

**AN EXPLANATION OF THE METHODOLOGY USED IN A  
DISSERTATION ENTITLED "THE NATURE OF  
COOPERATION AMONG ASEAN STATES AS PERCEIVED  
THROUGH ELITE ATTITUDES — A FACTOR  
FOR REGIONALISM" \***

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The movement towards regionalism in contemporary years has been motivated by group survival as it had been in the past. In ancient times, city-states coalesced into federations and empires; in the Middle Ages, feudal entities evolved into nation-states, and in modern times, states banded themselves into world and regional organizations. It appears that the underlying reason for all these events was that there were many difficult problems which threatened people's survival.

The trend towards regionalism in Europe has gained impetus since the end of World War II, while attempts in Southeast Asia have not been as successful. But Southeast Asians appear determined to come together in some collaborative efforts. Perhaps this is partly due to the demonstration effects of the European experiences but it is more because of the felt need to pool their scarce resources together to solve common problems. Based on a cost-and-benefit calculation, Southeast Asian leaders believe that on some issues, it costs less to meet problems on a cooperative endeavor than if each had to tackle them singly.

This work tried to study the nature of cooperation among five Southeast Asian states (the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia) during the last ten years, with several objectives in view. First was to find out the attitudes of Southeast Asian leaders regarding regional cooperation. Second was to see whether these leaders perceived the threats to their existence in identical or converging fashion. Third, it was interesting to find out whether the policy-makers looked at rapid development towards regionalism as more desirable than a gradual one. Then, it also tried to see the attitudes of each ASEAN member state regarding the other integration experiences of its partners. For example, Indonesia could have had misgivings about Thailand and Philippine participation in SEATO which Indonesia had rejected from its inception. Finally this study tried to test several hypotheses on integration which were generated by the European and Latin American experiences. Among these hypotheses were:

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\* Microfilm copies of this dissertation may be obtained from the Microfilm Office at Ann Arbor, Michigan.

1. A strategy of rapid change is most effective when "background factors are not ripe."<sup>1</sup>
2. Unique cultural attributes create situations for acceptance of innovations.<sup>2</sup>
3. For early stage cooperation among developing countries, it is useful to amplify "close or safe" targets and to underplay remote ones.<sup>3</sup>
4. All decisions impinge on one another. Cooperation in one sector can spill over into another sector.
5. Physical proximity encourages cooperation among states.

It is interesting to see how states, which had very little contacts with one another for nearly two centuries, different historical experiences, and which reached statehood only barely thirty years ago, could engage in collaborative efforts. This study did not intend to look into the problems of regional integration since it was not the stated objective of current cooperative ventures in Southeast Asia. Rather, it looked at the nature of cooperation, an early relationship that occurs long before integration sets in.

### *Analytical Framework*

*Cooperation* is the conceptual framework used in this study because it is one of the early phenomena in integration. Cooperation is a necessary precondition to integration as it contributes to the building of mutual understanding and confidence, and hopefully, to the sharing of values, habits, and expectations among peoples of discrete political units. These conditions bring about a social and psychological foundation for social assimilation, a necessary condition for integration.

*Cooperation* is defined as the act of working together towards one end. The goal is shared and it is the relationship to that goal which holds the cooperating units together.<sup>4</sup>

*Integration* is the process whereby two or more actors form a new actor.<sup>5</sup> The actors involved are peoples who develop a consensus in values, aspirations, policy preferences, and general world outlook. They are the ones who shift their expectations on a significant range of values to a new actor, the new political community.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Amitai Etzioni, "European Unification, A Strategy of Change," in *International Political Communities, An Anthology* (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1966), pp. 194-195.

<sup>2</sup> Ernst B. Haas and Philippe G. Schmitter, "Economics and Differential Patterns of Political Integration: Projections About Unity in Latin America," in *Ibid.*, p. 284.

<sup>3</sup> Etzioni, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Mead, *Cooperation and Competition Among Primitive Peoples* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Johann Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Integration," *Journal of Peace Research*, No. 4 (1968), p. 377.

<sup>6</sup> Haas and Schmitter, in *International... op. cit.*, pp. 264-276.

The focus of this paper are the attitudes of the political elites of the five Southeast Asian (SEA) states regarding cooperation. In this study, *political elite* denotes the group of officials occupying formal government positions with authority to influence foreign policy-making. They are the President or Prime Minister, Deputy Foreign Minister, Secretary-General, and Ambassador who is a member of the Standing Committees of the regional organizations. It is assumed in this study that the political elites are the ones who take the lead in interacting with one another in Southeast Asia because the various societies have not developed any appreciable degree of mutual knowledge which could serve as the basis for cooperation. Political elites perceive national goals. When the attitudes of political elites are expressed officially in communication, they are taken as policies.

### *General Hypothesis*

This study tried to see if there is a positive relationship between the *attitudes* of the political elites regarding cooperation, perceptions of external threat, internal stability, economic development, and their attitudes toward the desired strategy for change and the previous integrative experiences of their partners, on one hand, and actual cooperation on the other.

### *Data Base*

The materials used in this study consisted of documents pertaining to the pre-organization, organization, and post-organization activities of ASA, Maphilindo, and ASEAN (1959-1969). The author's own interviews of the political elites of the five states were added to the documents and all together the universe of documents was 86.

### *Methods*

Thematic analysis was the initial method used. Each variable was broken down into possibly all the themes found in all the documents. Then the themes were classified into three groups. Every variable therefore had a set of three groups of themes, corresponding to measurements of high — medium — low on a three-point scale. For example, let us take the variable attitudes on cooperation. All the officials mentioned the desire for cooperation in their speeches. However, the varying intensity is discerned in the themes that were used. All themes which meant mere subscription to the idea were classified low (1). Themes that called for specific ideas for cooperation, such as meeting, consultation, organization, were classified medium (2). All statements that strongly urged action and set specific dates for meetings were grouped into high (3).

As to the classifications of attitudes regarding external threats, internal stability and economic development, they were patterned after Haas.<sup>7</sup> If the ideas of the elites were identical with the general definition as contained in the agreements and followed identical reasoning, they were classified as identical (3). If the goals were the same but the paths of reasoning taken were different, they were converging (2). Non-congruent ideas or those with reservations were opposed (1).

Regarding strategy of change, attitudes were for rapid strategy (3) when elites were using mainly policies, fiat, legislation, propaganda and involving a few key sectors. Mixed strategy (2) would use both rapid and gradualistic strategies. Gradualistic (1) meant slow evolution from nationalism to regionalism, waiting for a community of sentiments to develop through education and unplanned exposures of people to one another.

As for previous integrative experiences — expressions that considered them as beneficial to the present cooperative movements were classified as reinforcing (3). Attitudes expressing non-commitment to the question were called neutral (2), while attitudes that were unfavorable to such previous experiences were lumped into disintegrative (1).

It may be seen then that although the criteria for measurement differed with each variable, there was comparability in the intensity of attitudes.

The frequencies of each theme were added for each rank in scale (1-2-3) and the highest frequency or modal position was taken as the country attitudinal position. Country positions represented all the attitudes enumerated for every level of conference, communication, or interview of all the named political elites of each country.

It was thus possible to compare country positions per organization or year (ASA — 1959-67, Maphilindo — 1963-65, and ASEAN — 1967-69). Or one could also compare attitudes by the rank of the political elites — Presidents, Foreign Ministers, or Secretaries-General.

Actual cooperation which was the dependent variable, was broken down into seven indicators. Each indicator was also measured on a 3-point scale. Thus,

|   |   | 1          | 2         | 3           |
|---|---|------------|-----------|-------------|
| 1. Resolution of conflicts                  | — | unresolved | impasse   | resolved    |
| 2. Status of treaties                       | — | abrogated  | suspended | operational |
| 3. Projects as joint endeavors              | — | no action  | suspended | operational |
| 4. Intra-regional trade                     | — | low        | medium    | high        |
| 5. Visitor exchanges                        | — | low        | medium    | high        |
| 6. Sectors involved in direct sharing       | — | none       | few       | many        |
| 7. Machinery set up for regional activities | — | none       | few       | all         |

<sup>7</sup> Ernst B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), Chapter 1.

Each attitudinal position was compared with each indicator of cooperation. It was found out that although most attitudes were only converging (2), yet they were supportive of cooperative projects. Converging attitudes on the lowest common denominator (mostly projects that were "feasible, quick-yielding and beneficial to all")<sup>8</sup> were sufficient starting points for cooperation. Where the attitudes were high (3) and the actual cooperation were either medium or low, social and political realities which are products of historical experiences accounted for the lack of congruence.

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<sup>8</sup> ASEAN definition of the types of projects to be undertaken initially.