

CHAPTER VI

INSTITUTIONAL CO-OPERATION (Cont.)

C. PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

SEATO and ASA, in order to continue to become instruments for developing institutional co-operation and closer relations between Thailand and the Philippines, should be able to cope with the common problem of stability and permanency and the more specific problems that inhere in the nature of these organizations. In order to obtain co-operation, the instruments for securing it must be perennially present. Effectiveness is another question.

At this instance, it should be borne in mind, that the following analysis is being made in connection with the roles of SEATO and ASA as tools for institutional co-operation between the Philippines and Thailand.

SEATO Problems and Prospects

From the historical point of view and the explicit provisions of the treaty, SEATO was established primarily as a collective defense shield--a machinery designed supposedly to counteract any subversive or open violation of the territorial integrity and political independence of the treaty area. In other words, the common interest of SEATO is negative, that is as a deterrent to Communism.

Within this context, it appears that SEATO will endure as long as the Communist threat still exists.

Assuming that SEATO will endure and assuming further that Thailand and the Philippines continue to thrive on stable political systems and that neither of them withdraws from the organization, SEATO will continue to be a means for fostering co-operation to whatever degree.

The question on the number of members, more or less, affects the permanency of the organization. It should be noted that withdrawal is explicitly provided for in the treaty.

There have been much speculation said from all quarters about the impact of the recognition by France of Red China. Whether or not France will withdraw from SEATO as a consequence of recognition of Red China is a matter for conjecture. However, it may well be stated at this juncture that recognition of Red China does not necessarily hold incompatibility of membership in SEATO. Great Britain is an example of a SEATO member which has reconciled membership in SEATO with recognition of Red China. The degree of responsiveness of a SEATO member which extended recognition to the call for counter attack against any breach of peace by the Chinese Communist, however may prove to be an interesting and stimulating study.

Whether what constitutes a Communist tactic or threat had been agreed upon by member states is quite doubtful. However, in most cases, one thing is always subject to the national interpretation of states to suit their respective interests.

Coming to the problem of effectiveness, how much has SEATO measured to the criteria of an effective and successful security arrangement? This is dealt with within the context of the logic that the effectiveness of the machinery, itself reflects on its effectiveness as an instrument for co-operation.

In the last Laotian crisis in 1962, it was apparent that SEATO was hesitant to apply sanctions. Prime Minister Sarit Dhanarajata said in his address to the people of Thailand on the Seventh Anniversary of the founding of SEATO:

As for myself I have been trying to be fair and square and give SEATO its due. Far from belittling its performance I have not been chary of praise where praise is due. At the same time I think it is high time that reform measures must be devised to make SEATO more effective as a collective defence organization. In this connection there is one thing we must all admit and in all fairness and good faith I must speak about it on this occasion. That is in actual practice SEATO members do not follow one and the same line of thought; the interests of some member countries do not correspond with those of the majority; there are marked discrepancies in the degree to which various members feel themselves committed to SEATO ideals and objectives. Some countries take only a lukewarm interest as their real interest and worries are elsewhere. So they are reluctant to take on additional responsibilities

in this part of the world. That is why they have been endeavouring to dissuade SEATO from any attempt to do what by right it should have done. As a result, in stead of setting about our work in complete unison we have before us a sad spectacle of filibustering, contention and working at cross purposes. In some cases some countries have persisted in doing things their own way regardless of what fellow members might think.¹⁵²

The cultural aspect of the problem of SEATO sets a high wall against establishing spontaneous rapport between the Philippines and Thailand. The language barrier, particularly should be broken down to facilitate exchange of ideas and culture.

It is heartbreaking to note that students from the Philippines coming to study in Thailand under the Cultural Exchange Programme find so much difficulty in comprehending and digesting class lectures, obviously because they are in Thai. Only the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University has attempted to lay down foundations for conducting classes in English in the graduate level with foreign students. However, it is still in its pioneering and experimental stage. Oftentimes, the class has to be split if there are also Thai students because the Thais would rather have lectures in their own language.

¹⁵²IFA Bulletin, Volume 11, No. 4, p. 62.

Statistics reveal the very wide gap between the number of Thai students in the Philippines and Filipino students in Thailand. The present ratio is approximately one Filipino student for every twenty-six Thai students. That there are more institutions of learning in the Philippines and there are few colleges and universities in Thailand may account for this fact. It can also mean that the language difficulty is quite a discouragement for a Filipino student to come and study in Thailand.

The present writer believes that something should be done about this because it is fundamental. SEATO should revise the cultural schemes to eschew this problem. However, this is more of a challenge posed to Thailand. After all the yardstick for patriotism and nationalism can not only be measured in terms of utilizing one's own language to the neglect of a more universal one. True, this contributes to promoting national solidarity but surely it also hinders the advancement and progress of a people. Contact through the spoken medium is the fastest way to learn and progress by the experiences and culture of other peoples.

The other aspect of Article III deals with economic collaboration. As stated earlier, this should be given equal emphasis. The scope of the economic technical assistance programs should be broadened and the rest of the Western

SEATO partners may as well share with the United States the bulk of the economic responsibility. But how much interests do the Western SEATO members, excluding the United States have to defend in the area is the crux of it all. Actually, SEATO finds itself completely dependent on America that at times it has created the impression that SEATO has no collective foundation.

SEATO economic activities should not only concentrate on economic studies but these studies should be followed up by more concrete steps.

Both economic and cultural aspects, if strengthened and pursued resolutely and vigorously, may in the long run take the place of the "deterrent" aspects of SEATO, thus changing and giving more meaning to "positive" common interest.

ASA Problems and Prospects

ASA is very new. There can be much room for speculation of the good points it will bring out as there are instances which can raise doubts as to whether it will survive and the feasibility of its proposed long-term projects.

Presently ASA faces the following problems:

1. The Malaysia impasse--At the moment, ASA projects which have been launched and those which are still in their blue-print stages which are expected to be implemented are

held in abeyance. The following are some of the ASA meetings suspended after a rupture of diplomatic relations between Malaysia and the Philippines as a result of a dispute over North Borneo:¹⁵³ Ad Hoc Committee meeting on ASA Fund; ASA meeting on the Representatives of Commerce and Industry; first meeting of the permanent committees; the third meeting of the Joint Working Party to be held in Thailand; and Third Foreign Minister's meeting.¹⁵⁴

In an attempt to thresh out differences over the Malaysia issue, MAPHILINDO¹⁵⁵ which is a political aggrupation of Malaya, Indonesia and the Philippines was formed in Manila shortly before the establishment of the Federation of Malaysia. The agreement provided for the practice of mushjawah or political consultations. As a result, a compromise was reached which allegedly committed Malaysia (then Malaya) to the settlement of the North Borneo question before pushing

¹⁵³North Borneo is now known as Sabah. According to the Philippine claim, this northern portion of Borneo was ceded to the Sultan of Sulu by the Sultan of Brunei as a token of gratitude because the former helped in the suppression of an internal uprising in North Borneo. The question however is whether or not the Sultan later on leased or sold it to the British North Borneo Company.

¹⁵⁴Philippine Embassy File: Bangkok.

¹⁵⁵MAPHILINDO was derived from the combination of the names of Malaya (now Malaysia), the Philippines and Indonesia.

through with the formation of Malaysia and to a UN survey of the determinative of the peoples of the Borneo territories. While the UN conducted the survey, Indonesia for a while relaxed its policy of "active confrontation". The UN survey team came with favorable results for the establishment of the Federation except from Brunei which preferred to be ruled under the present system of the sultanate.

The Federation was formally announced established on September 16, 1963.¹⁵⁶ Immediately, the Philippines refused to give recognition since, according to the Philippine stand, it did not live up to its commitment made in the Manila Agreement. In retaliation, Malaysia pulled out its diplomatic staff in Manila and severed diplomatic relations with the Philippines.

Thailand in its role of promoting good neighborliness and attempting to save the Association from "going to the rocks", has figured in quiet and behind-the-scenes diplomacy. Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman particularly has played a vital role in trying to bring the Philippines and Malaysia to understanding.

The question of what effect has the establishment of MAPHILINDO on ASA is often asked. At the outset, the

¹⁵⁶Bangkok World, September 16, 1963.

present writer believes that MAPHILINDO was established against the background provided by the differences of Malaysia (then Malaya), the Philippines and Indonesia on the formation of the Federation of Malaysia. It may be deduced that it had been a tool for threshing out said differences. Or was it a triumph for President Macapagal's dream of establishing a loose confederation of the Malays? On the other hand, it can also be viewed from the point that the three nations--Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia are vying for leadership and MAPHILINDO places them on equal footing and gives them equal assumption of leadership and responsibilities in the area.

MAPHILINDO should have been an instrument for the gracious exist of the Philippines from the Borneo issue. The postponement of the creation of the Federation was already sufficient defeat for Malaysia. One thing more, a nation does not have to pursue a claim because it is legal. It is much nobler to waive such right for the sake of peace and stability in the region.

Whether MAPHILINDO should merge with ASA because of overlapping objectives and membership, or whether their functions should be delimited remains to be seen in the future. Now the point is to let them grow and be carried out further. At this stage, they have to be tried. The questions of duplication or overlapping and delimitation

of functions may be taken up after they have at least completed their initial development.

However, the question of too many regional organizations with identical objectives might affect the effectiveness of said organizations. Sometimes, it is better to chart their goals along specialized fields early. At any rate, a pluralism of organizations is a healthy sign for obtaining more regional co-operation.

The atmosphere for the solution of differences over the Malaysia issue is bright. As of now, Philippine interests in Malaysia is taken care of by the diplomatic staff of Thailand per request of the Philippines.¹⁵⁷ The resumption of diplomatic ties is predicted to take effect very soon.¹⁵⁸ ASA by then will have to face the following problems soon as it starts functioning again.

2. Stability of the political systems of not only its members but of the region, itself. - Any organization whether economic or political needs a certain amount of political stability to serve as a base for endurance and expansion.

¹⁵⁷EMPHIL, No. 58/63.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., February 5, 6, 7, and 8, 1963.

The Southeast Asian region is still tossing in revolution and change. Furthermore, it is still economically backward, its people are less educated.

3. Acquisition of members--More members can mean advantages and disadvantages for the Association. ASA seems incomplete without Indonesia and Burma. Cooperation, in the long run may be better achieved with more members. However, the process of consolidating and integrating efforts in various fields in the initial development may be a more difficult task when there are more members. The point is to lay a solid groundwork for the various integrative efforts among the ASA countries--Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand.

The historical background seems to include Japan in the original plan. Japan's inclusion may provide industrial leadership but it may also be expected that her responsibilities may equal her benefits from membership and thus, the fear of small nations to be "swallowed-up".

While it is also difficult to have many members since dissensions of opinions are bound to occur more often which hinders the carrying out of decisions, on the whole, it will be to the mutual advantage of the members.

4. Cultural barriers/transportation and communication
--Rapport between countries can be effectively established through the improvement of transportation and communication. This goes hand in hand with the breaking-down of cultural barriers.

5. The problem of integration and specialization--
This problem springs from the fact that all three ASA countries are producing identical primary exports. They are all in the process of developing and industrialization.

It has been pointed out that integration can be achieved by Malaysia specializing on heavy industries; the Philippines in service industry and Thailand in agriculture.

These problems require a considerable time before they are solved. Much experience and technology have to be expanded. The ASA countries have to give up a part of their national interests for the sake of that of the association. They have to adjust their economic development programs and their local customs regulations and procedures to suit and fit in the objectives of the Association.

On the whole, they require a long process of adjusting the economic and social structures of their respective countries.

To sum up, the Philippines and Thailand are expecting to benefit from ASA in terms of:

1. Expansion of trade through reduction of tariff duties in commodities; liberalization of import restrictions; pooling of shipping/^{and}airline facilities and standardization of customs regulations and administration;

2. Representation in international organizations will be affective as a bloc rather than as an individual nation. This can bring more bargaining capacity for ASA countries.

Malaysia and Thailand agreed to the Philippine proposal that in case one of them is not represented or is absent, those present should sound-off the view of the former when necessary;¹⁵⁹

3. ASA countries may become the sole distributors of primary commodities the fact that they are producing almost the same output of common products for exports. Price fluctuations may be reduced and better prices can be bargained; and

4. From the cultural aspect, Thailand and the Philippines will be able to establish better understanding of their respective social systems and cultures through exchanges of students, lecturers and professors and emphasis of Southeast Asian Studies in the institutions of learning particularly in universities and colleges.

¹⁵⁹SCB/63/R-5. Item 8, c.