

# The Declining Influence of History in Maritime Security Cooperation in Southeast Asia — The Cases of Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia —

Tamotsu Fukuda \*

## I. Introduction

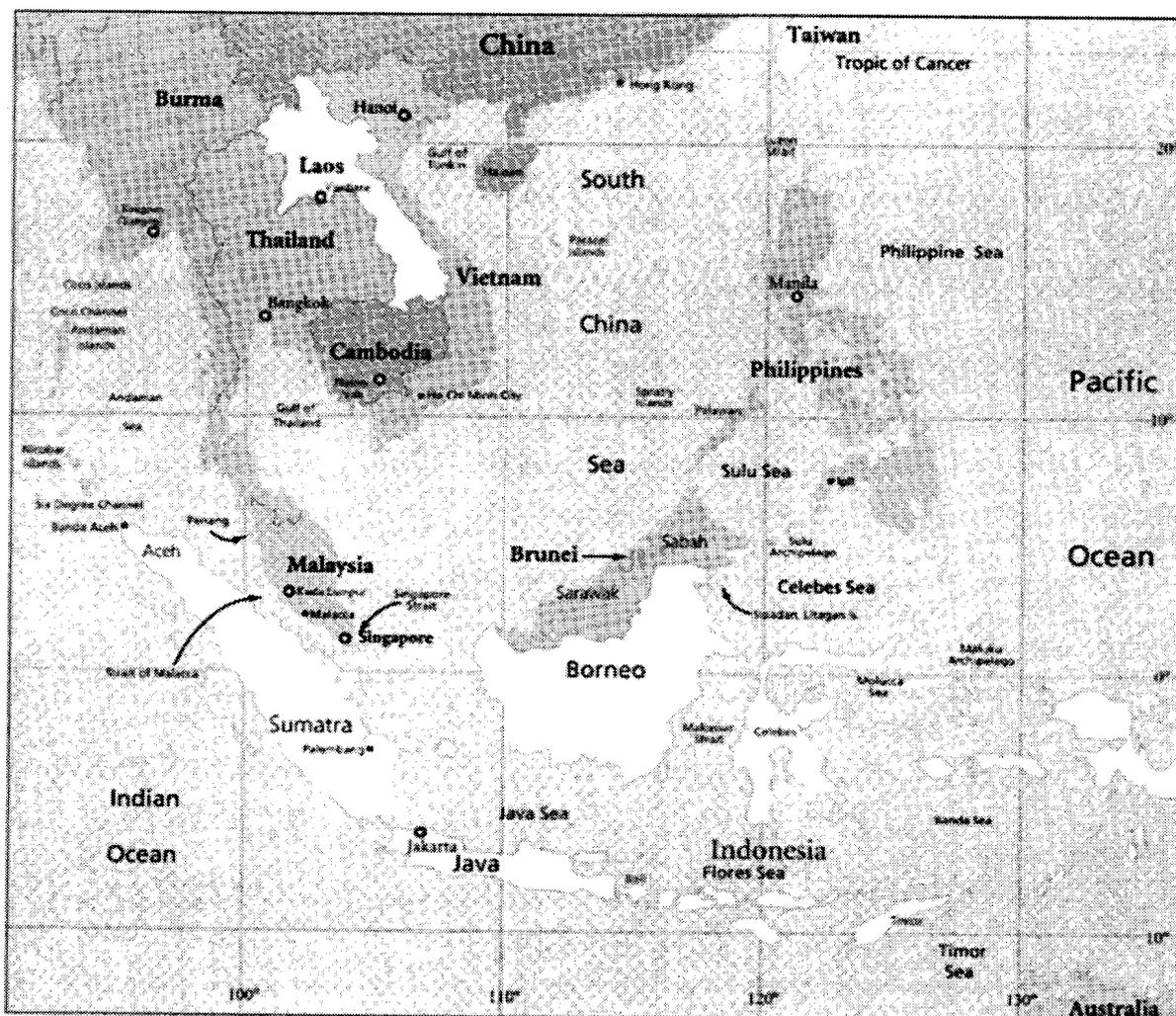
Resource-poor countries abound in East Asia. Consequently, states in the region are heavily dependent on imported raw materials such as oil. Most of East Asia's energy demand is being, and will continue to be met by imports from other regions, particularly the Middle East. For East Asia's export-oriented economies, moreover, export is the chief form of revenue and the engine of economic growth. Virtually all the imported energy resources as well as exports go by sea. Through the Malacca Strait and the Singapore Strait (hereafter the two Straits are referred to as the Malacca Straits) flow as much as eighty percent of China's oil imports, as well as eighty percent of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan's oil and gas imports. The shipping lanes are therefore literally the economic lifelines of the region. Regional cooperation to assure sea-lane security is essential since no one country is capable of protecting long maritime corridors flowing into and out of the region. As Singaporean Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Tony Tan stated, "individual state action is not enough. The oceans are indivisible and maritime security threats do not respect boundaries."<sup>(1)</sup>

The Straits of Malacca are the world's second busiest straits after the Strait of Hormuz, with more than 50,000 ships transiting yearly. Transit through the

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\* COE Research Assistant. This article is a revised version of the paper presented at the 39th Annual Meeting of Asian Studies on the Pacific Coast (ASPAC), hosted by Washington State University in Pullman, Washington, USA, June 16-18, 2006.

## Map of the Strait of Malacca and the Singapore Strait



Source: John Bradford, "The Growing Prospects for Maritime Security Cooperation in Southeast Asia," p.65.

**Table 1: Reported Incidents of Piracy**

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
World	210	309	471	370	383	452	330	266
Southeast Asia	100	173	252	178	174	190	173	117
Strait of Malacca	6	37	112	58	34	36	60	23

Source: International Maritime Organization, *Reports on Acts of Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships*, Annual Reports, various years.

straits is the principal maritime route between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The straits are notorious for piracy. The year 2000 was marked by the highest number of incidents with 112 in the Malacca Strait, accounting for almost about a

quarter of attacks worldwide (see Table 1). Despite the steady increase in the amount of piracy and armed robberies against ships in the straits in the late 1990s, the fact that the littoral states (Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia) have not taken extensive efforts to ensure straits security until 2004 suggests that there should exist obstacles to cooperation in Southeast Asia. Sensitivities to state sovereignty are often considered as the primary impediment to regional security cooperation in general and maritime cooperation in particular. The next (second) section of this article addresses how the issue of sovereignty has blocked regional maritime cooperation.

Despite their sensitivities to sovereignty, the coastal states have not only grown warmed to inviting extra-regional powers but also demonstrated greater commitment to maritime security. For example, although Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta have long rebuffed involvement of extra-regional powers in the security of the Malacca Straits, they began relaxing their dismissive postures. The three straits states also began a program of trilateral coordinated patrols, the first multilateral cooperative arrangement in the straits. What is interesting, furthermore, is that although the three states all have colonial experience, their commitment to maritime security varies. Malaysia and Indonesia have been much more sovereignty sensitive than Singapore. Singapore has rarely raised the issue of sovereignty as a ground to decline cooperation. Singapore has in fact been receptive to cooperation with external powers including Japan, its former colonial power. This article seeks to elucidate on these two issues. That is: (1) the growing willingness of Malaysia and Indonesia for sea-lane security cooperation and (2) the differences in the degree of sensitivities to sovereignty among the three coastal states.

The two questions suggest the declining influence of historical legacy as a factor barring Southeast Asian maritime cooperation. This article advocates a state development approach in explaining the issues. The elaboration of this approach is the subject of the third section. The fourth (Singapore) and fifth (Malaysia and Indonesia) sections examine the readiness of the three littoral states to protect the security of the Malacca Straits and consider factors that have

contributed to the increasing readiness of Malaysia and Indonesia.

It is necessary to first confine the scope of this analysis. This article limits its focus on transnational or non-military threats such as piracy and maritime terrorism. While there may be armed conflict which may affect the security of the Malacca Straits, such as conflict between or among the three coastal states or members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the history of ASEAN and recent international relations in Southeast Asia suggest that warfare is simply unlikely to break out. On the other hand, threats of transnational nature are much more pressing. For example, investigations in Singapore found that Jemaah Islamiah, Al Qaeda's main regional affiliate, had plans to mount suicide attacks on U.S. warships visiting Singapore.<sup>(2)</sup> Hence, the focus of the article is on cooperation to counter transnational threats, rather than to prevent interstate conflict.

## **II. Sensitivities to Sovereignty: Representation of Historical Legacy?**

The norm of state sovereignty, together with domestic non-intervention, is often considered as a significant barrier to security cooperation in Southeast Asia. Indeed, mutual respect for sovereignty and domestic non-interference are enshrined in all the cardinal documents of ASEAN, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, and the ASEAN Regional Forum. That acute sensitivities to sovereignty are an impediment to regional cooperation was illustrated when Admiral Thomas B. Fargo, U.S. Pacific Command commander, raised before Congress a Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI) in March 2004.<sup>(3)</sup>

The RMSI is an initiative to work with Southeast Asian countries to protect the Malacca Straits from transnational threats that use the maritime space such as maritime terrorism, piracy, weapons proliferation, and human trafficking. Malaysia and Indonesia, the two of the three littoral states, promptly ruled out the initiative for it impinges on sovereignty. Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, who also serves as Defense Minister, criticized that an assumption that users of the straits have absolute freedom to utilize it including

for military purposes “reflects a lack of respect for the rights of littoral states and a misunderstanding of international law.”<sup>(4)</sup> Indonesian navy chief Admiral Bernard Kent Sondahk followed Najib, “The presence of foreign forces, the context of sea lanes of communication, should be under the request of the coastal state. This matter is very important, because it concerns the national sovereignty of the coastal states.”<sup>(5)</sup> In general, moreover, cooperative arrangements in Southeast Asia, as John Bradford points out, have been “carefully crafted to minimize their impact upon state sovereignty.”<sup>(6)</sup> Coordinated maritime patrols, for example, have not been coupled with extraterritorial law enforcement rights, extradition guarantees, or hot pursuit arrangements. Observing such regional dynamics, many analysts have come to conclude that sensitivities to sovereignty are “undoubtedly the single most powerful inhibitor of maritime cooperation in Southeast Asia.”<sup>(7)</sup>

The important question is the rationale behind their susceptibility to sovereignty. That is, why do states in Southeast Asia cling so strongly to sovereignty? An often-made argument is based on the region’s colonial experience in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Southeast Asian countries were under constant subjugation by Western and Japanese imperial powers. Many of them became what they are now only after the end of the Second World War. Because the state came into being as the champion of nationalist forces against the colonial oppression of the West and Japan, it is hardly surprising that they “cling to the rhetoric of sovereignty as one of the means available to defending it.”<sup>(8)</sup> Amitav Acharya observes that East Asian norms and institutions were products of their historical experience in that they were “shaped by decolonization at a time when the main concern of regional states was to preserve the modern nation-state as a permanent feature of the Asian political order.”<sup>(9)</sup> As a result, regional cooperation has been “sovereignty conforming,” designed to safeguard their “hard-earned sovereignty.”<sup>(10)</sup> The statement made by Malaysian Vice Admiral Ramlan Bin Mohamed Ali attests to the significant influence colonial experience has had on maritime security cooperation: “Malaysia has been colonized four

times, three times by Europeans, and in all cases they arrived under the pretext of fighting piracy. So you can understand why we are particularly sensitive to these issues.”<sup>(11)</sup> The bitter memories of many Southeast Asian states probably contribute to their unyielding position on state sovereignty. Nevertheless, this account based on their colonial or historical experience offers only a partial explanation. This is exemplified by the Singaporean position.

Singapore is a country that experienced one of the worst sufferings in Southeast Asia with the Japanese occupation between 1942 and 1945 during the Second World War. Contrary to Malaysia and Indonesia however, Singapore welcomed the American RMSI and even welcomed a Japanese role in protecting the Malacca Straits. Singapore Deputy Prime Minister Tony Tan stated, “It is not realistic to unilaterally confine such patrols only to countries in this part of the world. Even while the littoral states have taken action, we can do more if we galvanize the resources of extra-regional players.”<sup>(12)</sup> In fact, Singapore has been most willing to cooperate with Japan. Not only has Singapore agreed to bilateral arrangements, but it has also encouraged Japan to take a leadership role in beefing up maritime security cooperation. Japanese efforts have led to an agreement to establish an Anti-Piracy Information Sharing Center in Singapore, which was set up by the signing by sixteen East Asian states of Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) in November 2004. Japan has been helping the coastal states to secure the straits for the last thirty years, but, one Singaporean Maritime and Port Authority official was quoted as saying, “we haven’t had a problem yet. Japan knows how to work well with local authorities. First, they (sic) recognize that they have a responsibility to the region. Second, they haven’t stepped on anyone’s toes.”<sup>(13)</sup> This Singaporean perspective demonstrates not only the declining importance of historical legacy as a barrier to regional cooperation, but also that sensitivity to sovereignty may not derive so much from the colonial or historical experience of Southeast Asian states.

The cases of Malaysia and Indonesia also reveal that the colonial experience may not figure so prominently in their policy-making. Although Kuala Lumpur

and Jakarta immediately opposed to the RMSI after its introduction by Admiral Fargo, they gradually shifted their positions and moderated their earlier reluctance about seeking outside help. While they made clear that the role of extra-regional powers would be limited and be indirect, Malaysia and Indonesia joined Singapore in asking for assistance from user states. The two states welcomed American offers to help increase maritime security through intelligence sharing and provision of equipment and training. Malaysian Defense Minister Najib Razak said that Malaysia and the United States agreed to work together on the security of the Malacca Straits in a way that would not undermine the sovereignty of the three littoral states.<sup>(14)</sup> Their relaxed stances suggest that their adherence to sovereignty is relative, not absolute.

The coastal states also strengthened their efforts. Joint air patrols over the straits, called *Eyes in the Sky*, had been agreed upon in July 2005 by the three states, which supplement the coordinated sea patrols that have been ongoing over the years. Thailand joined the anti-piracy aerial monitoring arrangement the following September. For the joint aerial patrols, each coastal state provides only two maritime patrol aircraft each week. To buttress the effort, Najib called on external powers to contribute planes and other equipment for the air patrols, though he did not forget to add that any craft provided by other countries should remain in control and command of the littoral states.<sup>(15)</sup> In response to his call, Japan, China, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand announced their will to contribute to protecting the region's busiest straits.<sup>(16)</sup>

What brought such changes in the Malaysian and Indonesian positions and facilitated their efforts to protect the area? If Southeast Asian states adhere to sovereignty as a result of their colonial experience, they would not welcome Western or Japanese assistance. And, if Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia all had bitter colonial experience, why is Singapore much more favorable to cooperation with its former colonial powers than its Malay neighbors? Rather than historical legacy, the article argues that what is referred to as a state development approach may shed better light on these questions.

### **III. The State Development Approach** <sup>(17)</sup>

This approach emphasizes differences in the level of maturity of a state. A state, like a human being, goes through several stages of development. In plain terms, a politically and economically developed country is a country that has completed the process of state-building—"the creation of new government institutions and the strengthening of existing ones."<sup>(18)</sup> Post-World War II Japan was not as it is today. Priorities of a state change in accordance with the stage of state development the state is in. It is not hard to imagine that due to differences in their level of maturity as a state, with other things being equal, the priorities of Japan and Afghanistan, for example, diverge significantly. For Afghanistan, the formation of the state is given the utmost priority, whereas it is not in Japan. The fundamental assumption of this approach is therefore that the variations in levels of state development among states generate differences in the preferences and priorities of their policy-making, thereby also engendering discrepancies in their approach to regional cooperation. Put differently, the state's willingness to cooperate mirrors the development level of the state.

The state development approach submits that the propensity for regional cooperation increases with increases in the stages of state development. The more a state is developed, the more it is inclined for regional cooperation. Because the priority of developing countries is state development or modernization, the government is preoccupied with such internal issues as maintenance of domestic stability and acceleration of economic growth. As a result, the government of developing countries places foremost importance on economic development and domestic political legitimacy. Their interests are primarily confined within their national borders. In short, national problems precede transnational problems.

Domestic political legitimacy relates to the right to rule the country with popular support. That the government in power is politically legitimate means that it is supported by most, if not all, of its populace and regarded as morally right. Without such recognition within the country, the government will have to rely on force to suppress rebellious forces to defend its status as the legitimate

government. A massive use of force reflects the weakness of the legitimacy of the incumbent government.<sup>(19)</sup> Robust political legitimacy implies that the country is stable, allowing the government to concentrate on a wide variety of political, economic and social activities. It also attracts foreign investment, which accelerates economic development.

State sovereignty is an important component of political legitimacy for developing countries. Sovereignty gives the state international recognition; it bestows states to enter into treaties with one another, gain membership in international organizations, and it provides diplomatic immunity and privileges to state representatives.<sup>(20)</sup> It also guarantees immunity from external influence. Sovereignty therefore can provide the government with the means to secure external resources and enhance well-being of its citizens. Stephen Krasner argues, "In an uncertain domestic political situation, international recognition can reinforce the position of rulers by signaling to constituents that a ruler may have access to international resources, including alliances and sovereign lending. Hence, sovereignty can promote the interests of rulers by making it easier for them to generate domestic political support not just because they are in a better position to promote the interests of their constituents but also because recognition is a signal about the viability of a political regime and its leaders."<sup>(21)</sup> In essence, the inclination of the developing state for cooperation is weighed against how cooperation influences economic development and domestic political legitimacy.

A developed state, on the other hand, is much more disposed toward cooperation. Due to highly advanced communication and transportation technologies, a considerably high density of international interactions at various levels-political, economic, and social-results. Because various political, economic and social interactions take place across societies in developed states, it becomes hard to draw a clear distinction between domestic and foreign affairs.<sup>(22)</sup> Globalization is a worldwide phenomenon and not distinctive of developed countries, but nowhere are the dynamics of globalization more profound than in developed states. States and non-state actors conduct their activities domestically

and internationally without great cost differences. Activities undertaken at the domestic level by states or non-state actors increasingly have consequences at the international level and vice versa. With increased influence of non-governmental actors, governments in the developed state no longer have full control over many of the activities occurring within its borders. In policy-making, be it domestic or foreign, a plethora of actors-businesses, interest groups, the public, the media, etc.-come into play; a dense web of policy networks hence emerges. Consequently, foreign and domestic policy in developed countries constitutes “a seamless web.”<sup>(23)</sup> Due to the breakdown of the distinction between internal and international issues, state interests of the developed state no longer remain ‘national;’ national interests increasingly come to coincide with regional and international interests. As a result, susceptibility to sovereignty is relaxed in the developed state.

Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia can be divided into two groups in terms of levels of state development. While Singapore is a developed country, Malaysia and Indonesia can be classified as developing countries. Singapore is developed because politically, for instance, it is internally stable in that there is little likelihood that the government will be destabilized or overthrown by some unconstitutional or violent means such as domestic violence or terrorism. Economically, the gross domestic product (GDP) of the city-state is as high as that of any developed country in the world such as the United States, Japan, or Germany. On the other hand, neither Malaysia nor Indonesia is fully developed. Domestic stability in Indonesia, for example, is not as robust since secessionist movements and violent conflict are discernible in Ache and other areas within the country. Although their economic growth began to resume in the wake of the Asian financial crisis, the GDP of Malaysia and Indonesia, a widely accepted indicator of economic development, has not yet caught up with the economic dynamism of the world’s leading economies.

#### **IV. Singapore**

Pursuant to the state development approach, Singapore, as a developed

state, underscores transnational security issues such as piracy. The basic position of the Singaporean government is that because the Straits of Malacca are an international waterway under international law, user states of the straits should also be involved to maintain the security of the straits. Sensitivity to sovereignty is thus less intense in Singapore. Deputy Prime Minister Tony Tan stated, "As a maritime nation and the world's busiest transshipment port, maritime security is a vital component of Singapore's national security. Singapore views the regional piracy situation and the possibility of maritime terrorism in regional waters very seriously."<sup>(24)</sup> Singapore identifies regional stability as one of extremely high policy areas which is worth devoting extraordinary measures. Singapore has thus been most keen to support ventures which improve the capability of neighbors to ensure the security of the Malacca Straits.

## **V. Malaysia and Indonesia: The Growing Readiness**

As developing states, Malaysia and Indonesia still face a myriad of internal pressing issues. Accordingly, they take precedence over piracy, which assumes an aspect of transnational problems. In the case of Indonesia, an insurrection in Aceh and scattered violent ethnic conflict elsewhere within the country can directly compromise Jakarta's state-building efforts, but piracy does not undermine such efforts to the degree that secessionist movements do. It is therefore not surprising that experts on the Indonesian armed forces insist that the Indonesian Navy is "more concerned with national territorial integrity in Aceh and Papua than it is with the Strait of Malacca."<sup>(25)</sup>

Similarly, although emphasis is given to other factors, John Bradford found that maritime security is a non-politicized issue in Indonesia, meaning that it is excluded from the policy debate and ignored by policy: "The eradication of piracy occupies an extremely low position in the government's hierarchy of interests. Policymakers are preoccupied with dozens of more urgent matters ranging from suppressing terrorism and separatism, to alleviating poverty and to sustaining democracy."<sup>(26)</sup> With respect to Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur has only recently

politicized or begun acknowledging that piracy is a potential threat to the state.

If the issue of piracy is non-politicized in Indonesia and only politicized in Malaysia, what factors served to motivate their rather indifferent positions? What drove these two countries to invite extra-regional powers and buttress their efforts? The state development approach posits that the interests in economic development and domestic political legitimacy have played important roles.

### **1. Economic Development**

In June 2005, the Joint War Committee of Lloyd's Market Association, a London-based advisory body for insurers, included the Malacca Strait and adjacent ports, along with Iraq, in its list of areas where ships were at risk from "war, strikes, terrorism, and related perils."<sup>(27)</sup> As a result, insurance premiums for ships transiting the straits have been increased. A raise in insurance rates could reduce the number of ships navigating the straits and calling at ports in the coastal states. Although only twenty-five percent of the ships transiting the straits call at Malaysian ports, given the importance of the revenues generated from the safe transit of the area the report would inevitably affect the Malaysian economy.<sup>(28)</sup> More importantly, such a report will hurt business confidence of the straits states. The impact of this report is evident, as the three strait states agreed on the joint air surveillance only two months after its publication. In reference to the *Eyes in the Sky* and their welcoming stance on external involvement, Malaysian Defense Minister Najib and Indonesian military commander General Endriartono Suharto stated that the patrol would send a strong message to the international community that "we are serious about maintaining the security of the Malacca Strait."<sup>(29)</sup> Najib further noted that he hoped these actions would help Lloyd's and other international insurance companies to "reconsider their decision" to classify the Malacca Strait as a war zone.<sup>(30)</sup>

In Malaysia and Indonesia, the acceptance of the American offer to guard the straits is influenced by their willingness to maintain friendly relations with the United States. The United States is Malaysia's number one trade partner and

single largest source of foreign investment. In May 2004, Kuala Lumpur and Washington concluded a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), which paves the way for a Free Trade Agreement between the two countries. Determined to be the engine of growth in Southeast Asia, the Malaysian government sought to consolidate relations with the United States. Similarly, between November 2004 and September 2005 public discontent in Indonesia with the state of the economy climbed. A poll conducted in September 2005 showed that the approval rating of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono dropped by seventeen percent (eighty percent to sixty-three percent) from the poll carried out in November due to his handling of economic issues.<sup>(31)</sup> For Jakarta too, Washington is the most important economic partner. Faced with the growing dissatisfaction with the government's economic performance, it appears that Jakarta pursued the economic gains that would accrue from cordial relations with the United States, which could be brought about by the invitation to the U.S. role in the Malacca Straits.

## **2. Sovereignty**

A shift in their susceptibility to state sovereignty also helped bring about change in the positions of Malaysia and Indonesia. There was an emerging concern in Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta that due to increasing numbers of piratical incidents in the area, the number of ships plying with privately armed escort vessels—that is, private companies offer armed escort services for commercial vessels transiting the Malacca Straits—has been on the rise. The issuance of Lloyd's War Committee report only worsened the situation. Although Singapore allows these companies to operate in its land and sea jurisdiction in the Singapore Strait, possession of firearms by unlicensed private citizens is a serious offence in both Malaysia and Indonesia. Therefore, the operation of the armed escort vessel in the territorial or archipelagic waters of these two littoral states is a direct challenge to their sovereignty.<sup>(32)</sup> Malaysia's director of internal security, Othman Talib, said that "it is a violation of our territorial sovereignty" and any ship providing armed escort services would be detained under the Internal

Security Act.<sup>(33)</sup> To both Malay countries, private security companies pose a more serious threat to sovereignty than extra-regional powers do. Enhanced security in the Malacca Straits, with external help, renders it unnecessary for commercial ships to hire armed escort vessels. Hence, cooperation with non-littoral states in the form of indirect assistance is deemed much more acceptable to the Malaysian and Indonesian governments.

### **3. Domestic Political Legitimacy**

As mentioned earlier, when the United States proposed the RMSI in March 2004, Malaysia and Indonesia declined it with protest, asserting that it was a violation of state sovereignty. The two governments' concern with domestic political legitimacy also militated against the U.S. initiative. Both Malaysia and Indonesia are Islamic states. Islam is the official religion in Malaysia and is the dominant religion in Indonesia. The fact that eighty-eight percent of the entire population is Muslim makes Indonesia the world's largest Muslim country. While Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta have consolidated counter-terrorism cooperation with Washington, Malaysia and Indonesia, unlike Singapore, deliberately opted to downplay this aspect of bilateral relations for the sake of domestic political legitimacy. Defense Minister Najib described Malaysia-U.S. defense ties as a "well-kept secret."<sup>(34)</sup>

In the wake of the American global campaign against terrorism and the Iraqi war, widespread suspicion has persisted in both Malaysia and Indonesia that the United States would be prepared to violate state sovereignty of other states.<sup>(35)</sup> In light of the public antipathy toward the United States, the welcoming of a U.S. role in the Malacca Strait would be a blow to the governments. Najib Razak maintained, "The presence of foreign troops in our waters trigger public anger and breathe new life into terrorist groups."<sup>(36)</sup> Likewise, Indonesian Foreign Ministry spokesman Marty Netalegawa asserted that the deployment of U.S. forces in its territorial waters would be "a new source of problem than actually solving problems."<sup>(37)</sup> Moreover, the move would run counter to Malaysia's long-held principle of less reliance on external power and Indonesia's

one of the basic principles of foreign policy, the policy of non-alignment. Thus, it could be perceived within the countries as giving in to the American demands.

Indonesia's public aversion to the United States, however, has begun to improve since the tsunami disaster in December 2004. A poll conducted by the Indonesian pollster Lembaga Survei Indonesia in early 2005 found that sixty-five percent of Indonesians view the United States more favorably after Washington provided military logistic support and substantial amount of government aid for relief.<sup>(38)</sup> In the poll carried out in 2003 found that seventy-two percent of the respondents opposed U.S. counter-terror efforts, but the 2005 poll indicated that more people endorse U.S.-led efforts to fight terrorism than to oppose them (forty percent to thirty-six percent).<sup>(39)</sup> This represented "the first major shift in Muslim public opinion since the September 11 attacks."<sup>(40)</sup> This stunning turnaround of the public opinion in Indonesia made it easier for the government to invite the United States and other extra-regional powers to the Malacca Straits.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Despite the fact that Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia have colonial experience, their commitment to maritime security varies. Malaysia and Indonesia have been much more sovereignty sensitive than Singapore. Singapore has rarely raised the issue of sovereignty as a ground to decline cooperation. Singapore has in fact been receptive to cooperation with external powers including Japan, its former colonial power. The recent positive changes in the postures of Malaysia and Indonesia have also shown that the issue of sovereignty is not an absolute impediment in securing the vital shipping lanes in the Malacca Straits. Although Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta continue to lay importance on state sovereignty, interests in economic development and domestic political legitimacy helped to relax the Malaysian and Indonesian susceptibility to sovereignty as well as their concern over the involvement of extra-regional powers. The differences in their receptiveness to foreign involvement as well as their growing readiness to cooperate with former colonial powers attest to the declining influence of historical legacy as a factor barring

Southeast Asian maritime cooperation. Instead, the factors closely related to state-building appear to be driving the regional sea-lane security efforts. The state development approach therefore suggests that until the two coastal states evolve into developed states, it is likely that the interactions among the issues of sovereignty, economic development, and domestic political legitimacy would condition the pace of sea-lane security cooperation. One important policy implication for user states of the Malacca Straits such as Japan and the United States is that success of regional maritime initiatives depends on whether such initiatives are designed in such a way to accelerate economic growth or strengthen domestic political legitimacy of the two Malay countries.

## Notes

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- (2) Barry Wain, "Strait Talk," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 22, 2004, p.17.
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- (9) Amitav Acharya, "Will Asia's Past Be Its Future?" *International Security* 28, no. 3 (2003/04), p.158.

- (10) Ibid., pp.158, 159.
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# **The Declining Influence of History in Maritime Security Cooperation in Southeast Asia**

— **The Cases of Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia** —

〈 Summary 〉

Tamotsu Fukuda

For resource-poor, export-oriented states in East Asia, the security of sea-lanes are economic lifelines. Through the Malacca Strait and the Singapore Strait flow as much as eighty percent of China's oil imports, as well as eighty percent of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan's oil and gas imports. The straits, however, are notorious for piracy, and were listed in 2005 as a perilous zone of war, terrorism, and other related perils. Although user states are more than willing to contribute, the security of the straits rests fundamentally with the three coastal states of Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Sensitivities to state sovereignty are often considered as the primary impediment to regional security cooperation in general and maritime cooperation in particular. It is often argued that strong adherence to state sovereignty in the region stems from bitter colonial experience of many Southeast Asian states, including the three coastal states. However, although the three states all have colonial experience, their commitment to straits security varies. Malaysia and Indonesia have been much more sovereignty sensitive than Singapore and less willing to cooperate with extra-regional powers. Singapore, in contrast, has rarely raised the issue of sovereignty as a ground to decline cooperation and has been receptive to cooperation with external powers including Japan, its former colonial power. The divergence in the positions of the coastal states suggests not only the declining importance of historical legacy as a barrier to sea-lane security cooperation, but also that sensitivity to sovereignty may not derive so much from their colonial or historical experience. Rather than historical experience, this

article advocates that the differences in levels of state development yield differences in the degree of adherence to sovereignty as well as states' willingness for cooperation.

While both Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta continue to attach importance to sovereignty, the two Malay states have not only grown warmed to inviting extra-regional powers but also demonstrated greater commitment to maritime security since 2004. There are two important factors behind this: economic development and domestic political legitimacy. Evidence suggests that Malaysia and Indonesia, developing states whose overriding priority is given to state-building, became more willing to sea-lane security cooperation when their interests in economic development and political legitimacy of the governments are at stake. In short, these two factors helped to relax their susceptibility to sovereignty as well as their concern over the involvement of extra-regional powers.

The state development approach suggests that until Malaysia and Indonesia evolve into developed states, it is likely that the interactions among the issues of sovereignty, economic development, and domestic political legitimacy would condition the pace of sea-lane security cooperation in Southeast Asia. One important policy implication for user states of the straits such as Japan is that success of regional maritime initiatives depends on whether such initiatives are designed in such a way to accelerate economic growth or strengthen domestic political legitimacy of the two Malay countries.