Chapter I

Introduction
Southeast Asia, a region which became popular following the establishment of Southeast Asia Command under Lord Mountbatten during the World War II, encompasses Myanmar (earlier Burma), Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines and Brunei together covering a total land area of 4.5 million square kilometers. These countries have a population of 510 million.¹ Southeast Asia is located between two giant nations – India and China – and connected to two great oceans – the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, prompting Cressey to describe it as Indo-Pacific.² The existence of deep and profound Indian and Chinese cultural influences inspired the European and Indian historians to call Southeast Asia as ‘Greater India’ or ‘Farther India’ while the Chinese called it ‘Nanyang’ or the ‘Southern Seas’.³ A tropical region, Southeast Asia comprises two geographical units called mainland Southeast Asia or peninsular Southeast Asia consisting of

Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, West Malaysia and Singapore, and the island or insular Southeast Asia including the Islands constituting Indonesia, the Philippines, East - Malaysia and Brunei.

Southeast Asia is a classical example of a region exposed to external influences which chiefly came through the sea. Laos enjoys the distinction of being the only landlocked country while the other countries of the region have access to the sea. Indonesia which happens to be the largest and the densely populated country and which is hailed as the “Emerald of the Equator”, comprises more than 13,000 islands by virtue of which it is considered as the world’s greatest archipelago. The Philippines is another “enchanting archipelago of more than 7,000 islands and islets set amid the emerald waters of the South China Sea in the west and the vast blue depths of the Pacific Ocean in the east”.4 Vast majority of these islands and islets are small and uninhabited.

Incredible racial and cultural diversity is Southeast Asia’s most outstanding feature. Without exception, all the countries of Southeast Asia have quite a few minority groups each pursuing its distinct culture, language, religion and social traditions. Being traditionally an open society, Southeast Asia has received and absorbed major influences from outside. Thus the people of the region profess “the great universalistic"

religions, namely, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity and speak about 1000 languages and dialects.  

Southeast Asia abounds in natural and mineral resources. The region contributes more than 85 percent of the world’s natural rubber, more than 70 percent of tin, 75 percent of copra and 55 percent of palm oil. The region is also endowed with huge quantities of copper, sugar, coffee, timber, various tropical fruits and minerals. Southeast Asia is also fast emerging as a major manufacturer as well as exporter of textiles, light consumer goods, electronics and petroleum products. It also represents a developing market with a widening base of demand for consumer and capital goods, and technical skills. In a nutshell, Southeast Asia has rich potentials to emerge as an economically vibrant region.

Though sandwiched between the two Asian giants, India and China, Southeast Asian countries excelled them in terms of standard of living. Curiously Southeast Asia is free from the problem of over population. In fact, high rate of population would not be a negative factor given the huge resources awaiting exploitation. Interestingly four of the ten Southeast Asian countries are among the world’s top 20 most competitive economies. Southeast Asian region’s geo-strategic significance is enhanced by its seaways through which pass each and every day the oil tankers and freighters carrying oil to China, Japan and the US Pacific coast from

middle East and the Eastern coast of Africa. Conscious of its inherent strengths the region has begun to play a greater role in global politics. No wonder, the region richly deserves the appellation “The heartland of our times”.  

India enjoys certain advantages in crafting a sound partnership with Southeast Asia. While China, Japan, the U.S., France, the U.K., Spain and Holland evoke memories of imperialist past in Southeast Asian minds, India is perceived as a benign neighbour. This is more so in view of the fact that the Southeast Asian countries such as Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia and Indonesia have been deeply influenced by Indian political ideas, religion, art and language. The Indian cultural impact in these countries is so deep that the enriched culture of Southeast Asia survives even today. B.B. Kumar, an Indian analyst of repute, aptly described the cultural closeness between India and Southeast Asia thus:

We need to know Southeast Asia not only because it lies in our immediate neighbourhood and we had age-old ties with the region. We need it also because it deepens our understanding about ourselves. Southeast Asia forms a part of India-centric continuum. A cursory look at the history, culture and religion of the region from ancient time to the present day reveal the common elements. The continuum operates at several levels, in terms of the geographical spread, in the depth and at perceptional levels. India and Southeast Asia share the perceptions of

divine kingship, apotheosis / deification of Kings, cult syncretism, composite cult emblems, law, bureaucratic government and expressions in the arts, norms, values and the ethos.  

During the dark period of colonial rule, the countries of Southeast Asia, with the sole exception of Thailand which retained its independence throughout its history, were brought under European colonial domination. The Southeast Asian countries served not only as suppliers of raw materials such as cotton, rubber, oil, tin, timber to mention a few, but also as markets for the finished products of their colonial masters – Britain, France, Holland, Portugal and Spain.

While the Philippines had two spells of colonial rule first by the Spanish and the second by the American; Indonesia was colonised by the Dutch; Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Myanmar by the British and Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam by the French. Even Thailand which maintained its independence was not entirely free from the ill-effects of European colonialism.

Filled with nationalistic fervour, Southeast Asian countries made a determined bid to throw off colonial yoke during the post - World War II period. The Philippines attained its independence from the U.S. in 1946, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei from Britain in 1946, 1957.


India's Southeast Asia Policy 1947-1966

Ever since its inception in 1885 Indian National Congress evinced keen interest in world affairs. This augured well for shaping Congress's foreign policy by Jawaharlal Nehru who became not only the Prime Minister but also the Foreign Minister of Independent India. Hailing this unique feature of continuity in India's foreign policy thinking and pursuit, N.V. Rajkumar, who chronicled the growth and development of Indian National Congress since 1885, observed: “This has given the country a continuity of tradition and steadiness of outlook in its external relations which perhaps no other young nation possesses”.9

The basic principles of Independent India's foreign policy have been anti-colonialism, anti-racialism, anti-imperialism, pursuit of an independent policy without joining either of the power groups, support to the movements aimed at freeing the world from the scourges of domination and exploitation and enabling Asia to gain its due importance in world affairs, and to extend its unqualified support to the UN.10 Soon

after the formation of the Interim National Government in September 1946 under his leadership Nehru outlined the basic tenets of Independent India's foreign policy thus:

In the sphere of foreign affairs India will follow an independent policy, keeping away from the power politics of groups aligned one against another... The kernel of our policy is the ending of colonialism all over Asia, or for that matter in Africa or elsewhere, and racial equality, or equality of opportunity for all races, no legal bar, etc., and the end of domination or exploitation of one nation by another.\[1\]

In 1947 when India became independent, Southeast Asian Countries, with the exception of the Philippines which attained its Independence in 1946 and Thailand which retained its independence throughout its history, were still under colonial rule. Save Indonesia, the countries of Southeast Asia were small in size and were hardly conscious of their importance in the international sphere in spite of the rich resources they were endowed with.

Independent India entered global political arena displaying keen interest in reviving its ties snapped during the colonial period. This was more so with regard to Southeast Asia because Indian leaders were aware

---


11. The Hindu, September 27, 1946.

7
that the developments in a proximate region such as Southeast Asia would have bearing on the peace and stability in the region. In his first broadcast to the nation as Vice-President of the Interim National Government Nehru said:

We are of Asia, and the peoples of Asia are nearer and closer to us than others. India is so situated that she is the pivot of Western, Southern and Southeast Asia. In the past her culture flowed to all these countries and they came to her in many ways. Those contacts are being renewed and the future is bound to see a closer union between India and Southeast Asia on the one side and Afghanistan, Iran and Arab world on the other.12

India shares land as well as maritime borders with Myanmar and maritime borders only with Thailand and Indonesia. The distance between the Southern most point of Nicobar Island and the Northern coast of the Island of Sumatra in Indonesia is hardly seventy miles. The World War II during which Japan, after occupying entire Southeast Asia, waited at the borders of Myanmar to enter India, demonstrated the strategic significance of Southeast Asia from Indian defense perspective. K.M. Panikkar, top-notch historian and strategic analyst par excellence, rightly pointed out that "the war altered the character of Indian defence".13 Major Anthony Strachey, a British strategist, was still more

forthright when he noted: "The lesson of the last war is surely that her (India's) eastern neighbours do not become spring board to yet another attack on her...".\textsuperscript{14} Emergence of the People's Republic of China with its aggressive postures added a new dimension to Southeast Asia's strategic significance to India.

Economic factor had also influenced India's policy towards this region. During the British colonial period, when India was frequently affected by famines and droughts, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam came to India's rescue through their rice exports. Even though the foreign trade of India and the Southeast Asian countries was by and large confined to their respective colonial masters, considerable amount of trade between India and Southeast was noticed. In 1938-39 India's exports to Southeast Asia accounted for 9 per cent while Southeast Asia's exports to India accounted for 20 per cent. The chief items India exported to Southeast Asia included cotton textiles, jute manufactures, coal and vegetable oils while Southeast Asia's exports to India were rice, petroleum, wood, palm oil, quinine and non-ferrous metals.\textsuperscript{15}

Presence of sizeable Indian population in Southeast Asia also makes the region important. Having gone in large numbers, particularly to countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and Myanmar, during the


\textsuperscript{15} B.N. Ganguli, \textit{India's Economic Relations with the Far Eastern and Pacific Countries} (Calcutta, 1956), pp. 18-19.
colonial period, migrant Indians had played a critical role in the economic transformation of these countries. It is sad that despite their significant contribution to the economic advancement of the countries of their settlement, the Indian communities in countries like Myanmar and Malaysia find themselves as marginalised people in a desperate plight. In spite of the hardships they were subjected to during the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia, Indians in Southeast Asia were in the vanguard of India’s struggle for freedom.

Since the climate of peace was the prerequisite for development, India wanted to establish and enlarge an ‘area of peace’ in cooperation with the Southeast Asian countries. Nehru proclaimed: “We in India have ventured to talk about an area of peace, we have thought one of the major areas of peace might be Southeast Asia”. Therefore, India not only championed the cause of independence of the Southeast Asian countries but was also deeply concerned about their political stability and economic development. Even though newly independent India was confronted with economic problems, New Delhi assured all possible help to the Southeast Asian countries to fortify their newly won independence. In other words, India’s area of peace was designed to free the Southeast Asian countries from the domination of outside power or powers.

16. ‘Area of Peace’ comprised countries aligned to neither of the power blocs and steered clear of Cold War.
Even though Indian nationalist leaders expressed keen interest in the improvement of relations with the Southeast Asian countries, their thoughts and plans centered on Asia since India and Southeast Asia could not be expected to march ahead in isolation from the rest of Asia. Since isolation retards progress and cooperation enhances peace and progress as needs of Asian countries were similar and as the future of India was tied up with the future of Asia, Nehru, was convinced that time had come to foster closer relations with Asian countries and to establish an Asian federation. Articulating his views on the concepts of Asian unity and Asian federation, Nehru told a press conference on January 1, 1946 that though the talk of an Asian Federation was premature, some sort of closer association between the countries of Asia was necessary for purposes of both defence and trade. Until a wider international order came into existence the oppressed and exploited nations of Asia would seek to insulate themselves by holding together. Since all the nations of Asia were confronted by similar problems of defence, establishing democratic institutions, developing industry and agriculture and the uplift of the living standard of the masses, Nehru hoped that in solving these common problems, they would gladly associate themselves with the rest of the world and take help from them provided it did not involve any element of domination.\textsuperscript{18} Nehru's views were shared by the leaders of the Southeast Asian countries such as Myanmar and Indonesia. The die was cast when

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{The Hindu}, January 2, 1946.
the Indian Council of World Affairs, a non-governmental body was asked by Nehru to hold Asian Relations Conference in Delhi in March-April 1947.

As many as 28 Asian countries accepted the invitation and participated in the Conference. As Sir Sri Ram, Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Conference, has pointed out, the delegates represented "easily more than a half of the World's Population".\(^{19}\) India rendered greatest service to Asia the Mother Continent by bringing together the countries of Asia with a lofty ideal of promoting a more intimate collaboration and a better understanding among their people. The Conference also marked a humble beginning in the endeavour of the Asian nations ultimately catching up with Europe and America which were far ahead particularly in the sphere of Industrial development. Incidentally the Conference also represented the initial step in the direction of translation of the principles of India's foreign policy into action.

The Conference - non-official and non-partisan in character – was devoted to the study of the common problems of the Asian nations.\(^{20}\) As decided by the promoters of the Conference, there was no provision for passing resolutions nor to discuss political issues. The Conference was

---


organized without any false hopes but certainly with due optimism for bright future. Aware that complete identity of views on all topics was unattainable in a large Conference such as this, the organizers of the Conference took care to avoid discussion on contentious issues. In spite of this precaution taken, there was an outburst of anger over issues with which India was associated. In the round table group on national movements for freedom, some delegates deeply resented the conduct of Indian settlers in Myanmar, Malaya and Ceylon and Chinese settlers in Myanmar, Malaysia and Indonesia. As small countries sandwiched between the two Asian giants, Southeast Asian countries expressed fears.\textsuperscript{21}

A Malayan delegate bemoaned that Malays were reduced to a minority of about 40 per cent in their homeland.\textsuperscript{22} A Myanmar delegate pointed out that his country, swamped by settlers from India and China, was threatened with the prospect of non-Myanmerese population increasing at a much faster rate than the indigenous population.\textsuperscript{23} Despite these diatribes against fellow countries, there was the general desire for close cooperation or the spirit of Asian solidarity and brotherhood. The Conference unanimously decided to set up a permanent organization called the Asian Relations Organization (ARO) with the following objectives:

\begin{itemize}
\item 21. \textit{Ibid.}, p. 81.
\item 22. \textit{Ibid.}, p. 100.
\item 23. \textit{Ibid.}
\end{itemize}
1) To promote the study and understanding of Asian problems and relations;

2) To foster friendly relations and cooperation among the peoples of Asia and between them and the rest of the world; and

3) To further the progress and well-being of the peoples of Asia.\textsuperscript{24}

Nehru, who was largely instrumental in organizing the Conference, set the tone in his inaugural address declaring:

The dynamic Asia from which great streams of culture flowed in all directions, gradually became static and unchanging... A change is coming over the scene now and Asia is again finding herself. We live in a tremendous age of transition and already the next stage takes shape when Asia takes her rightful place with the other continents.\textsuperscript{25}

Striking a note of confidence on Asia playing its due role in global affairs, Nehru said: "In this crisis in history Asia will necessarily play a vital role. The countries of Asia can no longer be used as pawns by others; they are bound to have their own policies in world affairs". He further stressed that in this atomic age, Asia would have to function effectively for the maintenance of peace. Indeed there could be no peace unless Asia played her part. He was more emphatic on the need for

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 255; see also Nanda, n.3, p.112.
\textsuperscript{25} For text of Nehru's Inaugural Address see Ibid., p. 20-27.
greater cooperation among the Asian nations and the need for Asian
federation. He further elaborated:

We have arrived at a stage in human affairs when the ideal
of that "One World" and some kind of a world federation
seems to be essential though there are many dangers and
obstacles in the way. We should work for that ideal and not
for any grouping which comes in the way of this larger
world group. We, therefore, support the United National
structure which is painfully emerging from its infancy. But
in order to have 'One World', we must also in Asia think of
the countries of Asia cooperating together for that larger
ideal.

While disowning any leadership role for India, Nehru asserted that
India, by virtue of its geostrategic location was bound to play a central
part in the overall scheme of things in Asia. He said:

In this Conference and in this work there are no
leaders and no followers. All countries of Asia have to meet
together on an equal basis in a common task and
endeavour. It is fitting that India should play her part in
this new phase of Asian development. Apart from the fact
that India herself is emerging into freedom and
independence, she is the natural centre and focal point of
the forces at work in Asia. Geography is a compelling factor,
geographically she is so situated as to be the meeting point
of western and northern and eastern and southeast Asia.26

Nehru took care to clear the clouds of misapprehension of the European and American governments that the regional cooperation fervently advocated in Asia might end up in the establishment of an Asian bloc directed against Europe and America: "We have no designs against anybody, ours is the great design of promoting peace and progress all over the world".

Nehru's sentiments were shared by other leaders. Myanmarese nationalist leader Aung San hoped that "the Conference would be guided by a new consciousness of the oneness of Asia and by the supreme necessity on the part of all Asian nations to stand together in weal or woe". 27 Ceylonese leader S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike hailed the conference as the beginning of a federation of free and equal countries of Asia, working not merely for their own good, but for the progress and peace of all mankind. 28 Leader of the Chinese delegation, Cheng Yin-fun described the Conference as a kind of bridge between Asia and the rest of the world. 29

In the history of the Asian continent Asian Relations Conference will go down as a great event for, for the first time representatives of a large number of Asian countries met to discuss common problems, promote Asian solidarity and lay the foundation for the future of Asia's

27. Ibid., p. 38.
28. Ibid., p. 41.
29. Ibid., p. 42; see also Nanda, n.3, pp.111-112. 

16
regional unity in diversity. Myanmarese delegate remarked unreservedly: "Burma was between two great powers. It was terrible to be ruled by the Western power, but it was even more so to be ruled by an Asian power. Burma was naturally frightened by the possibility that British imperialism may be substituted either by an Indian or by a Chinese imperialism." There was no room for high expectations about the outcome of the conference as the promoters of the conference themselves, conscious of the limitations of Asian solidarity, did not expect miracles to happen. Therefore, the very meeting of a large number of Asian countries on Asian soil itself has to be seen as the significant development. The conference heralded a new era of resurgence in which the resurgent Asia would assert its role and the people of this great continent with democratic aspirations would oppose reentry of colonialism and imperialism in any garb. The Times (London) was realistic enough when it stated that the World had a new force to reckon with the awakened spirit of Asia.

While India organised Asian Relations Conference in 1947 in pursuit of its foreign policy objective of enabling Asia assume its due place in the world counsels, New Delhi called Conference on Indonesia in January 1949 in fulfillment of its yet another foreign policy goal of anti-colonialism. As Prof. Suryanarayan has pointed out, "India's crowning

30. Ibid., p. 96.
glory in support of Indonesian independence was the convening of a Conference on Indonesia in New Delhi from January 20-23, 1949.”

During the World War II when the Indonesia's colonial rulers, the Dutch, were defeated and Indonesia was occupied by the Japanese, the Indonesian nationalist leaders led by Sukarno proclaimed the independence of Republic of Indonesia. After the war, as the Dutch sought to regain their control of Indonesia, Indonesian nationalists resisted. Thus ensued the Indonesian struggle for freedom for which India extended deep sympathy and support. When the Dutch attacked the Indonesian Republic on July 20, 1947, Prime Minister Nehru became indignant and warned:

No European country, whatever it may be, has any business to use its army in Asia. Foreign Armies functioning in Asian soil are themselves an outrage to Asian sentiment. The fact that they are bombing defenceless people is a scandalous thing. If other members of the United Nations tolerate this or remain inactive, then the United Nations Organization ceases to be....

Nehru requested Britain and the United States to prevail upon the Dutch government but to no avail. On July 30, 1947, India, joined by Australia, took the Indonesian crisis to the U.N. Security Council which

32. V. Suryanarayan, *India and the Indonesian Resolution*, the sectional presidential address at the Indian History Congress 42nd Session, Magadh University, Bodhgaya, December 28-30, 1981.
offered its good offices for the peaceful settlement of the dispute through arbitration.\textsuperscript{34}

When the Dutch renewed the hostilities in December 1948, indignant Nehru convened the 18-nation Conference on Indonesia very next month. Further, India not only denied facilities to all Dutch aircraft and shipping but also persuaded Pakistan, Ceylon, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia and Iraq to follow suit. India also sent a Red Cross medical unit to Indonesia and granted asylum to Indonesian nationalist leader Sjahrr.\textsuperscript{35}

The Conference on Indonesia was the striking evidence of Independent India's first major involvement in the Southeast Asian affairs. It was, as Suryanarayan pointed out, "the first conference of Asian states to fulfill and strengthen the UN in its objective of finding a peaceful solution to the Indonesia dispute".\textsuperscript{36} The Conference was attended by India, Afghanistan, Australia, Myanmar, Ceylon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen besides the observers including China, Nepal, New Zealand and Thailand.

\textsuperscript{34} United Nations Year Book 1947-1948, pp. 362-87.
\textsuperscript{36} Suryanarayan, n.32.
Nehru's inaugural address\textsuperscript{37} started off with a blistering attack on what he called "dying colonialism":

We meet today, because the freedom of a sister country of ours has been imperilled and the dying colonialism of a past age has raised its head again and challenged all the forces that are struggling to build up a new structure of the world. That challenge has a deeper significance than might appear on the surface, for it is a challenge to a newly awakened Asia which has so long suffered under various forms of colonialism.

Nehru cautioned that it would be catastrophic not only to Indonesia and to Asia but to the world body and the world as a whole. He said:

The United Nations—symbol of One World that has become the ideal of men of thought and goodwill—has been flouted, and its expressed will set at naught. If this challenge is not met effectively, then indeed the consequences will affect not merely Indonesia but Asia and the entire world. That would represent the triumph of the forces of destruction and disintegration and the certain sequel would be endless conflict and world disorder.

He declared that the survival of colonialism any longer was anathema to the "New Asia" identified with "the spirit of freedom and democracy". Nehru averred: "Asia, too long submissive and dependent

\textsuperscript{37} For text of Nehru's inaugural address see The Conference on Indonesia, January 20-28, 1949 (Delhi, 1949).
and a plaything of other countries, will no longer brook any interference with her freedom”.

Nehru impliedly warned that Indonesia would eventually become a communist state if independence was not granted immediately. He said that any attempt to suppress Indonesian nationalism and their deep urge for freedom, Indonesians in despair, “will resort to other ways and other means even though these might involve the utmost catastrophe”. Nehru also made clear that the conference was meant to “supplement the efforts of the Security Council, not to supplant that body”.

After three days of hectic deliberations the Conference made the following recommendations to the Security Council:

- All Republican leaders and political prisoners should be freed and the freedom of the Republican Government should be restored.

- An Interim government should be formed before March 15, 1949.

- Elections to the Constituent Assembly should be completed by October 1, 1949.

- The Dutch should hand over power to the Indonesians by January 1, 1950.38

38. For text of Resolutions of the Conference see Ibid.
The Security Council which met on January 28, 1949 adopted a resolution largely meeting the demands of the New Delhi Conference. The one major change Security Council made was that it suggested July 1, 1950 as the deadline for transfer of sovereign power to the Indonesians while the New Delhi Conference recommended January 1, 1950.39

The New Delhi Conference on Indonesia, the U.N. General Assembly's decision to debate on the Indonesian Crisis, and the threat of American economic sanctions had the desired effect and the negotiations resumed between the Dutch and the Indonesian leaders on April 14, 1949 culminated in the transfer of sovereignty to the people of Indonesia on December 27, 1949. India had every reason to feel proud of its profound role in the emergence of Indonesia as a sovereign independent nation which augured well for the decolonization in other parts of Asia.

**India's attitude towards Indochinese nationalist movements**

As in Indonesia, struggle against colonialism was being carried on in Indochina where the Vietnamese accounted for three-fourths of the total population. In Cambodia and Laos, the two other constituent states of Indochina, opposition to the French Colonial rule was not so strident as it was in Vietnam where the Nationalists, embracing communism, were

led by Ho Chi Minh. India was not enthusiastic in championing the anti-colonial movement dominated by the Vietnamese communists as it did in Indonesia where the non-communist nationalists sought to establish sovereign democratic republic. On the other hand, till 1953 India allowed France to use Indian airfields for transporting combat equipment and French soldiers to Indochina.\textsuperscript{40} India neither held a conference on Indochina, nor took the Indochina issue to the U.N. by way of building pressure on France to grant independence.

India did sympathise with the Vietnamese nationalist movement but adopted an ambivalent attitude because of, as Nehru himself said, the "extraordinarily complicated situation"\textsuperscript{41} in Indochina. Vietnamese nationalists were divided into two groups, one dominated by the communists supported by the USSR and the PRC and the other by the anti-communists supported by the free world as a result of which Indochina problem got embroiled in the Cold War. Despite its crusade against colonialism, India was obliged to adopt a policy of neutrality in Indochina crisis. Defining neutrality in the context of Indochina situation Nehru said in June, 1950: "Neutrality as a policy has little

\textsuperscript{40} Yuri Nansen, \textit{Jawaharlal Nehru and India's Foreign Policy} (New Delhi, 1977), p. 172.

meaning except in times of war. If you think there is a Cold War today, we are certainly neutral”.42

However, scholars like Mohammed Ayoob and D.R. Sardesai attributed India's 'lukewarm' attitude to the Indochinese crisis largely to the “communist – dominated character of the Vietnamese nationalist movement”.43 Indian ruling elite's growing disenchantment with the communists who – within India and in the neighbouring Southeast Asian countries like Myanmar and Malaya – sought to undermine democratic institutions, and its perception that the emergence of communist-dominated Vietnam as a member of the socialist bloc would facilitate the intensification of the Cold War, influenced the Indian government in the formulation of its Indochina policy. Adding to the Indian reservations was the communist victory in China which shared a common border with Vietnam. The Vietnamese communists called Vietminh were branded at that time as the Chinese communists' natural and logical allies in Southeast Asia.

Yet another constraint in extending explicit support to the Vietnamese nationalists by India was the French factor. France was the next major supplier of military hardware to India (in the early years after

42. Nehru, n. 12, p.58.
its independence) after Britain.\textsuperscript{44} Further, India did not want to exacerbate France with which New Delhi was negotiating on the transfer of five small pockets France held in India till October 1954.

All the same, India, encouraged by the growing trend for peaceful settlement of Indochina embroglio, discarded its “Policy of circumspection and non-interference” and jumped into the fray on February 22, 1954 by issuing a cease-fire call to all the parties and the powers concerned with the problem of Indochina. Though not as an official delegate of the Geneva Conference convened in 1954 to find a negotiated settlement of the Indochina problem, India did play a significant role behind the scenes at Geneva. It may be mentioned that two days before Geneva deliberations started on Indochina, Nehru not only announced on April 24, 1954 a six-point proposal for the peaceful settlement of the Indochina problem but also got it endorsed by the Colombo powers – Pakistan, Ceylon, Myanmar, Indonesia, India – who met in Colombo on April 26, 1954. India, which was unalterably opposed to colonialism, was gratified over the implosion of French empire in Indochina. India could justifiably feel proud of its praise-worthy mediatory role at Geneva. French Prime Minister Mendes – France paid rich tributes to India when he described

\textsuperscript{44} Asia Kumar Majumdar, \textit{South-East Asia in Indian Foreign Policy: A Study in India’s Relations with South-East Asian Countries from 1962-1982} (Calcutta, 1982), p.33.
Geneva Conference as "ten-power conference – the nine at the table and India".45

**India’s Opposition to Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)**

One of the classical examples of India’s religious observance of one of its foreign policy tenets, namely, opposition to power blocs and keeping away from military alliances, was New Delhi’s strident opposition to the US-inspired Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). Despite the huge effort by the Western powers to draw India into this military alliance, New Delhi did not budge.

Inspired by the success of the policy of military containment of communism in Western Europe, the U.S. was convinced that a collective security organization would prevent further spread of communism in Southeast Asia. In the wake of the brightening prospects of communist victory in Indochina, the U.S. for the first time came up in March 1954 with the proposal of setting up a Southeast Asia Defence Organization. Though reluctant initially, France and Britain eventually relented and agreed to join the military treaty proposed by the U.S. On September 8, 1954 the U.S., Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand and the Philippines met at Manila and set up a military alliance

called Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) "to contain China and communism along the seventeenth parallel in Southeast Asia".46

India not only refused to join SEATO but also made a blistering attack on Manila pact. India took exception to SEATO which in New Delhi's view was in complete antithesis to the Geneva agreement which envisaged the creation of an 'area of peace' comprising Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam wedded to the principles of non-interference and non-alignment. In other words these Indochinese countries were "determined not to add to existing tensions" and "to refrain from adding to the tensions" then operating world politics.47 A close associate of Nehru considered the setting up of SEATO as "an embryonic infringement of our peace area approach".48 India also expressed intense concern about Pakistan's membership of SEATO which in New Delhi's view, brought Cold War to its "door-step" adversely affecting the climate of peace. Earlier on April 24, 1954 Nehru told Lok Sabha : "Peace to us is not just a fervent hope, it is an emergent necessity".49 India assailed military alliances, formed in other parts of the world, such as NATO and MEDO, but the intensity of New Delhi's opposition to SEATO was very severe because it was feared that SEATO's scope might be extended to cover India as well.

46. Sardesai, n. 43, p. 52.
47. Tibor Mende, Conversations with Nehru, (Bombay, 1968), pp. 74-75.
India not only opposed SEATO but also took initiatives to expose the redundancy of the Manila pact. India hence concluded Panchsheel Agreement with China in April 1954. The five principles – which should govern international relations – enunciated in Panchsheel Agreement were:

(1) Mutual respect for each other

(2) Non-aggression

(3) Non-interference in each others' internal affairs.

(4) Equality and mutual benefit.

(5) Peaceful co-existence.\(^{50}\)

India not only signed Panchsheel Agreement with China but also encouraged Southeast Asian countries such as Myanmar to follow suit. Premiers of China and Myanmar issued a joint statement in June 1954, affirming faith in Panchasheel.\(^{51}\)

It was ironical that the two largest democracies of the world – India and the US – were ranged against each other, at a time when the two communist giants – the USSR and the PRC – were seeking to display unity despite their differences on major issues such as peaceful co-existence. In any case, the relations between India and the US – which

---

\(^{50}\) For the text of the Panchsheel Agreement, see *Foreign Policy of India: Texts of Documents*, 1947-58 (New Delhi, 1958), pp. 87-83.

took diametrically opposite stands on the formation of SEATO – reached all time low.

**India and Bandung Conference**

When the Indonesian Prime Minister Ali Sastroamidjojo put forward his proposal at the conference of the Colombo powers in May 1954 to organize a wider Afro-Asian conference, Nehru - in the light of his unpleasant encounters with various participants at the Asian Relations Conference seven years ago - though initially was not enthusiastic to welcome the Indonesian proposal, but subsequently gave his acceptance, hoping to avail himself of the Afro-Asian Conference to secure the acceptance and adoption of the policy of peaceful co-existence as a counter measure against the abhorrent SEATO military pact. Appadorai and Rajan described the Afro-Asian Conference as “India’s response to the challenge posed by the American military - pact approach.”

The seven-day Afro-Asian Conference sponsored by the five Colombo powers, namely, India Pakistan, Myanmar, Ceylon and Indonesia – was held at Bandung on April 18-24, 1955. The main purposes of the Bandung Conference which was attended by twenty-nine

---

52. A. Appadorai and M.S. Rajan, *India’s Foreign Policy and Relations*, (New Delhi, 1985), p. 356.
countries accounting for “more than half the population of the world”\textsuperscript{53} were:

- To promote goodwill and co-operation;
- To consider social, economic and cultural problems and the problems of special interest to Asian and African peoples; and
- To view the position of Asia and Africa in the world and the contribution they could make to the promotion of world peace and cooperation.\textsuperscript{54}

Nehru, who wanted the international behaviour to be governed by the principle of peaceful co-existence for building up and preserving independence and peace in Asia and Africa, availed himself of the Conference to the optimum. Just as at the Geneva Conference ten months earlier, at Bandung India played a significant role in “Private talks” which helped to clear the clouds of Southeast Asian apprehensions about China’s intentions. Hence, Nehru not only arranged meetings between the leaders of China and the Southeast Asian countries but also introduced Primer Chou En-lai to the Indonesian, Myanmarese, Ceylonese, Filipino, Thai, Cambodian and Laotian leaders. Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia and Myanmar followed the Indian line of peaceful


\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
approach towards China and proclaimed their adherence to 'Panchsheel' and peaceful co-existence with China. More important, Chinese Premier Chou-En-lai and the Prime Minister of North Vietnam Pham Van Dong gave a pledge of non-interference in Laos and Cambodia. Pham Van Dong categorically stated that the question of the political settlement in Laos was an internal one, in which North Vietnam would not interfere. In India's perception, the pledges of peaceful co-existence and non-interference by the leaders of China and North Vietnam represented "a non-military defence system for Southeast-Asia".

It is a paradox that the Bandung Conference marked the pinnacle as well as the beginning of decline of India's influence in Southeast Asia. The delegate of the Philippines General Romulo resented the role of "mother hen" India played in introducing Chou En-lai to various leaders, particularly those of Southeast-Asia. Nehru's outbursts in the open sessions of the Bandung Conference against SEATO were retaliated by the two Southeast Asia members of the Manila pact—the Philippines and Thailand. While Nehru's indiscreet remarks irritated some of the Asian leaders, including President Sukarno, Chou En-lai, thanks to his diplomatic dexterity, impressed many of the Asian leaders. Nehru's assertion that "classical colonialism is gone and dead" and that the "old

55. Appedorai and Rajan, n.50.
56. Sardesi, n. 45, p.89.
57. Ibid.
imperialisms are fading away”, was not shared by Sukarno who insisted that “colonialism is not yet dead”.  

China was doubly happy because it not only made friends with various countries at Bandung but also witnessed India loosing friends in Asia.

The differences between India and Indonesia the largest country in Southeast Asia, became open six years after the Bandung conference. At the first conference of heads of State and/or Government of Nonaligned countries in Belgrade in September, 1961, while Nehru advocated peace through amity and cooperation between the Super Powers, Sukarno thundered that there would be no peace in the world as long as colonialism and imperialism existed.  

India’s image in the eyes of the Southeast Asian countries took a nosedive following the India – China war of 1962. The one and only Southeast Asian country which, “unreservedly and unmistakably” supported India against China during the war was Malaysia. Tengku Abdul Rehaman, the then Prime Minister setup a fund called, “Save Democracy Fund”, of which he himself was the Chairman, to assist

India.\textsuperscript{61} India’s diminishing interest in Southeast Asia was reflected in Nehru’s failure to reciprocate the visits of the leaders of the Southeast Asian countries to India.\textsuperscript{62} It was at this time when India’s attention and role in Southeast Asia were on the slide that efforts were being made to setup aviable regional cooperation mechanism by the Southeast Asian countries.

\textbf{Moves at Regional Cooperation in Southeast Asia and India’s Response}

\textbf{Origin and growth of Regionalism in Southeast Asia}

Regional cooperation is a means to hasten the process of realization of the primary goal of national development through institutionalized or regularized interaction between the neighbouring governments and groups.\textsuperscript{63} It has long been recognized that economic development insulates nation states against internal as well as external challenges. Benign cooperation with the neighboring countries would not only impart impetus to rapid economic development, but also would serve the purpose of whittling down and even the eventual termination of “intra-regional differences and suspicions”. Further, while reinforcing regional interdependence, cooperation and collaboration with neighbours provide

\textsuperscript{61} V.P. Dutt, \textit{India's Foreign Policy}, (New Delhi, 1997), p. 348.

\textsuperscript{62} Appadorai and Rajan, n. 52, p. 356.

\textsuperscript{63} Peter Lyon, “ASEAN and the future of Regionalism”, in Lau Teik Soon (ed), \textit{New Directions in the International Relations of Southeast Asia: The great powers and Southeast Asia}, (Singapore, 1973), p. 156.
each country the much needed self-confidence in the absence of which they would be prodded into joining alliances with external powers much to the detriment of the region as a whole. Suffice it to say that regional cooperation ensures regional stability.

Regional cooperation to be effective requires the states concerned to adopt certain principles such as the subordination of national sovereignty to the regional grouping, the establishment of regional institutions as symbols of solidarity, the exclusion of external influences, and to function for the realization of certain goals, including co-operation in economic, social and political spheres for common good, regional efforts to solve regional problems, and collective strength to bargain with and decreased dependence on the external powers.64

The concept of regionalism took roots in the American, European and African continents before the Asian countries were driven by "cooperative impulses". Hence emerged the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1948 to beef up the security arrangement which was already in place. European Economic Union (EEC) was formed in 1958 for achieving economic and political integration in Western Europe. The

Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was established in 1963 as a clear manifestation of growing pan-African sentiments.\textsuperscript{65}

Talking of and mulling over mutually beneficial regional cooperation were conspicuously absent among the Southeast Asian countries immediately after the attainment of their independence. Faced with the daunting task of sustaining their newly gained independence, Southeast Asian countries were hardly aware that national growth and development could flourish in an environment of peace and security in the region. The prevailing environment which was marked by disincentives such as nagging territorial and other discards and lack of mutual trust and confidence and sense of community among the Southeast Asian nations, prevented them from enjoying the fruits of regional corporation.

Despite growing interaction, chiefly to resolve conflicts among themselves, the states of Southeast Asia were "divorced from one another" as they were during the colonial period. As Bernard K. Gordon has pointed out, the period of European colonialism gave rise to "artificial" separation among the peoples who have had much in common. Substantiating his argument Gordon cited Aung San of Myanmar, Qurino of the Philippines and many others who complained that Southeast Asians knew for more about Europe and America than they did of their nearest neighbours. Almost all links, whether of trade, education, communications, and so on,

\textsuperscript{65.} For a good account on regional organizations see Sonu Trivedi, \textit{A Handbook of International Organisations}, (New Delhi, 2005).
were largely with the metropole powers. The commemoration volume brought out by ASEAN was quite explicit about the “artificial” separation. It explained:

The long period of colonial rule throughout most of the region meant that the administrative and legal systems of the colonial masters, many of which persist to this day, were imposed on the various countries. Under colonial tutelage, each of these colonized countries developed differently, evolving social and political systems modeled on those of their western rulers. The indigenous elite were educated to serve the colonial office and the whole notion of regional cooperation was non-existent.

In the colonial period, therefore, Southeast Asia was a partitioned region. One way to describe the situation which prevailed in the years before World War II is to say that each country in the region turned its back on its neighbours and looked across the seas to the metropolis of the ruling power. Thus the peoples of the region ... were largely ignorant of one another and showed little indication of wanting to get to know each other.67

The thrust towards regional cooperation was further impeded by internal economic and security problems such as insurgency and conflicts between the nations of Southeast Asia. Gordon hence rightly pointed out that international relations in Southeast Asia were marked by “conflict

67. ASEAN: The First 20 years, n.2, pp. 43, 46.

36
and no cooperation". The politico-economic environment which was infused by conflict and uncertainty did not allow the regional leaders to pay attention to regional cooperation. No other than Southeast Asian nations themselves admitted thus:

Post-war conditions among the Southeast Asian nations were to a large extent turbulent. Ideological revolution, insurgency, internal tensions and civil strife often led to fighting and bloodshed. Although most of these conflicts were internalized within the newly independent nations, there was also some friction between the nations, one notable case being the episode of confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia ... This period of tension led many observers to seriously doubt the prospects for regional stability and co-operation.  

Absence of local cooperative endeavours encouraged outside powers to set up regional bodies. Classical examples in this regard were Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Asia and Pacific Council (ASPAC), both of which were promoted by the US as part of its grand design to contain the influence of China. The SEATO formed in Manila on September 8, 1954 comprised eight members in all of whom only two, namely the Philippines and Thailand, belonged to Southeast Asia and the rest including the US, the UK, France, Australia, New Zealand and Pakistan were from outside the region. Therefore, SEATO could not be considered truly Southeast Asian in character even though its chief focus  

68. Gordon, n. 66, p. 141.  
69. ASEAN : The First 20 years, n. 2, pp. 46-47.
was on Southeast Asia. ASPAC was formed in 1966 with the modest aim of "achieving economic, social and cultural coordination among its member countries". Unlike the SEATO, ASPAC was able to draw more members from Southeast Asia – Malaysia, the Philippines, South Vietnam and Thailand. The other five non-Southeast Asian members included Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. Both these organizations, which as Peter Polomka has pointed out, "always lacked persuasive regional commitment and rapidly became obsolete with the onset of détente". Even though SEATO and ASPAC, whose track record was unimpressive and uninspiring, lived short, they made the Southeast Asian countries to display strong drives towards regional cooperation promoted by themselves and for themselves exclusively. Of course, various other factors too influenced the nations of the region to establish an indigenously inspired cooperative mechanism.

The shining example of cooperative mechanisms in other parts of the world, in particular of that of EEC, the states of Southeast Asia began to perceive regional cooperation as a means to overcome impediments to economic growth, namely, poverty, shortage of capital, shortage of skills and dependence on a very narrow range of primary commodities such as

70. Ibid., p. 47.
rice, teak, rubber, iron and tin ore, metals and coconut for export earnings.\textsuperscript{72}

In promoting Southeast Asian interest in regionalism, one cannot ignore the impact of some of Asia's most experienced economists such as Professor Hiroshi Kitamura, Kyoshi Kojima, Lim Toh Boh, Puey Ungphakorn and Saburo Okita, to mention a few, who stressed that for realizing development goals of nations of Southeast Asia the sure route was to focus on cooperation in trade and production.\textsuperscript{73} The Leaders and elite of Southeast Asia also felt the need for regional cooperation to develop region's large untapped resources under and above the surface of its earth and in its extensive sea waters. Nations of the region also realized that regional cooperation would serve the purpose of not only insulating from engulfing themselves in bitter conflicts and rivalries but also to prevent outside powers from fishing in the troubled waters of Southeast Asia and thereby impede the economic growth of the region. A publication of ASEAN said thus:

The 1960s were a turbulent time for the countries of Southeast Asia. Amid the tension of the Cold War between the Superpowers, the rise in military might of both the Soviet Union and the people's Republic of China, and the intensifying war in Indochina, the free nations of the region recognized an urgent need to come together in some form of

\textsuperscript{72} Gordon, n. 66, p. 146.
\textsuperscript{73} See Ibid., p. 154.
cooperative grouping for the promotion of peace and stability in the region and to work towards their mutual benefit.\textsuperscript{74}

The growing interest and enthusiasm of Southeast Asian leaders in regional cooperation found clear expression in the letter the then Prime Minister of Malaya Tenku Abdul Rehman wrote to the Indonesian President Sukarno on October 28, 1959:

You will understand that because of historical circumstances, the economic growth of most of the countries in Southeast Asia in this century has been influenced by relations with countries outside the region. Because of this, the feeling of "one region" has been stunted,... and because of these historical circumstances, we have looked for help and examples from the outside and seldom look to ourselves...

Mr. President, you of course realize that this region is not rich only in natural resources but also in culture, history, population, and so on. I believe that, by getting together more closely, we will be able to make more advantageous use of all of these sources, for the benefit of all, and will be able to enrich our own countries by cooperation of all kinds.

I also believe that, from the viewpoint of international relations, by establishing this form of association we will be able to put forward our view more convincingly, especially in international economies, because we share many common interests. Even if we cannot

\textsuperscript{74} \textit{ASEAN: The First 20 years}, n.4, p. 47.
achieve full agreement on a particular subject, we will be at
least better able to understand, through this association,
why we cannot achieve agreement.75

Formation of Association of Southeast Asia (ASA)

ASA which was the brain child of the Malaysian Prime Minister
Tengku Abdul Rehman was formed in Bangkok on July 31, 1961 by
Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines. It enjoyed the distinction of
being the first regional grouping established by the countries of Southeast
Asian region on their own initiative. As man lives on hope, this regional
body was named ASA which means “hope” in the national languages of the
three countries. The aims and purposes of the Association were:

(1) “To establish an effective machinery for friendly consultations,
collaboration, and mutual assistance in the economic, social,
cultural, scientific and administrative fields,

(2) To provide educational, professional, technical and administrative
training and research facilities in their respective countries for
nationals and officials of the associated countries;

(3) To exchange information on matters of common interest or
concern in the economic, cultural, educational and scientific
fields;

75. For text of the letter from Tenku Abdul Rehman to Sukarno dated
(4) To cooperate in the promotion of South-East Asian Studies;

(5) To provide machinery for fruitful cooperation in the utilization of their respective natural resources, agricultural and industrial development, trade expansion, and transport and communications improvement and generally raising the living standard of their peoples;

(6) To cooperate in the study of the problems of international commodity trade; and

(7) Generally, to consult and cooperate with one another so as to achieve the aims and purposes of the Association as well as to contribute more effectively to the work of existing international organizations and agencies.76

ASA-limited growth

The establishment of ASA marked the humble beginning made in the growth and development of cooperation in the region. The joint committees established by the ASA had prepared 36 papers for wider cooperation in the spheres of shipping, tourism, telecommunications and education. It provided a working model in terms of administrative machinery and provisions for policy consultations, economic, socio-cultural

76. For text of the Bangkok Declaration issued on July 31, 1961 setting up ASA, See Asian Recorder, August 27-September 2, 1961, p. 4137.
and technical cooperation which were emulated by the region's groupings in future. The ASA was not designed either to fight communism or to serve as an alliance against China.

The ASA established with fond hopes found itself in a state of limbo in less than three years after its inception and finally went into oblivion following the establishment of a more viable organization in the region in 1967. This short span of life was chiefly due to two factors:

(1) Serious differences between Malay and the Philippines on the issue of the formation of an enlarged state of Malaysia.

(2) The absence of the largest nation in the region – Indonesia – rendered the Association ineffective.

India’s Response

ASA caught the attention of neither the Government of India nor the Indian Press, because the Association was set up at a time when clouds of war were gathering between India and China. Further, the emergence of ASA had not gone well with India which perceived that the component states of ASA were pointed politically towards the West.

Referring to ASA’s initiative for holding a conference of countries of Asia for restoring peace in Vietnam, invitation for which was declined by India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi who became Indian Premier in 1966 said that while regional corporation was important, the gathering of a group of specific nations would only trigger more tension.\textsuperscript{78} Given the association of the Philippines and Thailand – the only two Southeast Asian countries who joined SEATO, against which India launched into a long tirade – with ASA, India perhaps thought it fit to turn a blind eye to the formation of this Southeast Asian outfit. In his speech in Rajya Sabha on June 23, 1962, i.e. eight years after the SEATO’s inception and eleven months after the inception of ASA, Nehru noted wryly: “The SEATO has been in existence for some years, but it has not functioned at all”.\textsuperscript{79} Further, India had its reservations about Asian regional cooperative organization with restricted scope and context. Minister of External Affairs, Swaran Singh stated in Lok Sabha on August 1, 1966: “The Government is interested in promoting regional cooperation in Asia but on a wider basis like that of the Colombo plan, ECAFE and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) than on the basis of certain political groupings”.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Asian Almanac}, 1966, p. 1711.
MAPHILINDO

While ASA was languishing, another "indigenous creation" called MAPHILINDO (an acronym combining the initial syllable of Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia) sprang up in Southeast Asia. If ASA was the brain child of Tenku Abdul Rehman, the Philippines President Macapagal was the author of MAPHILINDO proposal, which envisaged "the grouping of the three nations of Malay origin working together in closest harmony but without surrendering any portion of their sovereignty". MAPHILINDO, which was the result of the intense desire of the component states to forge unity among the people of Malay race, was claimed as the "Malay response to Southeast Asia's urgent need for a framework of stability and peace within which its component nations can progress in freedom and achieve their rightful destiny". The aims and objectives of MAPHILINDO that came into being following the signing of the Manila Declaration on August 5, 1963 by the Presidents of Indonesia and the Philippines and the Prime Minister of Malaya, included:

- "To maintain fraternal relations, to strengthen cooperation among their peoples in the economic, social and cultural fields in order to promote economic progress and social well-being in the region".

81. For the Manila Agreement signed by the Foreign Minister of Malaya, the Philippines and Indonesia on July 31, 1963, see Asian Recorder, October 22-28, 1963, pp. 5475-76.

82. Man Mohini Kaul, "ASEAN - India Relations during the Cold War", in Frederic Grare and Amitabha Mattoo (eds), India and ASEAN: The Politics of India's Look East Policy (New Delhi, 2001), p. 50.
➢ To launch “common struggle” for eradicating “colonialism and imperialism in all their forms and manifestations”.

➢ To “cooperate in building a new and better world based on national freedom, social justice and lasting peace”.

➢ To hold “frequent and regular consultations at all levels to be known as Mushawarah (consultation) Maphilindo”, “to achieve the foregoing objectives”.

It is sad that MAPHILINDO, which was formed with lofty aims and objectives which had the distinction of drawing for the first time Indonesia into the cooperative mechanism of the region, collapsed no sooner than it saw the light of the day. This was chiefly due to the dispute between Malaya and the Philippines over the possession of North Borneo (Sabah) and the policy of ‘confrontation’ launched by Indonesia against the formation of Malaysia. MAPHILINDO, therefore, proved that in international relations, it is not ethnic identity but certainly the national interests that predominate. Despite its failings, MAPHILINDO had merits. “MAPHILINDO”, as an American scholar has noted, “did provide the Philippines increased identification with... Southeast Asia and also

83. For the text of the Manila Declaration See Asian Recorder, October 22-28, 1963, p. 54-76.
provided an impetus" for Indonesia's participation in the future cooperative endeavours in the region.84

India's Reaction

India kept mum about the MAPHILINDO. The reasons are not far to seek. India's military debacle in the wake of China's invasion in 1962 and its failure to elicit the sympathy and support of the Southeast Asian countries (with the sole exception of Malaya) dampened its interest in the region and the developments therein. Further, Southeast Asia, marred by conflicts, presented a bleak picture. In a statement in May 1963 Nehru said that India was not interested in getting entangled in their disputes as India had enough troubles of its own.85 India's silence had also much to do with its uncomfortable relations with two members of MAPHILINDO – the Philippines and Indonesia. India abhorred the Philippines for being avowedly pro-American and one of the founder members of the much despised SEATO. Indonesia, while moving closer to China, began to distance itself from India.

The rift between India and Indonesia which came to the surface at the first conference of Nonaligned States in Belgrade in September 1961 – where while India laid emphasis on promotion of peace with the

cooperation of the superpowers, Indonesia stressed on the elimination of colonialism from Asia and Africa\textsuperscript{86} - reached peak in September 1962 as a result of the "Sondhi affair".\textsuperscript{87}

A section of the Indian Press, however, found a lot of "romanticism" in the MAPHILINDO scheme mooted by the Philippines president. Nihal Singh of The Statesman heaped the three countries coming together as a new mood of cooperation in Southeast Asia. According to him, Indonesia viewed the scheme as a means to checkmate China's aggressive expansionism.\textsuperscript{88} Following the establishment of MAPHILINDO, The Statesman happened praises on the leaders of Indonesia, Malaya and the Philippines, hailed the nascent Southeast Asian grouping as marking a new era in the history of Asia and visualized that the MAPHILINDO scheme might thwart China's aims in the region.\textsuperscript{89}

With this introductory background various facets of India's association with ASEAN are projected.

\textsuperscript{86} See Appadorai and Rajan, n. 52, p. 358.
\textsuperscript{87} In the wake of the observation of G.D. Sondhi, the Vice-President of the Asian Games Federation on August 27, 1962 that in the absence of invitations to Israel and Taiwan, the name of the Games should be changed, anti-Indian demonstrators attacked and caused much damage to the Indian Embassy in Djakarta on September 3, 1962. Arora, n. 60, p. 103.