caucus' (EAEC) taking in the ASEAN states, Japan, China and South Korea but excluding the US and Canada, Australia and New Zealand.¹¹¹ Japan, a firm ally of the US and by far the largest Asian economy at the time, was never likely to agree and did not, while in 1991 the three 'Chinese' economies – namely the PRC, Taiwan and Hong Kong – were welcomed into APEC (consequent on the necessary diplomacy involved in bringing the Chinese mainland and Taiwan into the same organisation). But the notion touched on a potential tension in regional architecture between Asian and Asia-Pacific schemes. It could be said that while the former drew on ASEAN's anti-colonial antecedents – Mahathir being fervent in this respect – APEC drew on its 'San Francisco' antecedents.

APEC gained added traction from the profile given the organisation by US President Bill Clinton when he hosted a heads of government APEC summit at Seattle in November 1993 – one of a number of summits 'creatively initiated' by Clinton.¹¹² It was partly designed to deflect the EAEC.¹¹³ At this point the relative weight of the US compared with China in the region was sufficient to ensure an outcome favourable to the former. The leaders' declaration issued at Seattle referred to it being 'an unprecedented meeting of ... economic leaders ... In this post-Cold War era, we have an opportunity to build a new economic foundation for the Asia-Pacific that harnesses the energy of our ... economies, strengthens cooperation and promotes prosperity'.¹¹⁴

ASEAN was not able to control the agenda-setting process in APEC, a fact resented by many ASEAN leaders, although ASEAN endorsement had been a prerequisite for the organisation gaining traction.¹¹⁵ ASEAN did however veto an Australian proposal to rename APEC as Asia-Pacific Economic Community, as it took the scheme way beyond the informal structures which ASEAN preferred.¹¹⁶

1990

1997

¹⁰⁷ Acharya 1997, 323, citing H.L. Lee, Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore, speech of 11 Jul 1990 provided by Ministry of Trade and Industry, Singapore, 9.

¹⁰⁸ Acharya 1997, 323–324. The European Maastricht treaty and the North American free trade area were also mentioned, see also Chin 2007, 42.

¹⁰⁹ Hawke 2005, 57–58.

¹¹⁰ On the 'open regionalism' see Smith 2005c, 15.

¹¹¹ Baldwin 2012, 22.

¹¹² O'Brien 1995, 9.

¹¹³ Acharya 1997, 338.

¹¹⁴ http://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Leaders-Declarations/1993/1993_aelm.aspx

¹¹⁵ Acharya 1997, 341.

¹¹⁶ Acharya 1997, 331.

ASEAN and a wider regional security order

'For a long time in the post-Second World War period the network of bilateral security ties between the US and other regional states functioned as the only mechanism to ensure stability in this region.'¹¹⁷ The opportunity to craft a different or complementary security regime to the San Francisco system had arisen with the end of the Cold War. One model was the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), a product of 1970s détente. But Asia had more complex conflicts than Europe, and the end of the Cold War had not dissolved all of them. Some ASEAN members were sceptical about OSCE implications for the ASEAN's way of conducting regional relations.¹¹⁸ Moreover, as in the early 1970s some US allies were reluctant to subscribe to any scheme which might weaken their bilateral ties with the US.¹¹⁹ The US itself was also reluctant to foster a new arrangement which might weaken its alliances in the region. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific Richard Solomon called the various proposals 'solutions in search of a problem'.¹²⁰

At the ASEAN post-ministerial dialogue in 1991, Japanese foreign minister Taro Nakayama proposed using the occasion as a forum for a political dialogue on regional security issues to enhance mutual reassurance.¹²¹ 'ASEAN centrality' provided a way forward. Australian, New Zealand and Singaporean officials and scholars lobbied; the concept of an

ASEAN regional forum (ARF) with multiple tracks was refined, and approved at the 1993 ASEAN post-ministerial meeting.¹²² For ASEAN such a scheme for multilateral security addressed its wish to engage *all* the powers in its region: to keep the US committed, avoid Japanese unilateralism and avoid the appearance or substance of a 'containment' policy towards China.¹²³ It offered a chance for 'former rivals and potential future antagonists to directly convey to one another their intentions'.¹²⁴ A sequence of confidence building, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution provided at least a pathway for disputants even though it eschewed any enforcement mechanism. A track two organisation, the Council for Security Cooperation in Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) complemented ARF.¹²⁵ From 1991 China held 'dialogues and consultations' with ASEAN foreign ministers, with China becoming a full dialogue partner in 1996.¹²⁶

In the post-Cold War Asia-Pacific, ASEAN's principles for inter-state relations provided a relevant model for the wider region.¹²⁷ For New Zealand the formation of the ARF was a key moment in transforming its relationship with ASEAN from a focus on Southeast Asia itself to this wider regional one.¹²⁸ New Zealand's ministries of defence and foreign affairs jointly funded a Centre for Strategic Studies at Victoria University to manage New Zealand participation in related track two activities; New Zealand became a full member of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) in January 1994.¹²⁹ In 1997 defence officials for the first time met as a group, albeit very informally, at an ARF meeting.¹³⁰

1990

1997

¹¹⁷ Kamiya 1999, 231.

¹¹⁸ Acharya 2004, 255–256.

¹¹⁹ See also O'Brien 1995, 8.

¹²⁰ I am indebted to David Capie for this reference. See also O'Brien 1995, 8.

¹²¹ Capie 2013a, ch 1.

¹²² Graham Fortune interview 4 Aug 2015.

¹²³ Acharya 1997, 324, see also 341, ASEAN making clear its intention to be in the ARF driving seat.

¹²⁴ Kamiya 1999, 232

¹²⁵ <http://www.cscap.org/index.php?page=about-us>

¹²⁶ <http://www.china.org.cn/english/BAT/186164.htm>; Acharya 2004, 259.

¹²⁷ O'Brien 1995, 2.

¹²⁸ Paul Sinclair, personal communication, 20 Jul 2015; also David Taylor interview 31 Jul 2015

¹²⁹ Kamiya 1999, 233; Graham Fortune interview 4 Aug 2015.

¹³⁰ Sinclair 2015, 7.

The impact of the Asian financial crisis

The history of ASEAN (and ASEAN and New Zealand) is an evolution punctuated by shocks. Until the 1990s those shocks came in the sphere of power politics – the overthrow of Sukarno; the Nixon détente; the fall of Saigon; the invasion of Cambodia; the end of the Cold War. 1997 was different; it was in its origins a financial shock which affected economic activity more broadly in Asian states, and in particular Korea and ASEAN. In terms of the larger structure of relations shaped by and shaping ASEAN, its impact was to create some distance between the Asian and the non-Asian developed economies. The responses of the latter, exemplified through pronouncements or decisions from the US, the IMF or the World Bank and even in APEC, were interpreted by many in Asia as evidence of at best indifference and at worst, a wish to hobble economic competitors.¹³¹

ASEAN's limits were also highlighted at the same time by its only minor role in the East Timor crisis, a product of the 1998 democratic transition in Indonesia, itself a by-product of the financial crisis. The shift of East Timor from Indonesian province to independent state was orchestrated by the international community, in particular the US and Australia, not ASEAN. Individual ASEAN states, and also New Zealand, played a role, but not ASEAN itself. Indonesia's ties with Australia in particular were strained.¹³²

It was not inconsistent with this that post 9/11 ASEAN also fretted over the shift of US focus away from Asia to the Middle East, a shift not necessarily compensated for, and indeed in some ways reinforced by, US preoccupation with Islamist movements and their terrorist sidebars in Muslim Southeast Asia, as elsewhere.

In sum, the events of the late 1990s and early 2000s put trans-Pacific ties under stress and energised ASEAN ties with its immediate northern neighbours – China, Japan and Korea – with all of which ASEAN economies were now as much if not more intertwined than with the US.¹³³

Faced with unprecedented outflows of capital, a collapse in economic activity, and a hesitant response from the wider international community, which probably initially underestimated the severity of the crisis, the leaders of ASEAN and the three northern powers met in 1997, this being the first ASEAN plus three or APT meeting (the 16th was held in August 2015).¹³⁴ It had gained some traction from the requirements of the Asia–Europe meeting, which had first brought together ASEAN and the East Asia three (as the Asian side) in 1996/1997, but the financial crisis was a 'game-changer'.¹³⁵

At a meeting of the Asian Development Bank in 2000, the Chiang Mai Initiative was initiated by the APT. It was intended to strengthen the region's financial resources and to protect it from a repeat of the Asian Financial Crisis.¹³⁶

While New Zealand had focused on economic opportunities in ASEAN (and in Asia generally) in the early to mid-1990s commentators observed a lack of optimism in the relationship for several years after 1997.¹³⁷ The financial crisis was partly to blame but there were other factors. Free trade negotiations among the ASEAN countries themselves advanced only slowly and this impacted on opportunities to advance a free trade agreement between Australia and New Zealand on the one hand and ASEAN on the other.¹³⁸ New Zealand and Singapore did however conclude a free trade agreement in 2001 after just a year of negotiations.¹³⁹ This was a comment on

1997

2000

¹³¹ For APEC and related see Hawke 2005, 80–81.

¹³² Smith 2007, 5; see also Sinclair 2015, 7; Smith 2005c, 11, 20.

¹³³ Webber 2010, 314.

¹³⁴ www.asean.org

¹³⁵ Rolfe 2005, 47–48.

¹³⁶ Webber 2010, 319; Narine 2008, 423; Lynch 2015, 15.

¹³⁷ Hawke 2005, 81.

the greater openness of Singapore compared with other ASEAN economies and the close ties between officials and others of the two countries. But for a time it was an isolated accomplishment. Arguably New Zealand's (as Australia's) absence from the Chiang Mai initiative was a misstep.¹⁴⁰

The implications but also the limitations of APT were realised in 2005 when ASEAN organised a first East Asian Summit (EAS). Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad had advocated an exclusively East Asian membership but other APT countries, notably Japan, Singapore and Indonesia, strongly disagreed.¹⁴¹ Mahathir having retired from the prime ministership at the end of 2003, at the ASEAN meetings in 2004 the organisation agreed to host the summit, to which India, Australia and New Zealand would also be invited: the EAS would be kept 'open, outward-looking'.¹⁴² The invitations to Australia and New Zealand echoed earlier ways in which ASEAN kept open lines of communication with the US, which was accordingly not as averse to the EAS as might otherwise have been the case.¹⁴³ The invitation to India was an important new departure.

New Zealand policymakers had been keen to join the EAS as part of the overall strategy of engagement with Asia maintained by the Labour-led government which had taken office at the end of 1999: that government, had launched a 'Seriously Asia' programme in 2003, building on the work of the Asia 2000 Foundation of New Zealand (renamed the Asia New Zealand Foundation) established by the National government in 1994.¹⁴⁴

New Zealand and Australia signed up to ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, which stressed the importance of state sovereignty and non-intervention (Australia overcoming its reluctance to shackle its right to engage in 'forward' defence).¹⁴⁵ This paved the way for their participation in the first EAS meeting – and in the process acknowledging that ASEAN would manage the process, something

the 'plus three' powers had also agreed to.¹⁴⁶

Minister Jim Sutton, who addressed a symposium on New Zealand and ASEAN in Singapore in 2007, described the EAS as 'the most exciting development in the region's architecture for many years and New Zealand is delighted to be part of it'.¹⁴⁷

2000

2005

¹³⁸ Hawke 2005, 80–81.

¹³⁹ <http://mfat.govt.nz/Trade-and-Economic-Relations/2-Trade-Relationships-and-Agreements/Singapore/index.php>

¹⁴⁰ Gary Hawke personal communication 7 Sep 2015; see also Smith 2005c, 15.

¹⁴¹ Webber 2010, 317.

¹⁴² <http://www.asean.org/news/item/chairman-s-statement-of-the-8th-asean-3-summit-vientiane-29-november-2004>; <http://www.asean.org/news/item/joint-communique-of-the-38th-asean-ministerial-meeting-vientiane-26-july-2005>.; see also

Webber 2010, 317–318.

¹⁴³ Chin 2007, 42.

¹⁴⁴ Sutton 2007, xvii.

¹⁴⁵ Smith 2005c, 7.

¹⁴⁶ <http://www.asean.org/news/item/chairman-s-statement-of-the-8th-asean-3-summit-vientiane-29-november-2004>: 'China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea reiterated their support for ASEAN's role as the major driving force in East Asia cooperation.'; Capie 2015a, 5.

¹⁴⁷ Sutton 2007, xiii.

Since 2005 — Current circumstances and the future

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Introduction

2005, a decade past, provides a convenient point to survey the character of ASEAN-New Zealand relations, with a view to both evaluating the changes in the last ten years and looking forward.

The most salient observation to be taken from the ten years is that, unlike any other ten-year period in ASEAN's history, there has been no shock on a scale large enough to either accelerate the evolution of the association or to prompt it to change course. The closest might have been the onset of the global financial crisis in 2008, but unlike the Asian financial crisis of nine years earlier, this was much more a North America/Europe phenomenon and left Asia *relatively* unscathed.

This absence of shocks is unprecedented. It could itself be considered testimony to the success of ASEAN in creating a relatively benign regional environment. Or it might be the product of global and larger regional trends.

Either way, in the absence of such shocks, the driver of the change that has taken place is easy to identify: the steadily rising economic and political significance of China and to a lesser extent India. Evolution, carried on long enough, becomes revolution.

Through the 1990s, when new schemes of regional order were implemented, China was slowly integrating with the capitalist world economy. Export-led growth provided the 'nuts and bolts'; joining APEC (1991) and the World Trade Organization (2001) provided the structure. If China had had a population the same as say Japan these processes might have been seen as irreversible; that is, that

they would have entailed a Chinese integration into a global economic system whose rules had been devised primarily by the US and Europe and would likely continue to be. But China's GDP (at purchasing power parity) matched that of the US in 2015 – the first country to reach this status since US GDP surpassed that of the UK around 150 years before.

This economic rise reinforced a political difference. Unlike Japan and Europe, China lacked a lengthy recent historical association with the US and indeed in the decades after 1949 the two countries were adversaries, at war (in large part, but not entirely, by proxy) in Korea and Vietnam. Through the years of its economic rise, China's political system remained authoritarian. China subscribes to the norms of the international system in a variety of ways but its leadership also draws on a lengthy history of Chinese 'centrality' in formulating its place in the international order.¹⁴⁸

India has not had the profile of China (or Japan) in the economies and diplomacy of ASEAN – commercial and financial ties have been more limited and there was no equivalent to the APT before the advent of the East Asia Summit. Nevertheless India was the world's third largest economy in 2015 (purchasing power parity). It had also long had distinct conceptions of regional order which reverberated in Southeast Asia, in particular a shared history of non-alignment with Indonesia, ASEAN's largest member state, and long-standing ties with Vietnam.

¹⁴⁸ See for example Womack 2010, ch 7.

Development of ASEAN and New Zealand's relations with it

What direction has ASEAN *itself* taken since 2005? One obvious answer is integration. In 2006 ASEAN defence ministers held their first ever meeting. The project of an ASEAN community was decided on in 2003 and came into being at the end of 2015. At successive meetings in 2004 and 2005 leaders agreed to draw up an ASEAN charter.¹⁴⁹ It was released at the end of 2007 and came into effect in December 2008.¹⁵⁰

The Charter contained 'unprecedented articles concerning democracy and human rights and good governance', but it retained decision-making by consensus with only weak implementation and enforcement provisions.¹⁵¹ The charter did not prevent a return to military rule in Thailand in 2014 despite Article 1, clause 7 stipulating that one purpose of ASEAN was to 'strengthen democracy, enhance good governance and the rule of law, and to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms'.¹⁵² Governments have differed on the best way to achieve those goals.

The ASEAN community is also a 'glass half full'. It was initially to come into effect in 2020 but was brought forward to 2015. The components of the community project are a political and security community, an economic community and a sociocultural community. On the face of it, such a level of integration would

transform the situation of ASEAN in the wider Asia and Asian-Pacific region. Has it happened? Singapore scholar Barry Desker was a sceptic, acknowledging ASEAN's achievements in meeting the ASEAN community goals but that ASEAN remained a 'diplomatic community with little impact on the lives of most people in its ten member states'.¹⁵³ Others have pointed to Indonesia where the new president, Jokowi Widodo has displayed a more nationalist approach to fellow ASEAN members than his predecessor, S B Yudhoyono.¹⁵⁴ Others again were more optimistic.¹⁵⁵

What did New Zealand make of this? New Zealand policymakers have learned to be patient in dealing with ASEAN. They have long acknowledged the limitations of ASEAN ways and learned to work around them rather than seek to overcome them – certainly not explicitly. Frustrations are often felt at the inability or unwillingness to address substantive issues or quarrels, and at the sometimes 'frustratingly slow pace'.¹⁵⁶ Were annual dinners with their song and dance routines really more important than the substance?¹⁵⁷ Are bilateral relations, particularly with the bigger ASEAN member states, for example Indonesia and Vietnam – more important than ASEAN relations?

Gatherings that have the potential to achieve more – the EAS – rather than less – ARF – have been favoured.¹⁵⁸ New Zealand defence officials put a lot of effort into relations with their ASEAN counterparts, and facilitated the inception of ADMM+ – a gathering of ASEAN and non-ASEAN defence ministers – in 2010.¹⁵⁹ 'Non-traditional' security issues, for example transnational crime, maritime security, counterterrorism, military medicine, disaster reduction and peacekeeping, have formed an important part of the exchanges. New Zealand co-chaired a working group on peacekeeping operations with the Philippines in 2011–13 and in 2014 joined Brunei as co-chair of a maritime security working group.¹⁶⁰

2005

2015

¹⁴⁹ Narine 2008, 421–422.

¹⁵⁰ <http://www.asean.org/archive/publications/ASEAN-Charter.pdf>

¹⁵¹ Webber 2010, 321.

¹⁵² <http://www.asean.org/archive/publications/ASEAN-Charter.pdf>

¹⁵³ Desker 2015.

¹⁵⁴ For the impact on ASEAN see Economist 2 May 2015, 23–24.

¹⁵⁵ Kesavapany 2015.

¹⁵⁶ Capie 2013a, ch 2.

¹⁵⁷ Graham Fortune interview 4 Aug 2015.

¹⁵⁸ Alison Mann interview 17 Aug 2015.

¹⁵⁹ Sinclair 2015, 8; on the foreshadowing of ADMM+ by the Shangri-La dialogue (2002–), not an ASEAN-sponsored gathering but involving most regional states including New Zealand, see Capie 2013b, 9–10.

¹⁶⁰ Sinclair 2015, 8–9; Capie 2015a, 4.

And arguably New Zealand diplomats have mastered the elliptical style of ASEAN – often better than their Australian or American counterparts, for whom a megaphone has at times been a preferred instrument of communication.

Some think the exposure of New Zealand policymakers to taha Māori has made them more attuned to the importance of process, not outcome.¹⁶¹ More fancifully, New Zealand could be seen as the Austronesian (Malayo-Polynesian) world's most southerly outlier, the heartland of which is in ASEAN.

Irrespective, New Zealand has remained a strong supporter of ASEAN and the idea of an ASEAN community. The goal of an Australia/New Zealand-ASEAN free trade area (AANZFTA) was announced at the commemorative summit in 2004 and came into effect in 2010.¹⁶² The trading environment is utterly different from that of 1975: in the late 1970s, two-way trade amounted to \$150-million annually. In the calendar year 2014, New Zealand exported nearly \$6-billion worth of goods to ASEAN and imported almost \$10-billion, making it the country's second largest source of imports after China.¹⁶³

Brian Lynch has put it graphically: 'The weekly trade with ASEAN now is equivalent to what took twelve months to send to Southeast Asian markets when the group was formed in 1967.'¹⁶⁴

In 2008 New Zealand appointed an ambassador to ASEAN – it was only the second country to do so and it reinforced this step in appointing an ambassador accredited solely to ASEAN in 2014.¹⁶⁵

Since 2010 New Zealand has stepped up the pace of its engagement with the organisation. In that year what was only the second New Zealand plus ASEAN summit was held in Hanoi. A number of flagship projects were announced, amounting to about US\$142-million of assistance over five years, mostly to be directed, as had been the case since the mid-1990s, to the CLMV countries (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam).¹⁶⁶

In 2013 the government's ASEAN strategy addressed 'stakeholders' in New Zealand, especially in business. AANZFTA had nothing like the profile of New Zealand's free trade agreement with China – the ASEAN strategy was partly directed at altering that.¹⁶⁷

The Minister of Overseas Trade, Tim Groser, has referred to it as an 'insurance policy', if China's economy got into difficulties.¹⁶⁸ In 2015 New Zealand aimed to become established as a 'strategic partner' with ASEAN – a status already enjoyed by China, Korea, Japan and India, and by Australia since 2014.¹⁶⁹

2005

2015

¹⁶¹ O'Brien 1995, 8.

¹⁶² Capie 2013a ch 2.

¹⁶³ Capie 2015a, 4.

¹⁶⁴ Lynch 2015, 10.

¹⁶⁵ Capie 2015a, 4.

¹⁶⁶ David Taylor interview, 31 Jul 2015.

¹⁶⁷ For comment on persisting limits to New Zealand's economic engagement with ASEAN see Halim bin Saad 2015. For a perspective on New Zealand's 'soft power' engagement with Southeast Asia see Butcher 2012.

¹⁶⁸ <http://www.stuff.co.nz/business/71953015/free-trade-fervour-and-reality-tim-groser-40year-crusade>

¹⁶⁹ David Taylor interview, 31 Jul 2015.

ASEAN, the wider region and New Zealand

Beyond the immediacy of dealing with ASEAN and taking it seriously lies the broader issue of the way New Zealand's engagement with ASEAN overlaps with New Zealand's approach to the wider region. Stephanie Lee, New Zealand's ambassador to ASEAN, has reiterated New Zealand's continued active participation in the ARF, East Asia Summit and ADMM+.¹⁷⁰ Such a statement is a reminder that for New Zealand ASEAN, however important in its own terms, has also remained a means to an end.

The formation of the East Asia Summit underlined ASEAN's preference for multiple forms of involvement by outside powers in the region and this was reiterated in the Charter, which stipulated that one of the purposes of ASEAN was to 'maintain the centrality and proactive role of ASEAN as the primary driving force in its relations and cooperation with its external partners in a regional architecture which is open, transparent and inclusive'.¹⁷¹ In the long view those multiple forms of involvement can be seen as muted versions of the way ASEAN sought to overcome the threefold Cold War division of communist, anti-communist and non-aligned, now articulated as competing centres of power rather than of ideology.

The US has remained actively involved in the region and indeed in announcing its 'pivot' to Asia in 2010 (later 'rebalancing') confirmed its intentions in that respect. On the security and diplomatic front,

the US participated in the ARF and the ADMM+. It joined the East Asia Summit, along with Russia, in 2011.¹⁷²

That said, the US's most important ties remained bilateral, with Japan and Australia and also into Southeast Asia itself, notably with the Philippines, Thailand and Singapore. An observer commented in 2010 that 'all major ASEAN member states, Malaysia included, concur that a strong general American presence in the region is important for its security and stability'.¹⁷³ The same held true in 2015. New Zealand's strengthened ties with the US, expressed particularly through the Washington Declaration of June 2012, have underlined its alignment with ASEAN in such matters.¹⁷⁴

On the economic front, APEC remains an organisation for promoting an agenda of economic liberalisation on both sides of the Pacific but more US activity has gone recently into the trans-Pacific partnership agreement (TPPA), which involves New Zealand, Australia and Japan, but only four ASEAN countries (Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Vietnam), and has caused some unease in the organisation as a result.¹⁷⁵

The US aside, both Japan and Australia remain committed to a broadly Asia-Pacific regional order, with the US both involved and balancing the rising power of China. Australian and Japanese leaders both canvassed plans for a more developed regional system in 2008/09, Kevin Rudd's scheme for an Asia-Pacific community and Japanese Prime Minister Hatoyama's scheme for an East Asia community. In both instances ASEAN was cautious.¹⁷⁶ Neither scheme gained critical momentum. In the economic sphere however, and somewhat at odds with the Asia-Pacific strategy, though consistent with Hatoyama's vision, negotiations are in process for a regional comprehensive economic partnership (RCEP) which takes in ASEAN and the original EAS countries, with all of which ASEAN has free trade agreements. Like Japan and Australia and the four ASEAN members, New Zealand is a participant in the negotiations for both the RCEP and the TPPA.

¹⁷⁰ <http://www.asean.org/news/asean-secretariat-news/item/asean-new-zealand-to-bring-comprehensive-ties-to-new-height>, 3 Jul 2015, Jakarta, ASEAN NZ 3rd joint cooperation committee meeting.

¹⁷¹ <http://www.asean.org/archive/publications/ASEAN-Charter.pdf>, article 1, section 15.

¹⁷² Sinclair 2015, 8-9; see also Capie and Taylor 2010, *passim*.

¹⁷³ Webber 2010, 320.

¹⁷⁴ Ayson 2012

¹⁷⁵ Thitinan 2015b, 2015c.

¹⁷⁶ Frost 2009, especially 20-22.

2005

2015

The economic research institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), a think tank set up in 2007-08, was another Japanese initiative, drawing in the original 16 EAS countries, which received strong support from New Zealand.¹⁷⁷

Scholars have in the past speculated that ASEAN's 'survival and significance' might not lie within the organisation 'but in its utility to China'.¹⁷⁸ China is the largest trading partner of all ASEAN countries and even in those where its impact is somewhat less massive (broadly, maritime Southeast Asia compared with the mainland states) supply of value chains tie the regional economies to China.¹⁷⁹ The ASEAN economy may amount to US\$3.6-billion but it is dwarfed by China's US\$17.6-billion (US\$19-billion if Hong Kong and Taiwan are included).

The Southeast Asian mainland states in particular are likely to be drawn further into China's orbit as new road and rail links with their large neighbour are developed.¹⁸⁰

The implications of a China-centred regional order have also surfaced with the acute tensions over competing territorial claims in the South China Sea. In July 2012, Cambodia, an ASEAN state in which China is the most influential outside power, blocked the inclusion of any reference to the South China Sea disputes, resulting in ASEAN's failure to issue a communiqué after an ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, for the first time.¹⁸¹ New Zealand's very low-profile stance on South China Sea disputes has suggested a reluctance to be drawn into disagreements between China and some ASEAN member states, but this may not be sustainable if the disagreements intensify.¹⁸²

All ASEAN member states, as also New Zealand and Australia, signed up to the China-initiated Asian Investment and Infrastructure Bank (AIIB) in 2015, in respect of which Japan and the US are noticeable absentees. Japan has long been the principal funder of the Asian Development Bank and the US the principal influence in the World Bank. Japan, not least under its present activist prime minister Shinzō Abe, remains immensely influential economically

in Southeast Asia, increasingly sees itself playing a security role, and is not ready to cede strategic hegemony to China in East Asia.

India's engagement with Southeast Asia is much more limited than China's or Japan's. The economic flows are modest and India's security and other preoccupations have usually been to the north and west, not east and south. Nonetheless, India is a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum and was a founder member of the East Asian Summit in 2005. The membership in the latter marked the first time India had been so prominent in an ASEAN-centred organisation. New Zealand is a supporter of Indian involvement with ASEAN and East Asia generally but as of 2015 there have been few practical consequences.

ASEAN is likely to continue to attempt to 'square the circle', to promote engagement by all powers, established or rising with ASEAN itself, and in doing so, to help shape the practice of international relations in the region. ASEAN statistics impress – the world's third largest country and its fifth largest economy, but one scholar sees ASEAN's influence lying not in its strength but in its weakness as an international actor which, 'combined with the legitimacy that accompanies its "seniority" and its impartial broker image, has enabled [it] to become ... a prominent player in East Asian cooperation'.¹⁸³ ASEAN's 'open regionalism' suits New Zealand, a relatively small state that could too readily be excluded from tighter regional associations. A recent instance is New Zealand's support for ADMM+: 'New Zealand was quick to seize the opportunities [ADMM+] provided for a more focused, much deeper and more wide-ranging defence partnership to be built with ASEAN. New Zealand's role in the ADMM+ contributes not only to New Zealand's overall partnership with ASEAN but also to a prosperous and stable Asia-Pacific region.'¹⁸⁴

That said, that partnership with ASEAN is yet to be deeply embedded in New Zealand life. A statement from ten years back remains valid: 'all these developments primarily occupied diplomats, and the business interests directly engaged a small

¹⁷⁷ http://www.eria.org/about_eria/history.html; Capie 2015a, 5.

¹⁷⁸ Rolfe 2005, 51; Narine 2008, 423.

¹⁷⁹ Lynch 2015, 12-13.

¹⁸⁰ Thitinan 2015a.

¹⁸¹ Desker 2015.

¹⁸² Capie 2015b; <http://www.incline.org.nz/home/is-new-zealand-inching-towards-a-tougher-position-on-the-south-china-sea>

¹⁸³ <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/GDP-PPP-based-table>, placing eurozone as 3; Webber 2010, 323, quoting G. T. Chin and R. Stubbs. 'The political economy of the ASEAN-China free trade agreement and East Asian regionalism', paper prepared for the International Studies Association Conference, 26-29 Mar 2008, San Francisco, 11; see also Capie 2013a ch 2; Graham Fortune interview 4 Aug

2015 ASEAN cannot participate in the big games except to the extent that it provides a neutral meeting place.
¹⁸⁴ Sinclair 2015, 9.

2005

2015

interested community within New Zealand. The *NBR* and the *Independent* showed occasional interest in New Zealand's economic relationship with Southeast Asia but otherwise the media seldom moved beyond the picturesque or sensational.¹⁸⁵

The New Zealand public remains unengaged with ASEAN as an idea or a project. 'An overwhelming majority of the participants in an online qualitative survey,' one scholar has reported, 'had not heard of the term ASEAN or knew very little about its meaning.'¹⁸⁶

This is not likely to change any time soon, for three main reasons. First, New Zealand's society and culture remained saturated in the social and cultural practice and outlook of the rest of the Anglo-Saxon world. Even a casual glance at the offerings on television channels, magazine news-stands and at bookstores underline this. Auckland, with its 25 percent Asian-origin population may be a precursor of something different, but for the moment, sustained popular engagement with Asia and Asians remains a subdued element in the New Zealand mosaic.

Second, any domestic issue with an Asian inflection – house prices, farm sales, overseas traveller car drivers – frequently triggers nationalist responses. The 2014 annual *Asia New Zealand survey of New Zealanders' Perceptions of Asia and Asian Peoples* show a greater readiness to acknowledge Asia's economic value to New Zealand over the next 20 years than to accept that Asian cultures or tradition might have a positive impact.¹⁸⁷

Third, authoritarian practice in Asia – be it in dealings with opposition politicians, restricting freedom of speech or belief, or handling minorities such as West Papuans and the Rohingya of Myanmar – gets a poor press in New Zealand.

Policymakers and opinion-makers can best deal with these 'democratic deficits' as they might be called, on both the ASEAN and the New Zealand sides, softly, softly. The relationship is not so intense – nor likely to become so – as to make that problematic. Robert Ayson's exploration of values that New Zealanders and Asians might have in common is an excellent starting point, one which reaches both deep into New Zealand life and into the most creative part of the ASEAN endeavour.¹⁸⁸

2005

2015

¹⁸⁵ Hawke 2005, 82-83; see also Matheson 2012, 128-140

¹⁸⁶ Capie 2015a, 5.

¹⁸⁷ <http://asianz.org.nz/reports/report/new-zealanders-perceptions-of-asia-and-asian-peoples-2014-annual-survey/new-zealanders-views-about-the-importance-of-asia/> fig. 3.

¹⁸⁸ Ayson 2011, passim; see also Smith 2005c, 18.

Conclusion

New Zealand and ASEAN have come a long way from 1975, let alone 1945. A relationship based on securing a region both for (or against) itself and for New Zealand became a relationship important in its own terms, but also important because it is one which provide pathways to multiple patterns of regional order and ensures that they can coexist rather than collide.

As a small state New Zealand has a strong interest in institutions that promote cooperation and a peaceful, rules-based international order.¹⁸⁹ The ASEAN states are in not such a different situation. Their very different geographical setting impels them as much as and probably more than New Zealand to promote such norms. Whether that order is one shaped by the US, China, India, Japan or some combination of them, New Zealand will gain by fostering its relationship with ASEAN for many decades to come.

¹⁸⁹ Capie 2013a ch 3.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|---|
| JKA | Jakarta (Indonesia) |
| KL | Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) |
| MFA | Ministry of Foreign Affairs (New Zealand) |
| MFAT | Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (New Zealand) |
| Min FA | Minister of Foreign Affairs (New Zealand) |
| NZE | New Zealand Embassy |
| NZHC | New Zealand High Commission |
| SEA | Secretary of External Affairs (New Zealand) |
| SFA | Secretary of Foreign Affairs (New Zealand) |

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