Australia, with Japan and India, if we may say so, forms a tripod of "Middle" Powers surrounding the Southeast Asian countries and sharing a common destiny with them. Owing to post-war political realities, the frontiers of the Commonwealth of Australia are no more at its northern gateway of Darwin; they are on the Mekong, if not beyond. Perhaps to add a dramatic touch to this geographical fact, the Australian soldier has appeared, in camps as well as battlefields, in Malaysia and Vietnam. This study seeks to examine the attitudes and policies of Australia towards her next-door neighbours during the crucial period between the V-J Day and the signing of the Manila Pact.

This period is important to the understanding of the present-day policies and attitudes of this Western nation in a non-Western milieu. These ten years saw developments in the neighbourhood of Australia which, in more normal times, would have taken decades and perhaps centuries to materialize. After the war, Asia was no more the quiet backyard of the European Colonial Powers. New nations appeared
on the stage of South and Southeast Asia, some with charismatic leaders. Politics in the region was now characterized by a passion, pungency and chiliastic vision, with which the Australians were unfamiliar.

In the following pages, one would see the young Australian nation reacting to these situations and discovering itself in the process. This discovery, it would be discerned, led them to charter a course away from Mother Britain and acquire a distinct personality in the Family of Nations.

For various reasons, India, too, has to give utmost consideration to Southeast Asia in her policies and attitudes. An understanding on the part played by such nations as Australia, China and Japan in the area should be of infinite value to us. So far little or no work has been done in the Indian Universities on the external affairs of Australia. In its own modest way, this thesis seeks to interest the Indian scholarship in this rather unfamiliar "subject" of study. We may soon have to examine, with all academic detachment, our own growing relationship with this country and the resultant opportunities.

A small but devoted group of Australian scholars has sought to introduce their country to the world of learning through scores of studies, quite a few of which have come out in print. Their labours were
amply rewarded, as many outside Australia have been encouraged in profiting by the enormous spade-work already done by them in the Universities of Australia and abroad. Accordingly when I decided to pitch my academic tent on this rather interesting terrain, I had, by all means, a very rich background of scholarship to lean on. Apart from the usual primary and secondary source material, listed towards the end of this dissertation, valuable insights were provided to me by a number of officials, politicians, diplomats and statesmen, who granted me interviews during my Australian visit. Besides, some were kind enough to reply to my queries subsequently. Their desire to remain anonymous has been duly respected, though not without some reluctance on my part for not being able to explicitly acknowledge my gratitude to them in this work. A number of unpublished studies and research works in the Universities of Australia, America, India and Singapore were also consulted and I have freely acknowledged my indebtedness to them in footnotes, if not in the text. Of the dissertations consulted, some were not for doctoral degrees. If they have been used by me, as by other better known students of Australian affairs, the fact in itself is a tribute to the quality of their data and the calibre of their writers.
To a number of commentators, Australia's exertions, whether in the New Delhi Conference on Indonesia or in the Manila Conference on SEATO, represented a blind search for security against the menacing Asian giant. This thesis, however, places a greater trust in the essential pragmatism of the policy-planners in Canberra, who juggled with three enormous clubs, namely, Britain, America and Asia, each with its independent volition. Thus the emphasis is on how far Australia could diplomatically establish a rapport with its neighbouring States, so vastly different from it in many ways. It is not denied that the search for security vis-a-vis Asia was a dominant strain in Australia's external relations during the period under review. But the inquiry here goes ahead and seeks to find if this search promoted or vitiated Canberra's attempts to find a modus vivendi with Asia.

Perhaps, as Walter Lippmann has said, "the true constituent members of the international order of the future are communities of states". This regional approach is gaining impetus in the area vital both to Australia and India. Here we have an Asian-Australasian region, which, unlike Western Europe or the Arab World, is a "plural" society with its varying systems, norms, cultures, races, living standards, but with a common destiny in a troubled world and an uncertain
future. What is needed is some sort of Council for Asian and South-west Pacific nations, which may constitute a machinery for evolving a common approach to various problems pertaining to the region. Rather than counting on military pacts, can we not consider evolving diplomatic consensus if not diplomatic coalition through some commonwealth of brown, yellow and white nations of the area for meeting challenges ahead? Howsoever nebulous and crude, Canberra's vision of regional organization in the period under study has to be re-assessed from this standpoint.

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