CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
Australia is located in the Pacific at the extremes of "Asiatic tail". South-East Asia and Pacific have their significance and importance to Australia's future. The importance of South-East Asia grew as the world economy developed. The term South-East Asia has some conceptual problems.\(^1\) As this term was used during the Second World War as the name for a theatre of operations. This is a geographical term given to a region to the South of China and to the east of India.\(^2\) This term denotes the six members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (the ASEAN), the three countries of Indochina (Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam) and Myanmar.

The first World War involved all of South-East Asia except the Netherlands East Indies. But in the Second World War the entire area of South-East Asia was invaded by Japan. It emerged as a vital region in the struggle between the Communist and Western forces of the world after the end of the war.

The "Near North" is an expression used by the Australians to describe the geographic relationship of their country to South-East Asia. R.G. Casey, Minister for External Affairs, stated to the House of Representatives on a visit to South-East Asia on 27 September 1951, "Although Australia was colonised and developed by people of European Stock, and although our cultural past and our present connection are such that our eyes turn most naturally towards Europe, our geographical situation is such that we must inevitably be brought

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into close touch with the peoples of Asia. If we make no effort to understand their problems we can scarcely expect them to make an effort to understand ours."³ After 1939 only Australia started establishing relations with countries outside the British Empire. Till then the Australian policy had always been a pro-British Empire in outlook. Even in 1939 when Second World War broke out, Australia announced that it was also at war along with Britain.

Australia's relationship with its neighbours in South-East Asia was growing. From the strategic point of view the South-East Asian region was turning into a region of interest for Australia. During the Second World War, Indo-China was occupied by Japan and this became a base to attack the rest of South-East Asia. Again the occupation of Singapore and Indonesia gave Japan a passage to the Indian Ocean. It placed Japan as a threat to Australia. Sir Percy Spender in January 1950 in his speech, upon his appointment as Minister for External Affairs said, "Geographically Australia is next door to Asia and our destiny as a nation is irrevocably conditioned by what takes place in Asia. This means, that our future to an ever-increasing degree depends upon the political stability of our Asian neighbours, upon the understanding and friendly relations between Australia and Asia."⁴ Although there is a diversity of social values, cultures and political ideologies and above all the levels of economic development differ vastly in these two areas. But, economically, politically and strategically the Australians are affected by South-East Asia. While talking

³ Current Notes on International Affairs, vol.22, no.9, September 1951, p.511.
about South-East Asia we talk about ten states and 413 million people and those are of great importance to Australia. Population is claimed to be 500 million now by them. Though Australia has not been involved in this region since long, but it has permanent interests in South-East Asia which may not be shared by Australia with other countries.

Geography and politics have combined on the international level to make South-East Asia one of the most strategically important areas of the world. The Straits of Malacca between Malaya and Sumatra is the strategic gateway between the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The land and the sea pattern in South-East Asia, peninsular and insular, has provided the natural facilities for movement from Asia to Australia.

This shows, that during the period of crystallization of external relations, Australia was getting involved in the South-East Asian region of social, political and pseudo military conflicts. The Australian position in South-East Asia is doubtful because of "the obscurity of Australian policy reflects the ambiguity of her position in South-East Asia. Geographically she is important, demographically she is weak. Her economic interests are limited, her strategic interests are great. At home she is strong industrialized power. But she looks inwards, and has done so for many decades."  

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1.1 Australia and South-East Asia in Second World War

The Second World War was fought in three continents - Europe, Africa and Asia. With the Japanese bombardment of Hawaii and Darwin, two other continents - America and Australia - were involved. On 7-8 December 1941, it came to the Pacific and here it was fought by five Western countries - the United Kingdom, the United States, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Australia against a single Asian foe, Japan. After Pearl Harbour, Singapore collapsed on 15 February 1942. Australia declared war on Japan on 16 December 1941, when Prime Minister Curtin said, that the war in the Pacific would revolutionise the life of the Australians and the declaration of war would be a vital factor in the history of hundreds of years.7 Singapore was supposed to be the "Gibraltar of the East" and the fall of this Naval Base came as a terrible shock to the British and other concerned countries. The declaration of war on Japan on 16 December 1941 was a traumatic experience to the Australians. Prime Minister Curtin showed his concern for the defence of Singapore by asserting that Australia considered the attack on both as directed against herself.8

Only five days after the fall of Singapore, the British Government requested Australia to divert to Rangoon a Division of Australian Imperial Force. This request was refused by the Australian Government. The reason was that the Australian city, Darwin had experienced the Japanese bombing of that city only few days before the British request. Prime Minister

8 ibid.
Curtin also pointed out that "Australia's outer defences are now quickly vanishing and our vulnerability is completely exposed." All this made Australia to transform its policies and attitudes according to its northern neighbours. The region of South-East Asia which was earlier unfamiliar to Australia was now unfolding and Australia started looking for its future in the troubled waters of South-East Asia. Partridge has stated, "the Curtin and Chifley governments gave Australia a foreign policy for the first time in its history."  

The tide of war turned against Japan with its surrender on 2 September 1945 in the region of South-East Asia to Australia alone. The Pacific area was divided into South-East Asia Command and South-West Pacific Command, which was roughly south of the Philippines and east of Borneo. The responsibility of the Japanese troops surrender was accepted by Australia.  

Herbert Evatt, the Minister for External Affairs, who served in both Curtin and Chifley Governments stated, in 1945, "The war is over now boys. We helped with the fighting and we are bloody well going to help with the talking."

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The political geography of these two regions demanded Australia's involvement in the struggle of independence in South-East Asia. The nationalists in South-East Asia identified capitalism with imperialism, which affected their attitude towards communism. These attitudes gave tough exercise to the policy-makers in Australia. An Australian student of Indonesian affairs stated, "Sound foreign policies must be based on sound assessment of the situation confronting us. We will stumble into the most appalling miscalculations unless we understand and appreciate the forces that are shaping the new societies in South-East Asia."\(^{13}\)

1.2 Australia's Policy Towards Indonesia After World War II

It was Chifley Government which took a plunge in the Indonesian Revolution in the early post-war years. In 1946, the Cheribon agreement (also known as Linggadjati agreement) was signed between Van Mook and the Indonesian Prime Minister Sjahrir. Following this the British troops left the archipelago leaving the Dutch and Indonesians to solve their problems themselves. Once again Australia got involved but this time its troops were not involved. After the signing of this agreement the Colonial powers again began to obstruct its implementation. On 21 July 1947, the Dutch attacked Java, Madura and Sumatra. On 1 August 1947, the matter was taken up by the UN Security Council who called for a peaceful settlement. To this Belgium was nominated by Holland and Australia by Indonesia. Thus, the regional interests

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of Australia got cut through her racial ties, which was a turn in Australia's international relations. In the Australian Parliament Herbert Evatt on 26 February 1947, declared, "Just as far as the people of South-East Asia cease to be dependent upon the decisions of European governments, so far do Australia's interests in the Councils of South-East Asia increase."\(^{14}\)

Even before this agreement also the Indonesians were looking forward to a co-operation with Australia. The Dutch were becoming unpopular with the Australian troops. Police actions of the Dutch in Indonesia compelled the Asians to hold a conference of interested regional powers in Delhi in January 1949. Australia's participation in this was a major contribution to the independence of its neighbour. This move was opposed in the country. Three resolutions, two dealing with the transfer of sovereignty to the Republic and the third with a wider issue of regional organization in South-East Asia were passed. The geographical proximity left no choice before the policy makers of Australia. "No part of the world would be harmed more by chaos (in Indonesia) than Australia, because the Indonesian archipelago is a vital section in Australia's northern arc of defence."\(^{15}\) It was felt by Australians that a unified nationalist state might be more useful to Australia's security than a divided, oppressed and wasted state."\(^{16}\)

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15 *The Sydney Morning Herald* [hence SMH], 16 November 1945.

The Government of Ben Chifley was succeeded by the Liberal Country Party in 1949 led by Robert Menzies. Percy Spender, the Minister for External Affairs in the new government visited Jakarta during 1950. Australia also set up its Embassy in Jakarta which was its first in South-East Asia. This government had continuity in its policy towards Indonesia.

During a Round Table Conference at the Hague in the latter part of 1949, an agreement to transfer sovereignty over the Netherlands East Indies to a Federal Republic with the one exception of the territory of West New Guinea was produced. "The final act in the drama of Indonesia was the joint sponsorship, by Australia and India, of the admission of their common neighbour to the United Nations in September 1950."17

1.3 Australian Attitude Towards New Guinea

In the 1950s, the warmth of Australia-Indonesia relations of 1945-49 independence was reduced. Difficulties arose over the Indonesian claim to the then Dutch New Guinea, the only part of the Netherlands East Indies which had not been transferred in 1949 to the new Republic of Indonesia.

New Guinea was important for Australia from its defence point of view. The Australians were justified when they claimed their conquest of German New Guinea as a result of the First World War.18 In 1946, Prime Minister

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Chifley asserted, "The territory of New Guinea... in which so many of our men died in battle against the Japanese is of such importance to the safety of this country that nothing but absolute control could be accepted by any Australian Government."\(^{19}\)

New Guinea lies in the North of the continent of Australia. It sprawls on the map like a huge bird. The Dutch claim to West New Guinea was not based on a physical conquest of the area. But, the Dutch have been paying an annual rent to the Sultan of Tidore for their rule over New Guinea.\(^{20}\) In 1945, a Papuan Guerilla Leader, Silas Papare also the founder of the Irian Party for Independent Indonesia organized a revolt against the Dutch, but it was crushed in 1946.\(^{21}\) After Linggadjati Agreement in November 1946, it was clear that the Dutch were going to retain West New Guinea. The Indonesians considered New Guinea as part of the political unit of their government and strategic necessity to Indonesia. This matter was not solved even at the Round Table Conference in 1949 held in the Hague between the Indonesians and the Dutch. The Dutch insisted on its retention while the Indonesians were demanding its transfer to them.

The Australian representative in the UN Good Offices Committee, T.K. Critchley, suggested to leave the matter for a year and then to negotiate

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in a better atmosphere. Public opinion polls revealed anti-Indonesian feelings among the Australian people, when their government was advocating the cause of the Indonesian independence in the Counsels of the world.22

The general election of 1949 brought a change in the thinking of the Australians. The victory of the Liberal-Country Party Coalition, did not destroy the continuity in the Australian policy towards Indonesia despite previous criticism of the Labour policy as excessively anti-Dutch and pro-Indonesian. This was the period when major cities in China were falling to the Communists and Australia was affected from the fear of Communism. In January 1950, the Minister for External Affairs, P.C.Spender visited Jakarta and discussed the issue of West New Guinea with the leaders of Indonesia. Though Australia did not support Holland publicly its preference was known. The adviser of the Indonesian delegation to the Round Table Conference in the Hague, Mohammad Yamin reportedly said that the people of the Australian New Guinea should be allowed to choose their own way.23 The Sydney Morning Herald also claimed, that the Indonesians did not regard their country as complete without the Dutch and Australian New Guinea, British Borneo and Portuguese Timor.24 As a reaction to it the sympathy for Indonesia among

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24 SMH, 31 January 1950.
the Australians started vanishing. P.C. Spender answered Yamin, "... the United States of Indonesia had not the slightest shadow of a claim to the Australian New Guinea on any ground, ethnic, racial or otherwise.... Frankly, however, we do not want them in any part of New Guinea and do not believe that they have any need of right to establish themselves there. West New Guinea should remain in the hands of the Dutch or be placed under trusteeship. East New Guinea is in our charge, and we shall firmly hold it."25

As a result the Dutch supported Sultan Hamid of Borneo in his attempt to overthrow the Central Government through Westerling coup of 23 January 1950. These events had opposite reactions in Australia and Indonesia. The Australians had sympathy with the newly liberated country. They were of the view that since Indonesia could not control its own territory, take over of West New Guinea will only lead to a chaos there.26 Australia continuously rejected Indonesian demand for West New Guinea on racial grounds. The Australian attitude was seen as "more Pro-Dutch than the Dutch" by the Times of Indonesia.27 The Indonesians were so irritated with the Australian attitude that President Sukarno warned Australia, that its attitude towards New Guinea problem was making their friendly relations bitter.28 America supported the

25 ibid, 1 February 1950.
27 UN, n.17, meeting 484, Session 9, 30 September 1954, p.124.
28 SMH, 13 July 1950.
Dutch position in this matter. They saw New Guinea as a possible territory for future Japanese migration.

During this period the Australians were cultivating their relationship with Indonesia through economic assistance. In 1950, Indonesia accepted economic aid from Australia and after two years joined the Colombo Plan. This diplomatic policy of Australia was criticized by the Dutch. The attitude of the Liberal-Country Party Government, led by Menzies on this stand changed. Emphasis was put on the relations with Jakarta. Denis Warner reported from Jakarta, "Ten days ago, the Indonesians politely forgot the White Australia Policy and greeted the Australians with every justification as the primary architects of their independence." Two issues which were the obstacle to friendly relations were the Communist problem and West Irian dispute. After 1950, the fear of having a common border with an Asian country in New Guinea, was the main cause of Australia's opposition to the Indonesian claim. The Dutch-Australian relations also improved. The matter was submitted to the United Nations in 1954 by Indonesia. Sir Percy Spender, the Australian Ambassador to the United States and the United Nations, explained that, the destiny of Australia is closely bound up with the island. A Dutch writer claimed that his country's policy towards New Guinea was due to the pressure

29 The Advertiser, 18 November 1950.
31 The Advertiser, 7 January 1950.
32 Mackie, n.13, p.293.
exerted on it by Western Powers, especially Australia. The Australians also realized later on that they brought about this situation. This can be supported by an Australian opinion, which is "...If Australian diplomacy had been directed during the early 1950s towards encouraging a peaceful transfer of West New Guinea to Indonesia, instead of encouraging the Dutch to stay, Australia would have spared itself the indignity of fence-sitting and perhaps have earned the gratitude of the nation of 100 million people with whom, whether she liked or not, she would soon have to share a common border." 33

By 1957 the general climate surrounding the dispute changed within Indonesia. The negotiations between the Netherlands and Indonesia were sought by American efforts. It was the decisive factor for the settlement. The tension over the Dutch New Guinea issue was eased with the visit of the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Subandrio to Australia in 1959. 34 His emphasis was on common defence interest of the two countries. The Australian Prime Minister Menzies visited Indonesia in return in December 1959. In April 1961, the Indonesian Defence Minister, General A.H. Nasution during his visit to Australia forced them to assure him that Australia would not assist the Dutch militarily in New Guinea. 35 He also sought a guarantee that Australia would


remain neutral in the event of conflict. Australian Prime Minister Menzies emphasized that Australia's concern was only that of a neighbour. He stated, "Australia is neither a party nor a self-appointed arbitrator."\(^{36}\)

The decisive factor of this issue was the American attitude and absence of any powerful support. In May 1962, during the meeting of ANZUS Council at Canberra it was decided that the United States would not support either the Netherlands or the Australian position.\(^{37}\) In August 1962, Indonesia and the Netherlands signed an agreement for the transfer of the Dutch New Guinea (West Irian) to Indonesia and for an act of self determination in West Irian before the end of 1969.\(^{38}\) According to this agreement Indonesia controlled West Irian from 1 May 1963.\(^{39}\)

The Minister for External Affairs of Australia, Garfield Barwick made a statement about the settlement, "And, if any should have contemplated a military adventure, it is worth remembering that none of the countries of the West, and particularly of those with whom Australia has the closest association were at any relevant time to maintain a Netherlands administration by military means."\(^{40}\)


38 H.C.Michael (Indonesian Section, Department of Foreign Affairs, Canberra), "Australia-Indonesia Relations", *Australian Outlook*, vol.40, no.3, December 1986, p.139.

39 Greenwood, n.37, p.295.

40 *Current Notes*, n.3, vol.33, no.8, August 1962, p.69.
1.4 The Australian-Indonesian Relations During the Confrontation Against Malaysia

Manifestations of the Indonesian assertion since 1957, were the inception of a new political system called "Guided Democracy", rise of President Sukarno to a dominant position and the foreign policy of developing close relations with Russia and China. The Australian Government concluded that the Indonesian conditions would frustrate efforts to contain Communist expansion in South-East Asia. The Indonesian domestic atmosphere became both more radical and more anti-Western. Another development was the flow of arms from the communist bloc which was a threat to Australia's security. On 6 April 1958, agreements were concluded for the purchase of arms totalling US $60 million from Poland, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. Australia has always believed, that the establishment of Malaysia was an important aspect of the strategy of "defence in depth." It was necessary to establish a zone of stability between Australia and China.

In 1961, negotiations to create Malaysia out of a Union of Malaya, Singapore and the British territories of North Borneo, Sarawak and Brunei took place. A Commission headed by Lord Cobbold was set up to investigate about the attitude and interest of Borneo people towards jointing Malaysia. The

Cobbold Report was positive. The Australian Government's reaction came out strongly in favour of Malaysian proposal. On 25 November 1961, Prime Minister Menzies stated, "We have throughout indicated our belief that the concept was a very good one, and we hope it will include all the countries originally indicated by the Tunku.... Having been in close touch we welcome the agreement now made. We hope that the Malaysia proposal will reach full achievement as soon as possible."\(^45\)

The Federation of Malaysia was to be brought into being by 31 August 1963.\(^46\) Again this idea was warmly supported by Australia as Menzies described Malaysia as an "imaginative and far-sighted concept" and said, "if it proved practicable could contribute significantly to stability and progress in an area in whose development and progress Australia was deeply interested."\(^47\)

The Philippines' claim over the Borneo territories was then only opposition to this proposal. It was rejected by the leaders of the political parties in the Borneo territories. Indonesia had no objection to the formation of the new state as Subandrio, the Indonesian Foreign Minister, speaking at the United Nations in November 1961 emphasized, "...When Malaya told us of her intentions to merge with the three British crown colonies of Sarawak, Brunei and British North Borneo as one federation, we told them that we have no

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\(^{46}\) Government of Australia, Department of External Affairs, Malaysia: Select Documents on International Affairs, no.1, Canberra, 1963, pp.104-5.

objections. Naturally, ethnologically and geographically speaking, this British part is closer to Indonesia than, let us say to Malaya. But we still told Malaya that we have no objections to such a merger based upon the will for freedom of the peoples concerned."\(^{48}\)

On 8 December 1962, a revolt led by A.M. Azahari broke out in Brunei to promote an independent union of the British Borneo Territories as the state of North Kalimantan. This was crushed by the British troops. Revolt received support from the Indonesian Government.\(^{49}\) While Australia condemned it. Garfield Barwick, the Minister for External Affairs stated, "The revolt is an attempt to overthrow the constitutional government of a territory enjoying internal self-government…. There has been no popular support for the uprising within Brunei."\(^{50}\)

On 9 December 1962, President Sukarno promised to encourage the spread of rebellion to British Borneo. Foreign Minister Subandrio, in his speech to the Mahakarta Regiment in Yogyakarta on 20 January 1963 said, "Now the President has decided, that henceforth, we shall pursue a policy of confrontation against Malaysia. This does not mean, that we are going to war. This is not necessary. However, one thing is certain, that we will no longer

\(^{48}\) Quoted Barwick, ibid, p.197.


\(^{50}\) Malaysia Select Documents, n.46, pp.104-5.
take a passive attitude towards all accusations, agitations and the hostile attitude of Malaya. For this, of course, Malaya has to bear all the consequences. "51

This shift in Indonesia's policy towards the Federation was the first stage in its policy of confrontation from December 1962 to September 1963. Its only objective was to prevent the creation of Malaysia. Further, they planned to provide military aid to Freedom fighters of the territories in North Borneo and delay the creation of Malaysia. The Indonesian President Sukarno showed preference saying, "Whoever does not sympathize with the just struggle of the people of North Borneo is a traitor to himself. Let us march forward, supporting those who oppose colonialism, imperialism and oppression...."52 The Indonesians were opposing to the Malaysian and British influence in the area.

Australia wanted to settle the dispute by negotiations.53 Sir Garfield Barwick, the Australian Minister for External Affairs had played a major role in it. Actually, Australia was not ready to break traditional links with Britain for an untested friendship of Indonesia. In the meantime Sukarno declared the policy of 'Crush Malaysia' and described the federation a puppet of the British imperialism. The Secretary General of the UN, U Thant supported the

51 The Straits Times, 26 January 1963.
52 Keesing's, n.49, p.10181.
53 Bruce Grant, Indonesia, Parkville, 1964, p.166.
Malaysian cause\textsuperscript{54} and as a reaction to it the Indonesians demonstrated outside the British Embassy in Jakarta and burnt the building.

After the failure of the Manila Agreement to solve the conflict, events led to the second stage of confrontation policy. The Australian Government had an unavoidable choice of supporting Malaysia and the United Kingdom. On 25 December 1963, Prime Minister Menzies stated, "...if, in the circumstances that now exist, and which may continue for a long time, there occurs, in relation to Malaysia or any of its constituent states, armed invasion or subversive activity-supported or directed or inspired from outside Malaysia - we shall to the best of our powers and by such means as shall be agreed upon with the Government of Malaysia, add our military assistance to the efforts of Malaysia and the United Kingdom in the defence of Malaysia's territorial integrity and political independence."\textsuperscript{55}

The third stage in Indonesia's confrontation policy from July-December 1964, was of the military conflict when Indonesian forces made two attempted landings on the Malay Peninsula. The fourth stage started with Indonesia's withdrawal from the United Nations in January 1965. Suddenly with the political changes in Indonesia caused by the coup of 1 October 1965, "Confrontation" was pursued with less enthusiasm.

\textsuperscript{54} Keesing's, n.49, p.19719.

1.5 Australia's Attitude to Indonesia's Opposition to the Malaysian Proposal

During the whole period of confrontation Australia tried to maintain friendly relations with Indonesia, but opposed the destruction of Malaysia, as well as, expansion of the Indonesian influence in the area. The Australian dilemma was expressed in the emphasis of Prime Minister Menzies when he described the peculiar misfortune of Australian position in which Australia sought friendship with its near neighbour but was compelled to enter into opposition to it. The reason, he mentioned, was the nature of the policy adopted by Indonesia.⁵⁶ Australia had vital interest in the aftermath of confrontation. Australian impression was that the damage and chaos of confrontation might emerge in a Communist intrusion.

Until the formal establishment of the Malaysian Federation in September 1963, the Indonesian position in its confrontation policy revolved around a few arguments.⁵⁷ They considered Malaysia a neocolonial creation of Britain despite the violation of a threat to the Manila Agreements, Indonesia's security and the peace in South-East Asia. The experience of foreign intervention in 1958-59, when Malaya was used as a base was recalled in Indonesia.

The Australians thought the same way as the British.⁵⁸ They rejected the Indonesian argument asserting that Malaysia provided a frame work which

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would allow a peaceful decolonization. By incorporating Malaya, Singapore, the two British Colonies Sabah and Sarawak, and the British Protectorate Brunei into a viable state, the new Federation would significantly contribute to stability in the area by its capacity to resist the encroachment of communism in the area.\(^5^9\) Australia did not agree with the thought that Malaysia was a threat to the South-East Asian peace. Instead Australia considered the British presence essential for the stability of the region. The British forces were committed to defend Malaysia under the Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement in 1957. It was to coordinate defence assistance to Malaya under which British troops were supposed to stay in Malaya after independence. AMDA was extended to ANZAM in 1958. It was an arrangement between three Anglo-Saxon countries the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and the former British possessions of Malaya and Borneo.\(^6^0\)

Australia was in a dilemma during the period of confrontation. This was reflected in the statement of Sir Garfield Barwick, the Minister for External Affairs, "...we have a special relationship with Malaya... as a Commonwealth country... we also have a particular interest in the friendship of Indonesia."\(^6^1\) Australia supported the British presence in South-East Asia in defence of Malaysia and continued to sustain aid and educational opportunities to the Indonesians too.


1.6 The Malayan Emergency

Australia and Malaya both were British settlements. The strategic importance of Malaya increased to Australia with massive British naval installations in Singapore. Major General Gordon-Bennett, Commander of the Australian force in Malaya before the war, said, "Australians regard Singapore as an outpost of Australia. We feel that in helping to defend this country, we are defending Australia.... To the people of Malaya, I say that your war will be our war. Should any enemy come this way, Australia will be there."62 Australia appointed its first diplomatic representative in Singapore. This shows that even before the war, Malaya was an important area for Australia.

Communist guerillas began their war against British Colonial authorities in 1948.63 It continued till 1960. Emergency was proclaimed in Malaya. With the increase in the Communist insurgency Malaya suffered heavy losses. "The Production of tin declined and almost one-third of public expenditure was diverted to measures against terrorists."64 Malaya was considered to be the first line of defence to Australia. The British were blamed and criticized for the situation there by the Australians.65 Minister for External Affairs, Sir Percy Spender was of the view that even if the crisis was economic in...

62 The Straits Times, 20 February 1941.
65 CPD, n.14, vol.198, no.9, 2 September 1948, p.65.
peninsula, by sending troops; Australia would supply the means of livelihood and defence.\textsuperscript{66}

In 1949, Liberal-Country Party Coalition, led by Robert Menzies came to power. This government set the principle of sending military aid to Malaya. The Prime Minister on 21 April 1950, disclosed that the British Government had sought the Australian aid to cope with the terrorists in Malaya.\textsuperscript{67} Some Australian air support and servicing was also provided to the British in Malaya which remained there till 1952.\textsuperscript{68} Talks between the UK government and Malay's alliance government in London in early 1956, established August 1957 as a target date for full independence of Malaya.\textsuperscript{69} On 31 August 1957, Malaya attained Merdeka (freedom for independence). The relations between newly independent ex-colony and the former colonial power were friendly.\textsuperscript{70} Responsibility of Malaya's defence was assumed by Britain.

1.7 Australia and the Dissolution of Malaysia

The Malaysian Federation faced serious economic strain, racial problems and communal rioting between Malays and Chinese in Singapore in late 1964. It resulted in destroying the whole concept of Malaysia. Prime Minister of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{66} ibid, 23 September 1948, p.839.
\item \textsuperscript{67} ibid, vol.207, no.4, 21 April 1950, p.1773.
\item \textsuperscript{68} Barcan, "Australia and Malaya", n.6, p.20.
\item \textsuperscript{70} Millar, n.34, 1 September 1957, p.271.
\end{itemize}
Malaysia and Singapore concluded the Separation Agreement on 7 August 1965 in Camera. According to this agreement Singapore became an independent state. Formal parting took place on 9 August 1965. It surprised the Australian Government. 71

The Australian Government had always dreamt of an "orderly decolonized and stable non-Communist state in Malaysian area. Australia supported the concept of wide Malaysian federation in 1961. On 25 September 1963, Prime Minister Menzies promised military assistance to Malaysia. Stressing upon the Commonwealth link Menzies stated, "We know and she knows that in this part of the world we look to her and she looks to us. We each apply in a spirit of mutual confidence a golden rule of mutual obligation." 72 Menzies admitted that the Malaysian Government never consulted Australia about dissolution. They considered it a drastic step. The Australian Prime Minister sent a letter to the Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, expressing his dissatisfaction and anger. He wrote, that Australia, which had contributed troops to Malaysia's defence and risked Indonesia's wrath, was not consulted. 73

Though Australia was not happy with this approach of Malaysia, yet Defence Minister Paul Hasluck gave reasons for supporting Malaysia. Firstly, he said, its creation by a democratic and constitutional process, secondly, its

71 The Age, 10-11 August 1965.
72 CPD, n.55, p.1339.
73 The Australian, 12 August 1965.
membership of the Commonwealth and lastly, the worth of Malaysia's stability and prosperity to Australia.\textsuperscript{74} It was clear after some time from the public statements that Singapore was forced to accept separation from the Federation of Malaysia.\textsuperscript{75}

### 1.8 Australia and Indo-China

The three countries of Indochina - Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos - were least understood by Australia till the end of the Second World War. With all the other South-East Asian nations Australia either had defence links or economic and political links. Partly, the reason was that Indochina was colonised by the French. It created a cultural and institutional gap and also political distance.

Before the Vietnam war Australia did not have an Indo-China policy, and did not see any interest in the area. Indochina became a direct strategic concern only about the time when the Australian were despatched to Vietnam in 1965.

**Australia in the Vietnam War:** By the 1960s Australia realised that Vietnam was the place where the West, specially the United States should take a stand against the Chinese communism. Vietnam was the first of a series of dominoes

\textsuperscript{74} CPD, n.55, pp.1377-78.

to fall and ultimate was Australia. Thus, Vietnam conflict became a concern of the "Australian foreign policy by mid-1960s. Australia's role in Vietnam war and Indochina can be seen into three phases: 1950-60, 1961-65, and 1966-72."\(^76\)

(a) 1950-60: Before the Second World War Australia hardly had any interest in Indochina or Vietnam. Vietnam faced the Communist led anti-colonial movement, Viet Minh, from 1945, which attained mass support as part of the anti-French nationalist struggle. This movement appeared as a threat to the Australian security from the Communist China. In March 1950, External Affairs Minister Percy Spender stated, to the Parliament, "It is certain that if the Viet Minh were to overrun the whole country the present Government of Vietnam could be replaced by a regime scarcely distinguishable from other Communist satellite governments.... Should the forces of Communism prevail and Vietnam come under the heel of Communist China, Malaya is in danger of being outflanked and it, together with Thailand, Burma and Indonesia, will become the next direct object of further communist activities."\(^77\)

Australia gave political support to the French in Indochina since 1950. Australia also gave civil and military aid.\(^78\) While External Affairs Minister, Casey was concerned at the prospect of a Communist victory in Vietnam, he

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76 Frank Frost, Director of the Foreign Affairs Group of the Parliamentary Research Service, interview to the Author on 26 November 1996, Parliament House, Canberra.


was aware of the strong political position of the Viet Minh. He opposed the US proposal for military intervention in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{79} It was partly because Britain opposed this plan but also because he felt that this proposal will lead to conflict with China.

Vietnam was temporarily divided in the Geneva agreements. French forces withdrew and armed conflict subsided for sometime as Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and the Diem regime, Republic of Vietnam (RVN), in the south worked together to consolidate their control.\textsuperscript{80}

From 1960, guerilla war expanded armed conflict in South Vietnam. Australia criticised it.

(b) 1961-65. After 1960 Australia's attitude towards Vietnam conflict produced policies of full support for US intervention of the Australian forces. It was believed, that North Vietnam was an agent of China. External Affairs Minister Paul Hasluck, in a statement in June 1964 after a visit to South-East Asia said, that "... there is no doubt that North Vietnamese regime is directing, supporting and controlling the insurgency in South Vietnam. Part of this was simply Annamite aggressiveness and the desire to dominate their neighbours, but part is the determination of China to establish Chinese hegemony throughout South-East Asia, working in the first place through the agency of her North Vietnamese puppets."\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{79} Cabinet Decision No.1026, 4 June 1954, p.3.


\textsuperscript{81} Quoted in Glen St. J.Barclay, \textit{Friends in High Places}, Melbourne, 1985, p.141.
The conflict in southern Vietnam in 1960s was a continuation and extension of Viet Minh's colonial struggle. The Australians knew that "military solution was not possible for South Vietnam and threat from communism can only be overcome by social, economic and educational programs in conjunction with the establishment of a sound government administration."\textsuperscript{82} Australia was in close official contact with the US on Vietnam policy from 1961. Australia announced its commitment of combat forces to Vietnam in 1965 to support the US position there. The evolution of Australian policy was discussed in an official report at the direction of the Prime Minister Whitlam. This was presented to the parliament in 1975.

The White Paper focussed on the origins of Australia's military involvement and concluded, that "The provision of military aid by Australia was decided upon for political reasons and was in support of the fundamental aim of Australian policy towards South Vietnam, which was to ensure the long term defence interests of Australia. These were seen in terms of the ANZUS and SEATO Treaties and the theory of forward defence against the victory of Communism in South-East Asia, an area seen as vital to Australia's future. This was a policy developed in Australia independently of any outside pressure. The cornerstone of this policy was seen as a compelling necessity to commit the power of the United States to the Asian area and thus to commit her to a

\textsuperscript{82} Australian Military Forces, Pocketbook, South Vietnam, Canberra, June 1967, pp.9-10.
tactical guarantee of active support to Australia through the ANZUS and SEATO Treaties.\textsuperscript{83}

In the period from 1961 to 1965, Australia was heavily preoccupied with the West Irian issue, and Indonesia's confrontation policy towards Malaysia. This led to the Australian military involvement in northern Borneo to defend Malaysia. By late 1964, Australia, while continuing to be concerned to all these affairs, was moving towards a further commitment of forces to Vietnam.\textsuperscript{84}

The Prime Minister, Menzies in his speech about Australian foreign policy making said, that the Vietnam conflict "... must be seen as part of a thrust by Communist China between the Indian and Pacific Oceans."\textsuperscript{85}

(c) 1965-72. Between August 1965 and October 1967 Australia only proceeded to expand the size of its forces in Vietnam. The increase in force was on request from the US. It was an extension of the 1965 decision to send combat forces to Vietnam.\textsuperscript{86}

The newly elected Prime Minister of Australia, Harold Holt in 1966 increased the Australian force in Vietnam. Australia's forces in Vietnam by 1967 increased to a level of 6300.\textsuperscript{87} The fourth and final increase in

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\textsuperscript{84} ibid, p.11.

\textsuperscript{85} \textit{CPD}, n.14, vol.45, no.4, 29 April 1965, p.1061.

\textsuperscript{86} \textit{White Paper}, n.83, p.23.

\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Current Notes}, n.3, vol.37, no.12, December 1966, p.53.
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Australian force was announced in October 1967. This was because of Australia's concern to the situation in Malaysia and Singapore and its implications for Australian security.\textsuperscript{88} By this time, the Vietnam war was also opposed in the US, which made the US administration to demonstrate more that their policies had political and moral support of its allies. The advisers of American President Clark Clifford and General Maxwell Taylor started with a mission in July 1967 to Asia, Australia and New Zealand.\textsuperscript{89} Australia's response was of particular importance to them. Neither country was willing to increase its forces in Vietnam. Australian Prime Minister, Harold Holt, also, "presented a long list of reasons why Australia was already close to its maximum efforts."\textsuperscript{90}

Soon after these talks Australia again sent its troops to Vietnam in September 1967. Holt, reaffirmed Australia's commitment to the allied war in Vietnam. He said, "... is the most urgent of our current external problems and it is basic to all our aspirations for security in Asia.... We do not believe that our great Pacific partner the United States should stand alone for freedom."\textsuperscript{91}

In early 1968, the US sought Australia's views on the current state of conflict in Vietnam about extending the bombing of North Vietnam and about

\textsuperscript{88} White Paper, n.83, p.23.
\textsuperscript{89} ibid, p.32.
\textsuperscript{91} Current Notes, n.3, vol.38, no.10, October 1967, pp.411-12.
possible extension of the war into Cambodia and Laos. The Australian government’s reply expressed caution. "Australia’s advice in brief was that the US should keep on doing what it had been doing."\(^92\)

On 26 March 1968, External Affairs Minister Hasluck supported continuation of the US bombing programme. Five days later only, President Johnson announced a halt to bombing and pursual of negotiations. Negotiations began in Paris in October 1968.\(^93\) From 1969, under the Nixon administration phased withdrawals of the US forces from South Vietnam started. President Nixon supported the withdrawal with the statement that South Vietnamese have become strong enough to defend their own freedom.\(^94\)

The Australian policy was also changed quickly to shift the Americans. But the Australian Prime Minister Gorton indicated that the withdrawal would be total.\(^95\) But the withdrawal of force was partial and last major combat unit of the Task Force to leave South Vietnam reached Australia in December 1971. A small Australian army assistance group still remained in South Vietnam in 1972 to train RVN forces. It was withdrawn in December 1972, when Labor Government came to power in Australia.

\(^{92}\) Renouf, n.78, p.267.  
\(^{93}\) Barclay, n.81, pp.164-5.  
\(^{94}\) ibid, p.173.  
Sometimes it is said, that Australia's involvement in the Vietnam war was a "mindless follow up of the United States." But Australia's involvement in the war was to stop the advance of expansionist Chinese communism before it reached Australia. Australia wanted to fight the battle several dominoes away from the Australian mainland.

Another reason was to keep the US actively engaged in the security of South-East Asia. Thus, Australia ensured the US help during its crisis. As the Australian Embassy in Washington at the time put it in a cable to Canberra, "Our objective should be to achieve such an habitual closeness of relations with the US and sense of mutual alliance that in our time of need, after we have shown all reasonable restraint and good sense the US would have little option but to respond as we would want." 97

1.9 Regional Arrangements

Australia's desire was to have a regional arrangement in its geographical location "which got momentum from 1943 onwards in the period of Herbert Evatt. In January 1944, Australia concluded the ANZAC Pact with New Zealand and showed an interest to establish the arrangement similar to South Pacific commission for South-East Asia and south West Pacific also. 98


97 Embassy cited as quoted in ibid, p.39.

After the Conference in New Delhi on Indonesia in January 1949, the Philippines President Elpidio Quirino suggested, for an anti-Communist Pacific Union. It was the result of Indian Prime Minister Nehru’s speech in the Conference that new impulses "should begin to think of some more permanent arrangement than this Conference for effective mutual consultations...." 99 It was not well received in Australia. Percy Spender, successor of Evatt as Minister for External Affairs delivering his speech said, that all Governments interested in peace in South-East Asia should consider creation of regional defence pact, of which Australia, the UK and other Commonwealth countries should be the nucleus. 100 Ultimately on 1 September 1951, ANZUS treaty was signed in San Francisco between Australia, New Zealand and the US. It came into force in April 1952.

Percy Spender, the Australian Minister for External Affairs at the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers’ Conference in Colombo emphasized to build up an economic bulwark against political and economic under-development. 101 The conference was held from 9-14 January 1950. Spender was able to bring it to the knowledge of Commonwealth statesmen that the situation in South-East Asia was too delicate and some remedies were needed. Thus, Colombo Plan was launched on 1 July 1951 which was the


initiative of Menzies Government. This government was seeking support and security through a non-political and non-military approach and that was symbolized through the Colombo Plan. Spender himself quoted, "Security in the Pacific, economic and technical aid and political stability in South-East Asia were, to me, rather like two sides of one coin."\(^{102}\) Spender himself felt that the Colombo Plan "provides a dramatic example of how small nation as Australia still is, may influence history."\(^{103}\)

As the war in Indochina developed, the question of an overall multilateral security arrangement in the Southwest Pacific, South-East Asia and South Asia became important. Ramon Magasaysay, the Philippines President stated on 18 April 1954, to support any NATO type alliance provided the Philippines be given the guarantee of the US help in case of attack.\(^{104}\) The Geneva settlement concluded in July 1954 led to an effort to establish a security arrangement directed at stopping further Communist gains in South-East Asia. On 6 September 1954, the Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan, Australia, New Zealand, France, Great Britain and the United States met at Manila. Two days later on 8 September South-East Asia Collective Defense Treaty was signed. The views in shaping it were of Britain and the U.S. The treaty area was defined as "the general area of South-East Asia, including also the entire

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103 Spender, n.4, p.271.

territories of the Asian Parties, and the general area of South-West Pacific, \textsuperscript{105} excluding Hongkong and Taiwan.

The SEATO was Australia's first defensive treaty with Asian countries. The creators of the SEATO had China in their minds. They had fought China in Korea and also confronted it in South-Vietnam. The Communists were keen to acquire the rich strategic sources and excess food supplies of South-East Asia. China was accused by supporting the Communists against the rulers in South-East Asia. Anthony Eden, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs was of the view that SEATO will not be effective unless it enjoyed the support of the South-East Asian powers.\textsuperscript{106}

In 1961, an Association of South-East Asia (ASA) was formed. The member countries were Malaya, the Philippines and Thailand. Indonesia was not included which is a natural regional leader. In 1964, another organisation called "Maphilindo" was formed which included Indonesia. One of the prime acts of the new government in Indonesia was to open the way for negotiations with Malaysia, about ending confrontation. Those negotiations ended up into the signing of Bangkok Agreement. Thus in Bangkok in August 1967, the idea of regional co-operation became a reality with the formation of Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). ASEAN Declaration was to unite in the


\textsuperscript{106} CPD, n.14, 5th series, vol.532, 1-12 November 1954, column 929.
nnfields of economy, trade and culture.\textsuperscript{107} It was put forward by Indonesia for economic and cultural collaboration with Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore.\textsuperscript{108}

Formation of the ASEAN was applauded by Australia. Even after two decades its relevance was appreciated. Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Senator Gareth Evans in the opening of 6+6 session of the Post Ministerial Conference in Jakarta on 27 July 1990 stated, "ASEAN has provided a vital confidence building mechanism between its member states. It has presented to the world a group of states which are economically vibrant, confident.... The vision of those who founded ASEAN in 1967 has been realised."\textsuperscript{109}

Australia's relationship with the ASEAN is one of the most significant aspects of its foreign policy. Economic cooperation has been given a priority. Economic co-operation not only paved the way for co-operation in other areas, but was a condition for achievement of objectives in other areas too.

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\textsuperscript{108} "ASEAN and the South-East Asian Region", \textit{Australian Foreign Affairs Record}, vol.45, no.12, December 1974, p.827.

\textsuperscript{109} "ASEAN's Past Success a Prelude to the Future", \textit{Australian Foreign Affairs and Trade}, vol.61, no.7, July 1990, p.429.
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