The soft and permeable nature of the subregion provides the setting for
this chapter. A China challenging the status quo of a Southeast Asia with
the US as the primary power will naturally be drawn to compete in an
area where the US presence is very real, but where there are no indige-
nous powers to compete with it. Given the dynamics of international
politics, it is not a question of whether an outside power will have a
presence in Southeast Asia, but rather how important that presence will
be and with which power, if any, it must share. The purpose of this chap-
ter is to discuss Southeast Asian attitudes and policies toward China and
the US, and to explore the dynamics of the interaction between them.

The cosmopolitan states of Southeast Asia tend to have larger
economies and both economic and security policies relatively compati-
ble with US policy in Southeast Asia. The insular states, on the other
hand, tend to attract US attention primarily as problem areas. This is
ture because these countries historically have been either communist or
allied with communist powers, and they represent for the Chinese, more
than other states in Southeast Asia, either opportunities (Myanmar) or
potential problems (Vietnam). All are mainland states, are heavily influ-
enced by China and all but Cambodia have long borders with China. If
present trends toward reform, interdependence and regional and subre-
gional institution building continue, the differences with some of the
cosmopolitan states will soon start to blur (Ganesan, 1994: 457).

The cosmopolitan countries all have concerns about China, but they
are discreet in expressing these concerns. With some variation between
countries, they welcome a US presence in Southeast Asia. Singapore
receives 80–90 US Navy visits a year and periodically stations US Air
Force contingents. Malaysia and Indonesia make available commercial
repair facilities. A US defense official stated in 1996, ‘we are satisfied
with the [military logistical] support we receive from Southeast Asia.’ The availability of facilities in the subregion increased after the US departure from the Philippines (Congressional Hearing, 1996: 22–3). These countries therefore complement US objectives of maintaining a presence in Asia and a counter to Chinese power. While some of them resist and resent US preachments on human rights and democracy, they nonetheless support the present international system and processes, and they have a stake in preserving the status quo. Their perspective is particularly acceptable to the US. These countries generally do not feel immediately threatened or alarmed by the rise of Chinese power, but they are uneasy about the long term. They much prefer not to be forced to declare themselves on China and their future with China as a neighbor. A noted exception to this is the Singapore leadership, especially Lee Kuan Yew, who seems to enjoy making philosophical statements on the realities of power in Southeast Asia. If China exercises restraint, most of Southeast Asia will be model economic and diplomatic neighbors. While these countries are cautiously sympathetic to increasing cooperation with Japan, they prefer continuation of the US–Japan alliance agreement to ensure that Japan does not go nuclear and that its activities remain subject to a US-directed agenda. In short, these states are ideal partners for the US. Moreover, the Southeast Asian contacts and facilities provided are important in facilitating the US ability to project force globally, particularly in the vital Persian Gulf. The US can bring

Table 6.1  Orientation of Southeast Asian countries to US and China

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>China and Southeast Asia</th>
<th>Alliance</th>
<th>Arms sales</th>
<th>Bases, logistics or common exercises</th>
<th>Past military conflict</th>
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<td>Philippines</td>
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<th>Military aid</th>
<th>Cooperate with bases, logistics or common exercises</th>
<th>Past military conflict</th>
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