

TOP SECRET

6. The Problem of Alignment. To preserve their independence, strengthen their internal stability and protect themselves against aggression, some countries in Southeast Asia prefer to join regional security arrangements. Some, however, prefer to avoid alignment with other nations. The basic objective of both groups is to maintain the independence of their countries free of outside interference or dictation, and the independence and vitality of both are important to the United States and to each other.

## II. POLICY CONCLUSIONS

7. The national independence of the mainland Southeast Asian states is important to the security interests of the United States. If such independence is to be preserved, U. S. policies must seek to build sufficient strength in the area at least to identify aggression, suppress subversion, prevent Communist political and economic domination, and assist the non-Communist governments to consolidate their domestic positions. U. S. policy should not depend primarily on the degree and nature of Communist activity at any particular time, but should seek to promote these goals within the limits of the economic capacities of the countries concerned and U. S. resources available for the area.

8. Where a national determination to maintain independence and oppose external aggression is sufficiently manifest, the United States should be prepared to provide military assistance based upon the missions of the forces as indicated in the "Country Courses of Action" (Part V, below).

9. In the event of aggression against a Southeast Asian state willing to resist, the provisions of the UN Charter or the SEATO Treaty should be invoked, but the United States should not forgo necessary action in behalf of such a state or states because of the possibility that other allies might be loath to participate or to furnish more than token military forces.

10. In the long run, the ability of the non-Communist governments to attain political, economic and social objectives will be the dominant factor in defeating the Communist attempts to dominate Southeast Asia. The United States should assist the non-Communist states of the area to formulate and execute programs designed to promote conditions of sound development, to demonstrate that they can achieve growth without reliance on Communist methods or dependence on the Communist bloc, and to give their peoples a greater stake in the continued independence of their countries.