CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOVIET POLICY TOWARD THE REGIONAL COOPERATION IN ASIA

We have analysed in our first Chapter how reality, that is to say, a given situation, interacts on concepts and ideas in making a framework of Soviet foreign policy, this also seems to be true in the specific case of regional cooperation among states as an issue of vital importance in international affairs. The post-Second World War Asia was a novel reality for Soviet foreign policy makers. Hence the process of such an Asian reality asserting its role in Soviet policy framework was long-drawn-out. It is precisely this historical process with which the following pages deal.

Early Background of Soviet Policy

Historically speaking, the Soviet Union emerged as an European power and its contact with Asia and its problems during the inter-war years were more imaginary than real. However, it is indeed true that Lenin and the Communist International showed an active interest in the colonial world, so much so, that Lenin came out with a specific plan for supporting and exposing the cause of freedom of colonies and semi-colonies. Likewise, the Soviet government right from 1917 consistently declared support for the cause of colonial freedom. But all these were imaginary in the sense that no concrete action was forthcoming, indeed it was impossible from the Soviet side. Yet a consistent declamatory support to the cause of colonial freedom, particularly in Asia, did transform the issue of colonial freedom as an vital problem of international politics, thereby helping the nationalist movements in the colonial and semi-colonial world.
It was precisely because of such a Soviet policy of support and encouragement to the issue of freedom of colonies and semi-colonies that the imperialist powers took special care that the Soviet Union continues to remain an European power, making it impossible for her to establish contact with Asian reality. It is in this sense that the post Second World War Asian reality emerged as a novel arena for Soviet foreign policy.

It was therefore understandable that Soviet policy makers took time in understanding the developments in Asia after the Second World War. In this process they registered colossal mistakes, as for example, underestimating the beginning of the process of the liquidation of the colonial system, and ignored or underestimated many of the notable developments sweeping through the emergent nations of Asia. The trends for regional cooperation among Asian states comprised one of such vital developments.

Like all historical phenomena, the trends for regional cooperation among the emergent Asian states have historical roots. Historically speaking, a solidarity was felt among the national movements struggling for freedom all over Asia, as they were confronted with a common adversary-imperialism. Many such instances can be cited from the history of national liberation movement in Asia; a notable example was the contact that the Indian national movement tried to build up the similar movements in West Asia and China.


With this background of sense of solidarity among nationalist movements in Asia, it was logical that when Asian national movements achieved their objectives, concrete steps, though preliminary and probing in nature, began to seen. The first attempt was the convening of Asian Relations Conference. The idea of convening of Asian Relations conference was advocated by 9 Asian countries at the Sanfrancisco Conference (1945), which discussed United Nations Charter.

Development of trends of Cooperation in Asia, and particularly in South-East Asia

Asian Relations conference was intended to be an unofficial conference. It held in New Delhi even before India's independence and was the first ever gathering of Asian countries.

In March 1947, the invitations were sent to the Asian countries, including the Soviet Union, by Indian Council for Foreign Relations to join the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi. The Conference was held from 23 March to 2 April, 1947. More than 200 delegates from about 27 Asian countries attended the conference. Twenty representatives came from the USSR, particularly from its Central Asian Republics, viz., Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kaghakistan, Kirgizia, Tajikistan and Ujbekistan. Representatives also came from Mongolian Republic and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Observes came from the USSR, the US and from some international organizations. The conference recommended for joint consultation, an exchange of experience, experts, technology and information, and peaceful solution.
of all disputes in bilateral and international relation. Asian countries also decided to help African countries "to their rightful place in the human family."

This conference was the first international forum where so many countries of Asia gathered and expressed their desire to unite. The discussions of the conference gave an impetus to the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movement. Its recommendations helped in socio-economic and cultural interaction among the Asian countries.

During the period from 1948-54, the Asian countries met together for several times, viz., Indonesian Conference (1949), Baguio Conference (1950), Colombo Conference (1954). Through these conferences they tried to highlight their problems. Attempts were also made for their economic and cultural cooperation. But due to their mutual differences, the aim could not be achieved.

This period saw some important changes in international relations. In the late forties, the cold war tension between the West and the Soviet Union became acute. The US tried to increase her sphere of influence in Asia. To counter the communist governments of Soviet Union and China, the US increased her military and economic involvement in Asia. On the other hand the Soviet Union took least interest regarding contemporary developments in the newly independent countries of Asia.

The first half of fifties was marked by some international developments in Asia, such as, Korean war, consolidation of communist governments in the PRC, North Korea, North Vietnam and Mongolia, Geneva Agreement on Indochina and recognition of neutral status of Kampuchea and Laos, and emergence of a few non-aligned countries in Asia. India and China normalised their relations and signed Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. The United States signed security treaties with Japan, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea. Similar treaty was also signed with Pakistan in 1954. She initiated military pact in Asia such as ANZUS (1951), Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (1954) and Bagdad Pact in 1955.

Since the mid-fifties, a clear-cut change could be marked in Soviet attitude towards the newly independent countries of Asia. N.S.Khrushchev, the new General Secretary of the CPSU, gradually tried to divert Soviet attention from Europe to Asia. As a result, in 1955, the USSR Supreme Soviet hailed the Five Principles, signed by India and China, and appealed to all states to build up their relations on its basis. The further study in this chapter will emphasise the gradual change in Soviet view of attempts of regional cooperation in Asia and the cautious and careful decisions of Soviet leaders regarding such efforts of Asian countries.

In the mid-fifties, Asia was divided into four groups of countries - pro-communist, anti-communist, non-aligned and neutrals of Indo-China region. Against this background the Asian countries together with the African states once again attempted to unite

themselves. They came closer on the basis of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism and anti-racialism. They met at Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955. The motive of the Bandung was to promote good will and cooperation among the Asian and African countries. They also discussed the problems of economic cooperation, national sovereignty racialism and colonialism. The final communique emphasised on the need of the economic cooperation in Asia and mutual cultural exchanges.

The Soviet Union supported the efforts of Afro-Asian countries for economic and cultural cooperation in Bandung and praised their struggle against colonialism. The Ten Principles of Peaceful Cooperation, proclaimed by the Conference, were also hailed by the Soviet Press. This Conference is referred to as "...first representative forum of Asian and African States which demonstrated the resolve of people to coordinate their actions in the struggle against imperialism and neo-colonialism and ensure peace and the security and sovereignty of the developing countries through joint

5. Afganistan, Cambodia, Ceylon, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gold Coast (Ghana), India, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan, Jordon, Laos, Lebnan, Liberia, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, North Vietnam, South Vietnam and Yeman met at Bandung.

6. The ten principles are: (i) Respect for the fundamental rights of man, as also the aims and principles of the UN Charter; (ii) respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations; (iii) recognition of equality of all races and nationalities - big and small; (iv) abstention from intervention and interference in the internal affairs of other countries; (v) respect for the right of every country for individual or collective defence in conformity with the UN charter; (vi) abstention from exerting pressure on other countries; abstention from exploiting agreements on collective defence of self interests on the part of big powers; (vii) abstention from acts of threats of aggression and use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country; (viii) settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means through talks, conciliations, arbitration or judicial settlement as also through other means as the parties may chose in conformity with the UN charter; (ix) assistance in mutual interest and cooperation; and (x) respect for justice and international obligations.
efforts. The Conference was described as "an organ for the defence of the rights of Afro-Asian nations...."

Except these gatherings of all-Asia nations, there was one regional organization of Arab countries, known as Arab League. It was formed in 1945. The League reflected Arab nationalist sentiments and tried for economic unity of Arab States. Though the League was formed in 1945, till 1958 it was not much active. The Soviet Union praised the anti-West policy of League and efforts of Arab countries to unite themselves. An article published in *International Affairs* (Moscow), praised Arab League because "The Council of League adopted a resolution rejecting the participation of the Arab countries in the aggressive bloc", like Bagdad Pact in 1955. The Council of the League also supported."peoples of Oman, Southern Arabia, Algeria and Kuwait in their struggle for national independence".

Since 1956, Soviet view of the newly free countries changed officially. The Twentieth Congress of the CPSU ideologically justified the Soviet Union's relations with the developing countries; having capitalist economic system and West-oriented foreign policy. The


9. Members are, Egypt, Iraq, Jordon, Lebnon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen. Later on it was joined by UAE, Moracco and Tunisia, all in 1958, Kuwait (1961), Algeria (1962), South Yemen (1967), Baharain, Oman, Qatar and UAE in 1971.

Congress also supported the idea of peaceful co-existence and collective security in Asia. The Soviet Union wanted the Asian countries to come closer and resist economic and political pressure of neo-colonialism. During this period the USSR tried to associate herself with the Afro-Asian solidarity movement. Bilateral relations were established with the developing countries and were given economic and military aid. Trade agreements were signed and cultural exchanges took place. This policy was carried on even by the Twenty-third Congress of the CPSU, when Leonid Brezhnev became the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party. But, the Soviet policy towards the organizations of regional cooperation during the mid-sixties was watchful and critical. The closer links of the member countries with the US were cause of anxiety of the Soviet leadership. They feared that attempts of pro-Western countries for regional cooperation were initiated by the US and would ultimately result in an anti-Soviet front. A Soviet author stated, "The US uses the watchword of regionalism to attract the independent states of the area to the United States, to draw its dissident allies closer to it, and to give US monopolies easier access to Asian market."

The experiences of Asian countries during the late forties and the fifties laid the foundation for the organizations of regional cooperation in sixties. The attempts of fifties gradually made it clear that the differences among the Asian countries in their foreign

11. For details see Documents of Twenty-third Congress of the CPSU, Novosti, Moscow, 1966, p.287, 288.

policy orientations are main obstacles in their unity. The Soviet Union and the US, both have the friendly states in the region. The third group of non-aligned states was also active. Therefore the formation of the organization of regional cooperation, including all the states of Asia was impossible. Moreover, any cooperation in fields of politics and military could not be achieved under these circumstances. The cooperation could be attained only in economic and cultural fields. The rivalry between the stronger states of Asia for leadership also led to the failure of the attempts for regional cooperation. Under these circumstances, it became clear that regional cooperation at a larger scale would be difficult to achieve. Therefore, the sub-regional organization in South Asia, Southeast Asia and South West Asia were formed in sixties. Due to the experience of the fifties, a need for a machinery was felt to implement the decisions of the conferences for regional cooperation. Hence, we can see that the attempts for regional cooperation in sixties are more organised and successful.

In Southeast Asia attempts for regional cooperation started in the late fifties. The Malaysian Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman visited President Carlos P.Garcia of the Philippines in January 1959 and proposed to form an organization for closer relations between the two countries. He referred the organization as Southeast Asian Friendship and Economic Treaty (SEAFET). Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman and his officials were developing this idea since a year back. The idea was expressed by the Malaysian Prime Minister in February 1958, when he visited Ceylon. He was of the opinion that regional

cooperation might bring benefits to the Southeast Asian nations. According to Rahman SEAFET was to be a non-political organization with the aims of economic and cultural cooperation. President Garcia agreed with Tunku Rahman in principle and the latter wrote letters to the leaders of other Southeast Asian countries, viz., South Vietnam and Burma for their views regarding regional cooperation. Except Thailand and the Philippines, none of the Southeast Asian countries showed their enthusiasm for the plan. Hence, Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia continued the consultation for a cooperative plan among themselves through out 1960. At the one stage the name of the cooperative plan was proposed as Association of Southeast Asian States (ASAS) and they tried to increase the number of its members. But the plans of SEAFET and ASAS did not possess any official character.

In February 1961, Foreign Ministers of Thailand, and the Philippines met Tunku Rahman in Kuala Lumpur and expressed their determination to form a regional organization in Southeast Asia. As a result, in July 1961, these Foreign Ministers met in Bangkok and declared formation of Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) for economic, social and cultural progress of the region. They decided to have an annual meeting of the Foreign Ministers of member countries.

In 1963, Malaysia and the Philippines raised disputes over Sabah and diplomatic relations between them were suspended. Hence ASA also became inactive. When relations between Malaysia and the Philippines

15. V.V.Samoilenko, *op.cit*, p.7.
deteriorated, Indonesia took side of the Philippines. Armed confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia started. Under these circumstances, the leaders of these countries decided to solve their problems by holding regular consultations and they formed Maphilindo in 1963. But the group could not work longer as Malaysia became disinterested.

In the mid-sixties attempts were made to form one more regional organization in Southeast Asia - Asia and Pacific Council (ASPAC). It was set up in 1966 by Australia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand and South Vietnam. They agreed to encourage solidarity and regional cooperation among Asian and Pacific countries. The members of this organization had military treaty with either the US or the UK. Therefore, their intentions in the region were doubted by the Soviet Union. ASA and ASPAC were criticized latter. It was stated that "one need only to take a close look at the activities of the Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC), the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA), and other regional alliances established in Asia under the aegies of the US. Although these alliances were established ostensibly for the purpose of economic and cultural cooperation, they are in fact intermediary steps in the establishment of a super bloc in the Pacific". Regarding the causes of ASA's failure, the Soviet authorities believed that "acute political contradictions" between the members led to its demise. The Soviet Union always feared that these


19. G. Chufrin, "Economic Integration in Southeast Asia", Oriental Studies in the USSR, No.6, 1982, p.120.
regional organizations might be used by the US to fulfill her own aim in Asia. It was forecasted that "the greatest danger of ASPAC is that the US wants to use it to 'envelop' the neutralist countries of Asia". In fact, Thailand, the Philippines and South Vietnam were members of SEATO. Australia and New Zealand were members of ANZUS. Taiwan had separate security treaty with the US and Malaysia had a security treaty with the United Kingdom.

During early sixties attempts were also made in West Asia for regional cooperation. An organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was formed in January 1960 by Iraq, Kuwait, Persia, Quatar, Saudi Arabia and Venenzuela. Later on it was joined by other oil exporting countries like Indonesia, Libya, Abu Dhabhi, Nigeria, Algeria, Gabon etc. These countries came together to use their collective pressure on oil importing countries. In the beginning the Soviet Union kept a critical watch on the members of OPEC. But, during later years, it supported the attempts of using the 'oil weapon' by Arab States. An article published in Asia; Afrika Segodnia stated that "OPEC is an organization of former colonies and semi-colonies, which in the context of a changing correlation of forces in the world in favour of socialism, had been able to break the front of colonial monopolistic exploitation and in a series of questions to impose its will upon imperialism." It is said that "OPEC's emergence was closely linked with the struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism".

22. I.Yermachenkov, "Oil Giants on the Offensive" International Affairs, Moscow, No.1, 1984, p.117.
Another regional organization was established by Pakistan, Turkey and Iran in 1964. It was called Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) and its aims were to achieve closer economic, technical and cultural ties among the members. This organization was again severely criticised by the Soviet Union as all its members were members of CENTO. Moreover, the Soviet Union believed that the idea of closer relations between members of northern tier was based on the proposal of an American political analyst, Louis Dupree in 1963. He had written a series of articles and suggested for a political union among Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran.

The Soviet Union was basically not against the regional cooperation among the Asian countries. But the closer relation of the member countries with the US and other Western powers, made the Soviet Union too cautious and critical of the Asian regional organizations. Soviet author stated that, "Sub-regional economic organizations in Asia like the ASA and its successor ASEAN as well as RCD ....came into existence with the blessings and even direct, participation of the imperialist countries. They received solid financial help; and institutions like the Asian Development Bank or the Asian Industrial Development Council have been so moulded as to serve the interests of the imperialist countries".

In the decade of sixties the political conditions further changed in Asia. The ideological differences between the two socialist


countries - the USSR and the PRC, came to fore, which in its turn encouraged the increased involvement of both in Asia. But in the PRC, cultural revolution took place in 1966, and till 1968 she isolated herself from international politics. She reappeared in international political scene only in 1969. But deteriorating relations between the two communist countries of Asia were sure to affect their relations with Asian countries and the political conditions in the continent.

The relation between the two super powers during the decade of sixties is also an important factor to influence the political conditions in Asia. The cold war tensions between them reached to its peak with the Cuban Missile Crisis. This crisis also revealed that the super powers would avoid the chances of direct confrontation and gradually, instead of Europe, Asia became the area of involvement of both the US and the USSR. The Soviet Union also achieved nuclear and naval parity with the US in 1968. She became co-chairman of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament along with the USA. Britain also cooperated the super powers in passing a resolution in the UN Security Council on guarantees of security to non-nuclear nations by signing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Both the US and the USSR agreed to begin talks on a comprehensive limitation and cut-back of offensive strategic nuclear arms delivery vehicles and of anti-ballistic defence system.

This decade saw the institutionalization of non-aligned policy. In 1960, seventeen African countries became independent and they

25. Cuba was near USA and the US opposed the increasing presence of Soviet missiles there in 1962.
joined the group of non-aligned countries. Hence a need was felt to organize the non-aligned policy in international politics. In 1961, at Belgrade, the first conference of non-aligned countries took place and in all, 25 Afro-Asian, Latin American and European countries joined it. In 1964, their second summit meeting was held at Cairo and 46 countries attend it. This increasing number of the non-aligned group proved the success of their policy in international relations and compelled the big powers to change their policy vis-a-vis non-aligned countries.

Emergence of Japan as an economically powerful state in Asia during this period was also a factor to be reckoned with and politically she collaborated the US in Indo-China war.

In the latter part of the sixties, the crisis in Asia became more acute due to the conflicting relations between the countries of the continent. India and Pakistan had a border clash in 1965. War also started in the Middle East in 1967. Indochina war was intensified. Furthermore, the United Kingdom declared in 1967 her decision of withdrawal from East of Suez by 1971. Therefore, the countries like Malaysia and Singapore, who had security treaties with the UK, tried for a closer cooperation among the countries of the region.

Along with these political conditions, there were some economic causes which led to the changes in the relations among the countries of Asia. During this period the value of the industrial goods increased several fold than the value of raw materials. This became a
cause of grievance for the developing countries, who were exporter of raw material and importer of industrial goods. In 1960s the position of the developing countries deteriorated in the 'world capitalist economy'. Therefore the Asian countries increased their 'contacts' and 'moves' to solve their economic problems.

It was marked that economic activities were intensified in Asia in 1960s. The conference of the Economic Commission for Asia and Far East (ECAFE) held at Manila in 1963 and at Tehran in 1964. It prescribed the Asian countries to abolish trade quotas, to adopt a comparatively more liberal trade policy and to remove the restrictions which had been imposed in the post-war period. The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) also stressed it. The meeting of the UNCTAD, held in Geneva in the spring of 1964, emphasised in its Final Act the importance of economic, industrial and agricultural cooperation between nations on a regional basis. In fact, the economic problems were main binding force behind the regional cooperation in Asia. The Malayan Economic Review (Singapore) stated, "The main aim of the policy of regionalism in Asia is to ensure its industrialization as a means of speeding up growth. In contemporary Southeast Asia regionalism of this kind seems to be a historical necessity". Therefore the Asian countries decided to organize themselves.


Against this background one more attempt for regional cooperation was made in Southeast Asia which was keen to form a viable organization of regional cooperation. During early sixties, their attempts failed. But in the latter part of the decade, an important organization, called Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was formed.

ASEAN was formed in 1967 in Southeast Asia by Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines. This organization was in the beginning criticised by the Soviet Union. Pravda stated that "Imperialists are plotting again to erect in Asia aggressive blocs covered up by such signboards as ASEAN..." The Soviet leadership believed that West had direct or indirect role in all the regional organizations in Asia.

In fact the idea of an Association of Southeast Asian Nations was first probed by an American scholar, Russel H. Fifield during the early sixties. While speaking of the need for a change in USA's military policies in Southeast Asia, he wrote: "In the light of changing circumstances, the non-communist countries of the region should undertake the obligation of a collective security pact.... In view of the national sensitivities, the alliance might be termed an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The US, though not a party to the proposed Southeast Asian security pact, could pledge that upon request, it would be willing to use its armed forces in defence of the integrity and independence of the ASEAN members in the vent of

armed aggression in the treaty area from outside..." Fifield's probing was taken note of by a Soviet commentator and he gave emphasis on the similarity between the two names - name proposed by Fifield, and the actual name of the regional organization when formed in 1967. According to him, ASEAN was a facade of an US sponsored military pact.

As we have pointed out earlier, the US military involvement and economic and political stakes in Southeast Asia had consistently grew over the years. By mid sixties, practically after the failure of coup de tat in Indonesia, the USA certainly appear to dominate the entire region. Hence the Soviets were not very far off the mark in their belief that ASEAN was in fact the creation of USA with a view to protect its own interest and not those of the member states of the organization. We shall deal this point further in our subsequent chapter.

In this connection it is perhaps relevent for us to focus attention in the reasons for the promotion for organization of regional cooperation in Asia, particularly in Southeast Asia. It is obvious that the trends for regional cooperation were more marked in Southeast Asia than other regions of Asia.

In other parts of Asia, though the attempts were made by the regional members to organize themselves against outside powers, the


organizations could not achieve much success. They were less organized and lacked viability and effectiveness till the late sixties. On the other hand, in Southeast Asia, the trends of cooperation started taking practical shape since the late fifties, and in 1967, an important organization of regional cooperation was formed.

There were some peculiar circumstances in Southeast Asia which led to the success of the regional countries in organizing themselves. First, the countries of Southeast Asia, which took the initiative of cooperative forum, were all members of Western military pact. In 1959, when Malaysian leader toured Southeast Asia and approached the Philippines and Thailand, Malaysia had security treaty with the United Kingdom and the Philippines and Thailand were members of SEATO. Thus there was similarity in their foreign policy orientations. In 1961, when ASA was formed, the cold war between East and West was at its peak. Therefore, the members rejected the idea of militarizing the organization. But ASA was an anti-communist organization. Within the country, ASA members were facing communist insurgents and outside they had to face stronger communist neighbours like China and North Vietnam. Hence the anti-communist feeling proved a combining factor among ASA members. After 1965, Indonesia also adopted anti-communist posture and when ASEAN was formed, the anti-communist feeling was there among the members, but it was not displayed. Second, Southeast Asia has contiguity with China, a powerful communist neighbour, which was already providing media facilities to the communist insurgents of Southeast Asian countries. Separately they might not resist Chinese influence in the region. Hence there was need for collective efforts. Moreover, except Singapore, all ASA or ASEAN members had an
economically powerful Chinese minority. Many of them were either stateless or having Chinese citizenship. This caused problems to the governments in Southeast Asian countries as their allegiance to the local government was doubted. This common factor also helped them to come closer. Third, the war in Vietnam was going on in full swing. These Southeast Asian countries collaborated the US against Vietnam. Thailand and the Philippines gave active help to the US. Singapore and Malaysia morally supported US action in Indochina. Thus the fear of success of communists in Vietnam provided a common platform to ASA and ASEAN members. Fourth, by the time when ASEAN was formed, it became clear that Britain will gradually withdraw from the Southeast Asian region. Malaysia and Singapore had security treaties with the UK. Hence the idea of her future withdrawal from the region caused anxiety and as a substitute, they preferred to have stronger ties with the other regional countries. Fifth, the increased Soviet presence in Southeast Asia was also noted down by the regional countries. In sixties Soviet Union was already giving economic and military aid to North Vietnam. In 1965, she gave North Vietnam an economic aid of US $85 million and military aid of US $210 million. In 1967, the Soviet Union started encroaching the seas in this area. She deployed her naval forces in Indian Ocean. The Southeast Asian countries felt that this could lead to the conflict of big powers in the region.

31. See for details in this problem S. Fitzgerald, China and Overseas Chinese: A Study of Peking's Changing Policy, 1949-70, Cambridge, 1972, Details on this problem will be discussed later in this study.

Sixth, it had been claimed in some quarters that the Southeast Asian countries lacked confidence in military pacts and hence they attempted for regional cooperation. An Indonesian newspaper Warta Berita criticised ASA in 1961 and claimed that the sponsors of ASA feared "popular indignation" and were afraid that SEATO was "incapable of saving the pro-imperialist regimes of Asia in a Laos-type explosion" and they formed new bloc. In 1966, Indonesia and Malaysia officially put an end to their confrontation. Diplomatic and trade relations were restored between them. Malaysia - Philippines relations, which deteriorated in 1963 due to their territorial dispute over Sabah were also normalised by 1967. Finally, the important factor, which united the countries of Southeast Asia and led to the successful establishment of regional cooperative organization, was economic. As it has been discussed before, the Southeast Asian countries were the suppliers of raw materials to the West. The commodities supplied by them were more or less similar - palm oil, rubber, tin, coconut products and rice. In exchange they used to import industrial goods. In sixties the price of raw material remained stagnant, while the price of industrial goods increased several times. Hence, these non-communist Southeast Asian countries decided to come closer to increase their bargaining power vis-a-vis the West.

These uniting factors were not present in other parts of Asia. Therefore, the trend of regional cooperation in South Asia or West Asia were not marked prominently. Even when the attempts were made in

33. Warta Berita was quoted in International Affairs (Moscow), No.11, 1961, p.81.
sixties, they did not succeed. In South Asia, particularly, the countries had different foreign policy orientations. Pakistan was pro-West; India was a non-aligned country with her leaning towards East; Nepal and Bhutan were too small countries and they remained non-aligned. Countries of this sub-region, except Pakistan, were not members of any security pact of the West. Secondly, there was no common threat to the region similar to Southeast Asia. So the countries of South Asia never felt a need to unite for security purpose. Thirdly, the conflicting nature of their economic and political interest did not encourage them to come to a common platform.

In West Asia also, though OPEC was formed, it covered only the interest of member countries related to export of oil. It did not cover other socio-political spheres for establishing stronger ties among themselves. In North-West, RCD also could not be turned into an effective regional organization. Thus till sixties only in Southeast Asia a systematic trend to establish regional organization developed, which covered a vast area of cooperation among the members. According to ASEAN's Bangkok Declaration (1967), this regional cooperative organization was formed "to accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavours. During the later years this trend of establishing regional organizations for cooperation in different sub-regions of Asia continued - in West Asia, Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) was formed in 1968; in Persian Gulf

34. 10 Years ASEAN, ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, 1978, p.14.
region, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was introduced in 1981; and in South Asia, South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established in 1985. But as we are not concerned here with those regional organizations, we will not go in details about them.

**Soviet Policy Towards Organizations of Regional Cooperation in Sixties**

The earlier discussion in this Chapter have shown that the Soviet Union took positive stand on Bandung Conference in 1955 and thus cast a positive view of attempts of cooperation in Asia. But the active Soviet policy towards the regional organizations lacked till sixties. The attempts of cooperation in Southeast Asia in early sixties were ignored by the Soviet Union. The Soviet leadership took lesser interest in this region till the latter part of the sixties. The Soviet policy-makers accorded low priority to this region. This region did not have any direct defensive value to them like East Europe or East Asia. Traditionally the area was far away from their homeland.

The Soviet Union had no economic relation with the countries of the region except Indonesia. Though she had diplomatic relations with both Indonesia and Thailand, she did not have any economic relation with the latter. Moreover, before the break-up of monolithic unity of the Communist bloc, the Southeast Asia was considered by the Soviet Union as a zone of Chinese influence. Therefore, the Soviet Union did not take much interest there. Furthermore, the communist movement in these countries was very much influenced by China and the Soviet Union did not show any active interest in it.
As it has been discussed before, except Indonesia, ASA and ASEAN members were aligned to Western security pact and economically closely tied with the West. Therefore, the Soviet Union ignored the developments in this region. The only country, where she showed interest was Indonesia. She gave economic and military aid to Indonesia before 1965. But in 1965, a military coup took place in Indonesia. Thousands of communists were massacred there. Indonesian government broke up diplomatic relations with China. Relations with the USSR were strained and Indonesia followed a pro-West policy.

From the discussion above, it can easily be seen that the origin and development of Soviet policy towards regional cooperation in Southeast Asia were directly linked with Soviet assessment of the domestic scenario in the countries of the region as well as the overpowering presence of the USA there. Soviet assessment of the emergent countries of Asia and Africa had began to change after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU and as a result the Soviet Union gradually moved to play a more active role in the developing countries. The non-aligned countries among them attracted involved attention from the Soviet Union and a closer relations with them followed.

However, overwhelming American presence in Southeast Asia greatly limited the scope of Soviet policy in the region. Moreover, the countries of the region themselves were extremely reluctant to develop relations with the Soviet Union both for ideological reasons, as well as, for practical ones. The ideological reasons were obvious and we

have discussed them above. Likewise, for practical reasons these countries did not visualise the necessity of attracting Soviet economic aid as their economic developments were oriented towards free enterprise and not to the development of rapid industrialization under state control. Hence, by the very nature of the role and function of Southeast Asian states in international affairs, it was perhaps logical for the Soviet Union to show little or no interest in trends for regional cooperation in the region during the fifties and early sixties. However, in the second half of sixties, there were indications, as pointed out earlier, that the Soviet Union was no longer inclined to ignore the trends for cooperation in Southeast Asia. The actual formation of ASEAN in 1967 was perhaps a landmark with the Soviet Union began to take note of. More so in view of the fact with one of the primary objectives of Soviet policy framework had traditionally being cooperation and friendly relations among the states of different social systems. Perhaps it is no exaggeration to suggest that with the changing orientation of Soviet policy in Asia - a greater all-round involvement - the formation of ASEAN provided an opportunity for the Soviet policy-makers to re-activise one of the traditional goals and objectives of Soviet foreign policy, namely, cooperation and friendly relations among states of different social systems in the Southeast Asian region. Hence, in some ways, there was a historical continuity in Soviet foreign policy and as such, the actual Soviet policy towards ASEAN from 1967 onwards does have a distinct historical background, as well as, emphasises a characteristic application of the framework of Soviet foreign policy.

We shall deal with Soviet policy towards ASEAN from 1967 onwards in our subsequent chapters.