CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION
The preceding chapters analysed India's role and response to important events that took place in Southeast Asia during 1954-1964. During this period the region was subjected to global pulls and pressures and the countries of Southeast Asia were made pawns in the cold war rivalry. Except Burma and Indonesia all other countries came under the influence of big powers - Thailand and the Philippines on their own initiative, Indo-China states involuntarily and Malaysia by the manner in which it was formed. India which was keen on extending the 'Area of Peace' in Southeast Asia in 1954 had to face severe obstacles in its policy implementation.

India, to a great extent, was responsible in bringing about peace in Indo-China in 1954. New Delhi's strategy was to keep out the great powers from the region and extend the area of peace which would enable the Indo-Chinese countries to develop economically and politically. However, India's policy towards Indo-China came into conflict with that of the United States (U.S.). India and the U.S. pursued the same goals of independence and peace but differed in matters of concrete action and thus pursued contradictory policies. India saw in Southeast Asia an area where it could implement its policy of peaceful co-existence by befriending China, while U.S. emphasised the danger of
communism and resorted to military measures and even formed a defence alliance called the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (S.E.A.T.O.). This alliance was formed while the Geneva Conference was in session, which went contrary to India's thinking that the Geneva Settlement, if implemented as envisaged would extend the peace area. Thus clash of ideologies created tensions in Indo-American relations. Though India was largely responsible for limiting the membership of Southeast Asian countries to two in S.E.A.T.O. and could persuade Burma, Indonesia, Laos and Cambodia to opt out of S.E.A.T.O., New Delhi could not prevent the formation of the alliance.

The U.S. viewed the Geneva Agreements as favourable to the Communists especially in Vietnam. It was one of the reasons why U.S. was keen on the formation of S.E.A.T.O. South Vietnam which was not a signatory to the Geneva Agreements questioned its very validity. With the coming into power of Ngo Dinh Diem as President of the Republic of Vietnam in October 1955, U.S. influence increased. France and U.S. had come to an agreement in September 1954 which empowered the U.S. to provide direct financial assistance to the Vietnamese army and training to the Vietnamese National Army of South Vietnam. In order to strengthen itself the D.R.V. moved
closer to China. Once the promised elections in 1956 in Vietnam did not come through, China's influence in North Vietnam began to increase and correspondingly U.S. influence in South Vietnam. India was particular about the implementation both in letter and spirit of the Geneva Agreements which would bring peace to Southeast Asia.

Though political settlement did not come under the purview of the I.C.C. India evinced keen interest in the political developments in Vietnam and initiated consultations in July 1955 for the elections to be held in July 1956. Cooperation from South Vietnam to the I.C.C. was not forthcoming. India, as the Chairman, wanted the elections to be held as scheduled.

Equally significant was the agreement reached between France and South Vietnam for the dissolution of the French High Command by April 1956. India requested the co-Chairmen to review the situation and help the parties agree to negotiations.

Following the decision of the co-Chairman to postpone the elections, India gave de facto recognition to both North and South Vietnam though India believed that only reunification would bring peace to the region. New Delhi's reaction to the Anglo-Soviet decision was one of disappointment for the situation in Vietnam was being allowed to drift towards a stalemate. New Delhi was of the opinion that while the decision taken might represent a compromise between divergent
views, real issues involved had been shelved for the time being.

In spite of continued efforts by the I.C.C. no progress was made regarding the deadlock over the reunification of Vietnam. The Commission which was engaged with the election issue took action against the complaints and counter-complaints received from the two Vietnams only by the end of 1959. North Vietnam was blamed for encouraging subversive activities in South Vietnam, while South Vietnam was charged with getting increased American military aid. India took serious objection to the interference of outside powers for it was in contravention of the Geneva Agreements but New Delhi's efforts could not prevent the rapidly deteriorating situation in Vietnam.

The chaotic conditions in South Vietnam compelled Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia, soon after the Geneva Conference, to apply for American military aid as well as membership in S.E.A.T.O. For a time Cambodia was vacillating between non-alignment and alignment with the West. During Nehru's visit to Phnom Penh in November 1954 Nehru emphasised India's abiding interest in the maintenance of peace in the world particularly in Southeast Asia and to see Cambodia live in peace. When Sihanouk visited India in March 1955, Nehru
was successful in convincing him that a policy of peaceful co-existence was better than alignment which would bring about tensions. During the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung in April 1955, it was Nehru who was responsible for bringing together Sihanouk, Chou En-lai and Pham Van Dong. Both China and D.R.V. assured Sihanouk that they will not interfere in the affairs of Cambodia. The agreement reached between North Vietnam and Laos through India's mediation further enhanced Sihanouk's admiration for Nehru and his policy of non-alignment. Finally Cambodia accepted non-alignment as the basis of its foreign policy. Cambodia's border problems with South Vietnam and Thailand took a turn for the worse in 1956. Phnom Penh suspected involvement of United States. India was not in a position to give much help due to differences of opinion within the I.C.C. From 1956 Cambodia developed political and economic relations with China as Peking supported the principles of peaceful co-existence.

The most controversial issue with regard to the political settlement in Laos related to the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua. The Pathet Lao wanted a political settlement in Laos before the establishment of the Royal Administration in the disputed provinces while the Royal Laotian Government insisted on establishing an administrative
t up in Phong Sely and Sam Neua. The talks which began in January 1955 between the R.L.G. and the P.L. ruptured in April 1955. The R.L.G. asserted that Pathet Lao still looked to the Vietnam High Command as their authority while the Pathet Lao blamed the R.L.G. for conniving with the U.S. Souvanna Phouma came to power in March 1956. He requested Prince Pethsaratth to return from Bangkok and help him in restoring peace. With his return in March 1957 American aid came under increasing criticism and relations with communist countries were encouraged. Once again the talks between the two sides reached a deadlock. When the P.L. and the R.L.G. came to some agreement in April 1957 the anti-communist groups in Laos did not allow it to make much headway. The I.C.C. called upon both parties to resume negotiations. After the elections in May 1958, the I.C.C.'s task was complete and it was asked to leave by the R.L.G. In July 1958 the I.C.C. was wound up in Laos much against the wishes of India. India felt that the work of all the Commissions were inter-related and they should continue till a permanent settlement was reached in Indo-Chinese states. In India's opinion the I.C.C. had a benign influence and the situation though bad was under control because of I.C.C. As feared by India there was progressive deterioration of the situation. Phou Sananikone became the new Premier in July 1958. He was a staunch anti-communist with
ong leanings to the U.S. Many P.L. leaders were arrested. 
.s immediately brought communist interference. The R.L.C. 
ich followed a neutral policy most of the time till 1958 
came completely pro-West. This was mainly due to massive 
support extended by the U.S.

After much political wrangling Souvanna Phouma came 
to power in August 1960. Once again the rightists seized 
power in December 1960 and Boun Oum formed a new Government. 
India blamed the West and the Communists for supplying arms 
to their dependent groups which intensified the conflict. 
Meanwhile the Boun Oum government suffered reverses as the 
neutralist and P.L. forces who were helped by Soviet Union 
and North Vietnam stepped up their military offensives. 
In January 1961 U.S. finally relented to cooperate in order 
to save Laos from falling under communist control.

India requested Britain to take the initiative to 
reconvene the I.C.C. in Laos and supported Cambodia's proposal 
to convene a fourteen nation conference on Laos. New Delhi, 
however, felt that convening a conference would be time 
consuming and so a cease-fire and the reactivisation of the 
Commission should precede the Conference in order to halt the 
rapidly deteriorating situation. India agreed to the 
Anglo-Soviet suggestion to re-convene the I.C.C. for Laos.
India participated in the fourteen nation conference held in May 1961. The I.C.C. tried to bring the three Princes together but with no effect. After protracted negotiations, the three Laotian Princes agreed on the formation of a coalition government in June 1962. Nehru welcomed the agreement. He was of the opinion that the only solution was neutrality. Any attempt to pull one way or the other would inevitably bring conflict. Nehru hoped that the agreement would be a turning point in Southeast Asia. The statement of neutrality by the Royal Government of Laos clearly revealed India's influence.

As stated earlier, New Delhi tried to implement the policy of Panchsheel and peaceful co-existence in Indo-China. I.C.C.'s success or failure in Indo-China was dependent on many factors. The parties themselves, at times, were not willing to implement the provisions of the Geneva Agreement. Within the I.C.C. itself there were differences of opinion. While Canada was inclined to lean towards the West, Poland was pro-Communist. India had to exercise its veto power to come to a decision many times. Procedural delays were also responsible for I.C.C.'s lack of success. Certain issues were to be tackled only by the Co-Chairmen, Britain and Soviet Union, so the I.C.C. could not proceed till the co-Chairmen took a decision. In spite of these
draw backs there was no doubt that New Delhi’s decisions were always taken with the larger interest of peace in Southeast Asia in mind.

It was the policy of alignment, as opposed to India's policy of non-alignment, which was responsible for not so close India-Thailand and India-Philippines relations. Both Thailand and the Philippines joined the S.E.A.T.O. and India criticised these Asian countries and made public its views during the Bandung Conference. Philippines and Thailand defended their pro-western orientation. It was this particular issue which was a major irritant in New Delhi's relations with Bangkok and Manila. By the end of 1950's, Philippines was keen on developing it's friendship with Asian countries. Vice President Diosdado Macapagal, during his goodwill visit to India in April-May 1960, expressed his desire for closer relations with India and tried to clear the misunderstanding that Manila was under US domination.

In early 1954 two irksome issues brought differences of opinion between India and Thailand. While India was keen to keep U.S. out of Indo-China, Thailand's decision to request the United Nations to send observers to study the possible danger to Thailand's security due to growing tensions in Indo-China was giving an opportunity for U.S. interference.
As mentioned earlier, Thailand's membership of S.E.A.T.O. was the second issue. Though both Manila and Bangkok condemned Chinese aggression on India, anti-China feelings alone could not be a binding factor in the improvement of relations.

Two factors contributed to the friendly and cordial relations between India and Indonesia at the beginning of the period of study. First was the personal friendship between the leaders of the two countries. Second was the identity of foreign policy perceptions on major cold war issues. India also supported the Indonesian interest in convening the Afro-Asian Conference. However in the Bandung Conference itself the differences in the style and emphasis between Sukarno and Nehru on the crucial question of colonialism was obvious. While Nehru declared that classical colonialism was dead and gone, Sukarno asserted that colonialism was the greatest danger to the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa.

In 1960 President Sukarno made a major announcement on his country's foreign policy in the United Nations which was diametrically opposed to Nehru's view of international affairs. These two perceptions clashed in the first meeting of the Non-Aligned Countries in Belgrade in September 1961. In India's view the greatest threat to world peace came from
the differences between the two super powers. Sukarno asserted that the most important cause of international tension was imperialism and colonialism. The differences between the two countries, though in the beginning was muted, gradually widened. Anti-Indian feelings were whipped up in Indonesia and it culminated in largescale demonstrations and looting of Indian shops in September 1962 during the Asian Games. The Malaysia issue further widened the differences between the two countries. India welcomed the proposal for the formation of Malaysia as it would lead to decolonisation and freedom of British colonies in Southeast Asia while Indonesia considered the proposal for Malaysia as an attempt by neo-colonialists to perpetuate their hold over Southeast Asia. In the Sino-Indian conflict that took place in October-November 1962, Indonesia adopted a non-committal stand, which caused considerable anguish in New Delhi.

India’s relations with the Federation of Malaya, on the other hand, were uniformly good. Though the Federation of Malaya entered into a Defence and Security Arrangement with the United Kingdom, there was general appreciation in Indian Foreign Office as India understood Malay’s peculiar problems. India-Malaya relations which were good during early years developed into one of extreme cordiality. Federation of
Malaya also stood by India during the Sino-Indian conflict. India, as stated earlier, supported the formation of Malaysia and rallied international support in the face of mounting confrontation from Jakarta.

Though India and Burma shared the same foreign policy objectives, the presence of the Indian minority became a serious irritant in India-Burma relations. The socialist policies of the Burmese government adversely affected Indian capital, trade and labour. About 25,000 Indians returned to India in 1963. New Delhi could not mitigate the problems of the Indian minority for fear that too much pressure on Rangoon would impair bilateral relations.

The Sino-Indian conflict of 1962 was a serious set back to India's foreign policy and it lost much of it's former dynamism. India was disappointed by the reactions of the Southeast Asian countries. The Federation of Malaya gave the most spontaneous support. The Philippines, Thailand and South Vietnam, who were anti-Communist, naturally expressed their sympathy with India. Burma and Cambodia had friendly relations with both India and China. Cambodia expressed the hope that both countries would settle the dispute peacefully while Burma adopted a neutral stand. Laos which had it's border with China merely expressed it's sympathy for India.
India was extremely hurt with the attitude of Indonesia especially in view of the earlier close relations that had prevailed between New Delhi and Jakarta. What is more Indonesia-China relations began to improve in a big way. North Vietnam condemned New Delhi for it's "aggressive" designs towards China.

To sum up, while India's policy of non-alignment and peaceful co-existence began to gain momentum in 1954, by the end of the period New Delhi's influence began to wane in the region. In 1964, India-Indonesia relations were at a very low ebb; in Burma the relations were clouded by the issues relating to Indian minority; Thailand and the Philippines were aligned to the west; in Laos the coup in May 1964 led to the merger of the neutralist and rightist factions which followed a pro-American policy; in Vietnam the conflict was continuing with no hope of a possible solution and in Cambodia Sihanouk's attempts to neutralise his country was not making much headway. Only India-Malaysia relations were cordial.