Chapter I

AUSTRALIA AND THE NEAR NORTH

.... And indeed Australia and New Zealand are almost in our region. They certainly do not belong to Europe, much less to America. They are next to us and I should like Australia and New Zealand to come nearer to Asia. I would welcome them because I do not want what we say or do to be based on racial prejudices.

- JAWAHARLAL NEHRU
The foreign policy of a country, by its very nature, is something that is in a flux. It is affected by several factors. Most of them are overlapping while some are imperceptible. If it embraces "fluid facts of power relationships", it also bases itself on the fixed facts of geography. Geographical conditions have a subtle but nevertheless traceable influence on nations and governments, which in their turn influence the pattern of international relations.

With regard to the Commonwealth of Australia, there is at least one fixed point to start with. The basic fact about Australia is that it is a country with a Pacific location, but with an Atlantic ethnology and outlook. Geographically, it is virtually at the extremity of Asiatic 'tail'. Much of the international thinking of the Australian community, in recent times, has centred around the quest for a new basis of security in a world radically different from that in which it has grown into nationhood. There has been a conscious effort in Australia, particularly since the last war, to come to terms with its geo-political setting. Since the extension of the war to the Indian and Pacific Oceans during the eventful years of 1941-1945, there has
THE ISOLATION OF AUSTRALIA AND ITS COMPARATIVE NEARNESS TO ASIA
This physical isolation has greatly influenced the development of Australia as a nation and as an independent entity in the Family of Nations. It is this very position of Australia on the map that kept her off from the stream of history and left her to react passively, and often belatedly, to the events that distant Powers invoked. (6) Australia has thus pursued, on the whole, an easy, comfortable and unflurried career, sheltered by greater Powers and bolstered up by the economic advantages of what once used to be the British Empire. It was pre-eminently this physical isolation that kept the Australians so loyally British for such a long time, unlike their cousins in the New World. The Australian nation grew up behind the Royal Navy's guns and "nowhere did Mahan's storm-tossed battle-ships mean more than to these transplanted communities of Britons 13,000 miles from Portsmouth.(7)

6 For an interesting comment on this, see A. Maleikovsky, "Australia's Security", News (Moscow), (31 October 1951), p.10. The writer has given examples from the history of Australia showing how world developments since the eighteenth century have influenced the course of events in Australia as well.

7 For a similar expression, see Turner in CPD, vol.4 (17 August 1954), p.299. "For more than a century," said this Member, "Australia had slept serenely in the arms of Mother Country, protected by the British Navy and the broad ocean ..."
AUSTRALIA IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE
Australia and Asia

This isolation of Australia, however, has been in the context of the Western world only. On the map, Australia appears as a large island mass at the end of a string of islands descending from the Asian mainland. It is thus clearly moored to the bottom of Asia's Southeastern regions. It has been pointed out that within the compass of a circle of 6,000 miles from Alice Springs in the heart of Australia, virtually the only inhabitable land areas are those populated by the Asians. (8) Other areas within or near the radius are Antarctica, New Zealand, the south-east tip of Arabia and a narrow stretch of the South and South-West African coast. (See Map No.3) Thus Australia, as Hartley Grattan writes, is "under the overhang of Asia". (9) The main air and sea routes between Australia and the principal areas of the Western civilization, either skirt through the fringes of the Asian territory or pass across it. An

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Australian researcher was almost prophetic, when he wrote in 1937:

The relative nearness of this country to eastern Asia, as compared to the great distance to which it lies from western Europe, has been a fact of primary significance in Australia’s past and seems likely to become increasingly important in future. (10)

(a) The Australian Civilization

The outstanding geographical feature of the hemisphere around Australia is the triangle formed by the vast land masses of India, China and Australasia. Interspersed between these are the colourful lands and islands, which together constitute Southeast Asia.

Historically, it is the base of the triangle (comprising of India and China) that counts. A fact of great importance is that the civilizations of India and China, in their natural drive to the south and south-east, stopped at the myriads of islands north of Australia and did not reach Down Under. (11)


11 Anthropological evidence of the Indian mixture amongst the tribes of northern Australia is still controversial.
Only Malays from Macassar (in Sulewesi) made annual visits to Arnhem Land in Australia's Northern Territory and carried its delicious sea-food, mainly trepang fishes (or beche-de-mar), to their native Macassar and thence to the rich markets of the Celestial Empire. (12) But these Malays, whose prahuus sailed to northern Australia with north-west monsoon winds, remained birds of passage and never tried to inhabit the country. Thus the East missed its opportunity and left the southern continent untouched. The discovery of this land was thus the last fling of the Renaissance expansion of horizons, which gave hegemony of the world to the colonial Powers of Europe. How unattractive was this continent to the Europeans themselves is borne out by the fact that there was a gap of about two hundred years between the first sighting and the first settlement of Australia by the Europeans. Even when it was settled, it was first a penal colony and not a trading

For details, see Shepherd, n.10, pp.108-10. Also McBride, n.3, p.4. According to these, in 1803, an Australian from New South Wales came across Malay pottery, bamboo basket-work, cotton rags, wooden anchor and no less than 60 prahuus (boats), enough to carry approximately 1,800 people. Also see Turner in CPD, HR, vol.4 NS (17 August 1954), p.301 for his view that Australia was known to people of Southeast Asia before, but they did not do a thing about it. The member was, of course, supporting the "White Australia" policy, when he put this argument.
venture. Thus, despite geographical proximity to the Orient, Australia became part of the Occident.

The civilization of Australia, at the time of writing, is 181 years old. This civilization is of European and, more precisely, Anglo-Saxon roots. Right from the beginning, the intention of the metropolitan authorities, as also of the colonists, was of "reserving the continent of New Holland (Australia) as a place where the English race shall be spread from sea to sea unmixed with any lower caste..." (13) Thus Australia, unlike America, did not develop into a melting pot of races. To its people, 1066 A.D. and William the Conqueror were just as much part of their history as the gold rushes in Ballarat and Bendigo. It has, therefore, been aptly stated that

An outpost of European civilization in an Asiatic milieu, Australia's aesthetic tradition has only been evolved through constant rejuvenating contacts with the fountain head of British culture. (14)


Thus the contacts of the "transplanted British" with their neighbours in Asia were minimal. There was no perceptible inter-action of the diverse civilizations, which could result into a blending of styles and fusion of ideas, which occurred in other parts of the world, where Europeans came face to face with others in the era of colonial conquests. A.D. Hope, Australia's most well-known poet, reflected his countrymen's protest against their lack of identity, saying

They call her a young country, but they lie:
She is the last of lands, the emptiest,
A woman beyond her change of life, ...

She has no gods, no songs, no history;
The emotions and superstitions of younger lands.
Her rivers of water drown among inland sands,...
(15)

To the great bulk of Australians, Asia remained a vast, incomprehensible and menacing mass. Until the holocaust of the Second World War forced re-adjustments in Australian attitudes, the Asians remained "Asiatics", "natives", "swarms" and "hordes", the Chinese were "Chinamen", "slant-eyed", "yellow" and "Yellow Peril" and the Asian workers were "coolies"

and "cheap labour". (16) Fear of Asia was the dominant theme in the utterances of politicians (17) as well as the writings of journalists. At least until the forties, Asia was rather a sealed book to most Australians. Few travelled to Asia. Missionaries coming from Asia, as Prof. Fitzgerald has pointed out, gave a distorted and one-sided picture of this "great continent of pagans", where the educated ones, being un-co-operative and obstructive, were as benighted as the uneducated ones. And the old missionary village-hall lecturer was sometimes the only major source of information on Asia. (18)

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17 For example, see Calwell in CPD, HR, vol.170 (1 May 1942), p. 846. ".... There will be no future of Australia", Calwell told the Australian Parliament, "unless it has a population prepared to defend it when a militarised Asia, not a militarised Japan, moves south at a time when Europe will probably have settled its many quarrels and when America may be disinclined to give us any further assistance."

It is indeed queer that the generations of Australians, who were called upon to seek modus vivendi with the newly independent Asian peoples had themselves read very little about them at the school during the twenties and thirties of this century. Text books, as we know, unintentionally (if not otherwise) create prejudice or at least misunderstanding or ignorance of other peoples' qualities and achievements. A Melbourne study on the material on Asia in the text books prescribed for schools in the State of Victoria between 1905 and 1960 (19) is quite revealing in this respect. Of the text books with Asian content (prescribed between 1905 and 1939), there was none from Asia, while 61 per cent were from Britain, 37 per cent from Australia and 2 per cent from America. (20) In these too, the content on Asia, as compared with the overall content, was 7½ per cent. (21) These texts refer to the Burmese as "jolly laughing natives", the Indonesians as "very backward" and talk of "the placid contentment

19 Forward, n. 16.
20 Ibid., p. 222. Table. The table shows that even up to 1960, there was no text book from Asia.
21 Ibid., p. 225. Table. Dividing subject-wise, the Asian content was 9½ per cent in Geography and 6½ per cent in History texts. This table also shows that during 1940-1960, the Asian content increased to 13½ per cent (14¾ per cent in Geography, 11 per cent in
of the Malayan people". (22) In the total Asian content, India's share was the highest, reaching 80 per cent in the thirties, but "most of the material on India has been a retailing of the Legends of the Empire" and, thus, interest in India as India has been low. (23) With this insufficient information and with all the traditional fear and, perhaps, contempt of Asia, there is little doubt that the neighbouring continent remained an enigma to Australians in all walks of life.

So, as the war opens a new chapter in the history of Australia as a nation and a State, we find these "transplanted British" living in the sixth continent of the world with a handful of dark-skinned aborigines. Through their window towards the Indian Ocean, Australians could now see millions of people, of alien races and culture, at work. (24) Through

History and 14½ per cent in newly introduced Social Studies.

22 Ibid., pp. 190, 192, 198.

23 Ibid., p. 142-4. The author asserts that most of them performed the secondary function of the moral education of the young, by setting forth Great Britain and Evil Indians as, respectively, models to admire and to eschew.

24 J. Gentilli, "Australia - Indian or Pacific?", Australian Quarterly, vol. 21, no. 1 (March 1949), p. 75. Of over 12,000 miles of Australia's coastline, the author states, 9,000 are in the Indian Ocean.
their other window to the Pacific, they could see only the Dominion of New Zealand and thousands of tiny islands. Americas - North and South - were too remote, if not entirely out of sight. In the years following 1945, Australia was therefore faced, more urgently and inescapably than any other "White" country, with the problem of a complete re-adjustment of political, social and human relations with the new nations of Asia. Terms, such as, the Far East and the Indian Empire lost all their meaning in the Antipodes and the "Near North" became a fact of life.

(b) The Near North. Arthur Calwell, as Deputy Leader of Opposition in the Australian Parliament, once suggested that Southeast Asia and East Asia, from his country's point of view, should be called North-west Asia and West Asia. (25) Even before this proposition was put forward, the term "Near North" had gained currency in Australia, though its relevance was only in the context of the Antipodes. The geographical boundaries of the Near North have not been clearly defined, but it certainly has a great influence on the politico-strategical thinking

in Australia. As to its connotation, a doctoral dissertation states that "what the Europeans call Far East is the Near North to the Australians".\(^{26}\) But this description is over-simplification and does not carry far enough. The Near North implies Australia's "Asiatic next door neighbours", which are not confined to the region of the so-called Far East alone. One who looks to the world northwards from Australia does not fix his gaze on the great nations of East Asia alone, but his roving eyes cover all the lands stretching from Pakistan in the west to the Philippines in the east. The idea of Near North implies some, if not all, of these lands, though some of these are not included in the so-called "Far East". The term Near North, however, excludes the Arab countries of West Asia and the vast regions of Soviet Asia. An Australian geographer has described the Near North as " ... the zones variously referred to as Asiatic Asia, Monsoon Asia, Southern and Eastern Asia ..."\(^{27}\) Hartley Grattan, an acute observer of


the Antipodean affairs, has further enunciated the idea, saying:

Beyond Indonesia is all that we call South, and East Asia, including Communist China, for which the Australians have tried to popularise the term "Near North". (28)

The editors of an earlier work, entitled Near North,(29) included the countries of Southeast Asia, India, Hongkong, China, Manchuria, China and Japan in their study.

Thus, broadly speaking, the area which is of immediate importance to the Australians as their Near North, comprises of the regions of South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia, where half of the population of the world lives. Of these, the region of Southeast Asia is the closest to Australia, though its own affairs have been frequently governed by the current of events in the other two regions. The use of European terms, such as "the Far East" had created, in Australia, a sense of remoteness from Asia and had lulled its people into complacence. The new term brought realism into their vision of the world around them. It suggested their nearness to the "mysterious".

28 Grattan, n. 9, p.2.
world of Asia and, also, their remoteness from the cradle of their own civilization.

(c) Is Australia a Part of Asia? The new post-war environment brought in its wake a debate in the country on whether Australia was or was not a part of Asia. This debate steadily increased as brilliant men like Nehru, Mao Tse-tung, Magsaysay and Sukarno hit news headlines, books and articles on multitudinous aspects of Asian life made their appearance in increasing numbers and, above all, young Asians established their common humanity with their Australian hosts in classrooms and laboratories, homes and hostels. Universities and Press, politicians and diplomats alike have kept the controversy alive. On this question, both major political parties felt the opposite pulls, though absolutely positions were rarely taken. If Menzies (30) and Calwell (31) have been on one side of the spectrum, Evatt (32) and Casey (33) have been on the other.

30 Menzies, Sir Robert Gordon (1894 - ). Leader of the Liberal Party and, until recently, Prime Minister of Australia.

It has been contended in a pre-war academic writing (34) that the name "Australasia" (now almost discarded except as a convenient means of referring to Australia and New Zealand collectively), was older and suggestive than "Australia". The force of this suggestion was greater when this word was hyphenated - "Austral-Asia", as it sometimes was before people forgot the meaning and origin of the term. It is further contended that men spoke of the little known continent almost as if it were an "Asiatic" country. This early impression did not linger more, as Asia itself receded into the background of world affairs and remained as such until the Second World War.

When Evatt and Burton (35) carried Australia into the two Asian Conferences, held in Delhi in 1947 and 1949, the country was unready even for this little identification with Asia. The Sydney


34 Shepherd, n.10, pp. 1-2.
Morning Herald interpreted Prime Minister Nehru's invitation for the latter Conference as a notice to Australia and New Zealand that they were deemed to be within the Asian zone of influence "qualified to occupy a modest place when the races of the East assembled in a conclave". (36) "From the standpoint of Australian politics", remarks Werner Levi, "the interesting purpose of this conference served was to indicate where Australia stood at this time in the shaping of her new relations with Asia". (37)

When Spender, the Minister for External Affairs in the new conservative Government in Canberra, told the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers' Conference in Colombo that his country was an Asian Power, not to be confused with areas in the Pacific, his opinion was contested at home. This time also, the Sydney Morning Herald, while conceding that Australia had concern for Asia, asserted that it was "the concern of a benevolent outsider, not a member of the brotherhood

35 Burton, Dr John Wear (1915—). Secretary, Department of External Affairs (1947-50) under Dr Evatt. Senior Lecturer in University College of London since 1964.
36 The Sydney Morning Herald, 8 January 1949 and 22 January 1949.
37 Werner Levi, Australia's Outlook on Asia (Sydney, 1959), p. 87.
of the Orient". (38) Casey, his successor, carried Australia more and more into Asia. In 1951, he said that Australia "as a Western country geographically situated in the Asian area can, and should, play a most valuable part in helping to bridge the gap which still exists between the East and West". (39) If now, Press and Parliament tolerated Casey's eloquent Asianism, the reason was that the events in Malaya, China and Korea had already started Australia's education in the facts of life in a harsh world.

However, the debate continues. Those who support that view that Australia is a part of Asia, though more vocal than numerous, style themselves as the "progressives". On one side, there have been people like John Burton, who sought a dynamic approach to Australia's relations with Asia. (40) On the other extreme were people like Downer, the Minister for Immigration, who declared not long ago that


39 Quoted in Usha Mahajani, "Is Australia a Part of Asia?", The Australian Quarterly, vol.36, no.2 (June 1964), p. 29.

40 For his views, see John Burton, The Alternative: A Dynamic Approach to Our Relations with Asia (Sydney, 1954). For a summary of his views by an opponent, see Sir Percy Spender, Exercises in
"geographically, millions of years ago the two continents may have joined, but there the nexus ends". (41) Their position was aptly summed up by Hasluck, another Minister in the Australian Government (42) in his talk to the Liberal Club of the Australian National University. The talk was significantly entitled "Is Australia Part of Asia?" The Australian statesman criticised his countrymen who "lowered themselves" to the level of Asians and insisted that they were no different from Asians. To him, this was "self-abasement". He then pointed out that fear was perhaps the reason why some Australians perpetually insisted that Australia was part of Asia and that Australians were the same as Asians. "We will not fool the Asians, but go on fooling ourselves", he said. Australian culture, he concluded, still needed European nourishment. (43)

Yet, it has been noted by a keen observer (44) that Australians are developing the rhetoric of Asia.

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43 He has since become the Governor General of Australia.
44 The Age (Melbourne), 5 March 1964.
The Australian nationalism can feel at home with Asian nationalism - it has the same freshly made quality. And there is enough anti-British feeling left in the country to pass itself off as a mild form of anti-colonialism. Further, the fact that most of Australia is still empty has given Australians some of the language of under-development, as in Asian countries (except Japan). Much of Australian industry is foreign-owned or controlled, being mainly British or American.

Asians, inside and outside Australia, have been no silent observers to the debate and have themselves contributed to it. The *Malayan Times* has stated that Australia can no longer remain a "a White island in an Asian ocean". (46) An Indian scholar, while in Australia, wrote that Australia had in fact become a part of Asia and its future role should be determined by the acceptance of its integration not only in specific actions but in spirit as well.(46) "Australia", said an unnamed

45 Quoted in Usha Mahajani, n.39, p.25.
46 Ibid.
Indian diplomat, "should not try to be a Western Power divorced from Asia, but an Asian Power with Western traditions, ties and advantages". (47)

On balance, it may be said that there are strong internal and external pulls carrying Australia, consciously or unconsciously, into Asia. There is always the strategic concern for Asia and, with Japan replacing Britain as Australia's principal customer, "Australia is entering an economic world partly dominated by Japan". In a recent seminar in Canberra, an Australian academician conceded that Australia was not much less "a part of Asia" than were Japan and the Philippines, both of which had strong reservations about sympathetic involvements in Asian affairs. (48) Australia itself accepted this

47 G. Harriott, "Australia Risks 'Missing Asian Bus'," The Advertiser (Adelaide), 26 April 1955. Quoted in M. P. Schneider, Australia and Indonesian Independence: A Study in Australian Foreign Policy (Unpublished Honours thesis, University of Adelaide, September 1955), p. 142. For a somewhat similar Indian view, see Usha Mahajani, n. 39, p. 34. She wrote: "Australians have regarded their European background as a historical fact and the location of their continent as a geographical accident. The terminology should be reversed. The European content of Australia's population is a historical accident; its position on the map, an unalterable geographical fact."

position, when she joined the ECAFE as a regional member in March 1963, though she was an "outsider" and donor in the Colombo Plan.

An unfortunate impression has somehow lingered on that joining Asia would level the Australians down rather than levelling them up. To them, the idea of joining Asia is a threat to their way of life and is likely to cut them off from their original European culture. In fact, being Asian does not imply such a transformation. An Asian diplomat rightly pointed out to the Southeast Asia correspondent of *The Age*:

> No one expects Australians to become Buddhists or Moslems. But the way Australians keep talking about the threat to their way of life makes us uncomfortable. (49)

In fact, the civilization of Australia may be European, but the progressive "modernization" of Asian countries is making the distinction less and less important than it used to be in the past. (50)


50 Already the per capita incomes in Singapore and Malaya compare broadly with those of Japan, Spain or Yugoslavia, while those in the Philippines equal incomes in Portugal, Turkey or Algeria.
Besides, Asia itself is diverse and complex. It does not have one character, but many single characters. And thus, if brown and yellow people, themselves divided in several distinct racial and cultural groups can be Asian without giving up their identity, Australians, as white people, can always join them on the same terms. It is very difficult to verify the truth of the proposition by Donald Horne that "the idea of seeing themselves as people who live in Asia will fill the Australian's traditional need for feeling that he is going somewhere into the future .... " (51) It can, however, be pointed out that Australia has sought *modus vivendi* with her neighbours through the Colombo Plan, which was too innocuous and the SEATO Pact, which was too controversial. The region, it is felt, has to have a political machinery, like the Organization of African Unity, which may serve to cushion the impact of world affairs on the region, exercise a moderating influence upon intra-regional disputes and contribute to regularizing the international politics of the area. If Australia is ever able to join an effectively and successfully working regional organization with Japan, India and other neighbouring

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51 Donald Horne, n.44.
countries, the fact in itself would be a landmark, as significant in its effects as the joining of the ANZUS Pact by Australia in 1952 with America and without Britain. There may be some voices of discord in the country, as in 1952, but the satisfaction in it will also be great.

AUSTRALIA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

The mini-world of Southeast Asia forms a sort of causeway that links Australia with the continent of Asia. On its three sides, the region is bounded by the vast land masses of China, India and Australia. Though there has been a lot of confusion about the actual dimensions of the region of Southeast Asia,(52) it is now generally agreed that the term denotes "the area of continental Asia and the offshore Philippine and Indonesian

52 Charles A. Fisher, "The Concept of Southeast Asia", The Eastern World, vol. 7, no. 3 (April 1961), p. 148. The author has pointed out that many writers use the term "Southeast Asia" as a synonym for the vast area stretching from Pakistan to Manchuria. For a plea to include Ceylon, India and Pakistan into the region, see Woodrow Wyatt, Southwards from China (London, 1952). Also see Saburo Okita, "Japan in South and Southeast Asia", in Miller, n. 13, p. 131 for the revelation that in some of the statistics compiled by the Japanese Government, Southeast Asia is shown to cover the whole area extending to Afghanistan and Pakistan on the west, to Indonesia on the east and south and South Korea on the north.
archipelagoes which lies south of China and east of India". (53) It thus consists of ten sovereign States, namely, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, North Vietnam and South Vietnam and colonial territories of Portuguese Timor and the Sultanate of Brunei. Two of these, namely, Malaysia and Singapore, had not attained their independence of the British during the period covered by this study. (54) This spacious corner of Asia extends more than 3,000 miles from west to east and 2,000 miles from north to south. Its total land area is comparable to the whole of Europe and its seas north of the African coast. (55)

The countries of Southeast Asia, like those of Renaissance Italy or the present day West Asia, constitute a "sub-system" of international politics. (56) Regional solidarity, however, has not so fully developed here as in other regions.


54  Malaysia was then divided into the British territories of Malaya, Sarawak and North Borneo (Sabah). Singapore became a sovereign State in 1965 after its secession from Malaysia.

Southeast Asia is indeed many worlds within one world. Some writers, therefore, argue that it may be more of "geographical expression" than a region. (57) This may perhaps be an exaggeration, as there have been and there are forces that operate over large parts of the area and a change in one part tends to make itself felt in other parts as well. (58) As a "sub-system", however, it is "a highly unstable system". Among the people of Southeast Asia, there is no memory of a united and prosperous past (or of some great empire which ruled over the whole area, as in China and India), to which advocates of unity can appeal. In some cases, the legacy of history makes for continued division in the present. (59) Besides, the cultural, economic and other pulls of these

56 For an explanation of the idea of regional "sub-system", see George Modelski, "International Relations and Area Studies: The Case of Southeast Asia", International Relations, vol. 2, no. 3 (April 1961), p. 148. He defines it as "a less than universal pattern of relationships created by a cluster of small powers in a condition of proximity".

57 For example, see Willis C. Armstrong, "Politics and Economics in Southeast Asia", World Politics, vol. 11, no. 2 (January 1959), p. 303.


59 Rivalries between South Vietnam and Cambodia, Thailand and Cambodia and Laos and North Vietnam can be attributed to their warfares before the advent of European colonialism.
nations have usually been towards their former colonial masters. The whole region has thus been compared to a Manhattan apartment building, in which the tenants occupy adjoining flats but rarely speak to each other and their friends are elsewhere. (60)

Political analysts are gradually subscribing to the view that Southeast Asia is peripheral to the global balance of power, though change in its position may have significant affect on countries like India and Australia, which are close to it. Its importance lies in the fact that it has been a cauldron of confrontations, a testing ground for trial of strength between external forces. Whatever its precise meaning, the expression "power vacuum" is indicative of the situation prevailing among these States of an area of great demographic, political, economic and strategic importance. It has, therefore, been aptly stated that

Politically and economically, Southeast Asia's role in world affairs will be the result of its weakness, not of its strength. While the rest of the world will affect decisively the future of Southeast Asia, the reverse is not equally true. (61)

60 The analogy is attributed to Kahin. Stanley Karnow and others, South-East Asia (The Hague ?, 1964), p.12.
61 Guy J. Pauker, "Southeast Asia as a Problem Area in the Next Decade", World Politics, vol.11, no.3
Australia has been on the political chess-board of Southeast Asia since the forties. Its record of involvement in the region is, thus, not long enough to give it those deeper insights, which come from long experience. Australia, like any other member of the Family of Nations, may not have permanent friends or permanent enemies, but it certainly has permanent "interests". A number of these "interests" may not be shared by Australia with other countries. So, when Canberra looks at Southeast Asia, it must obviously view it differently from, say, Tokyo or Peking or New Delhi.

What are then the interests which impel Australia to pump its money into some of the countries of the region, to look for military allies among them, to station its troops in peace time in one of them and to be engaged in actual fighting in the other? It is difficult to obtain simple and clear-cut answers to these queries. Australia's Minister for External Affairs was seeking to give an insight into the rationale of his country's involvement in the area, when he said in 1954:

(April 1959), p.236.
One hundred and seventy million of Asian people live within a radius of 2,000 miles from Darwin. It is in these Asian countries to the north-west of Australia that the largest share of the world's supply of tin, rubber, rice and other important communities is produced. This area also provides the most obvious route for potential aggression against Australia. (62)

Catching up the loose ends in the above statement we can now attempt to analyze some of the motives behind Australia's concern for developments in Southeast Asia.

The Human Factor

Those one hundred and seventy million people, in a population ratio of 11:1 with Australia, offer by far the most formidable contrast with the southern continent in many ways. Southeast Asian countries are a model of the typical traditional-preindustrial-agrarian society or of such society undergoing modernization. On the other hand, Australia presents a very different model— the model of a modern-industrial-urban society. In early fifties, Australia ranked

among the nineteen richest countries of the world with a meagre 16 per cent of the population earning 66 per cent of the total income of the world. In the same period, the countries of Southeast Asia were among the fifteen poorest, with more than half of the world's population living on less than 9 per cent of its total income. (63) Then there were those hopeless standards of literacy, which further vitiated the ills of pauperdom. While there was hardly any illiteracy in Australia, the following figures of illiteracy in Southeast Asia (64) show how marked was the contrast between the two domains:

ILLITERACY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country or Territory</th>
<th>Year of Census(C) or Estimate(E)</th>
<th>Criteria of Literacy*</th>
<th>Percentage of Illiteracy</th>
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<td>Brunei</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Borneo</td>
<td>1951 (C)</td>
<td>RW</td>
<td>83</td>
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<td>Sarawak</td>
<td>1947 (C)</td>
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<td>Burma</td>
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<td>Indonesia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1952 (E)</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* R= ability to read; W= ability to write; RW= ability to read and write.
Similar contrast existed in urbanization as well. While almost 75 per cent of the Australians were city-dwellers, the bulk of their Southeast Asian neighbours were village folks, as is evident from the following figures (65):

URBANIZATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>8.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>5.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>15.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>2.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaya</td>
<td>26.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Philippines</td>
<td>24.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>9.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>11.0 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These standards of literacy and urbanization were likely to make the area a breeding-ground of the


64 These figures are from UNESCO, World Survey of Educational Organization and Statistics (Paris, October 1955; second impression, June 1959), pp. 13, 15.

ideologies which, though irrational and unpragmatic to the more sophisticated people, make quite an appeal to the illiterate millions through simple but effective slogans. Then there were also the usual hunger, disease and unrest, which are characteristic of modern "under-development". The Secretaries of three Asian legations were right in pointing out to an Australian parliamentarian that "the only democracy" the Asians knew was "enough food to keep body and soul together". (66) Thus, as the Europeans beat a retreat from their former colonial possessions, the Australian people found themselves face with this "fault zone of world society", (67) Many of them were afraid lest in the promises and slogans of communism, their Southeast Asian neighbours might see reflections of their own aspirations, hates and fears. Etched upon the glittering facade of Australian prosperity, there were grave questions about the implications of being too close to the human tinder-box of Southeast Asia.

67 The expression is of Modelski. See J.A. Modelski, Southeast Asia and World Politics. Public lecture under the auspices of the Australian National University in conjunction with the Australian Institute of International Affairs, May 1965. Mimeographed. P. 13.
Australia's initiative in the launching of the Colombo Plan later was a feeble answer to this mighty challenge.

Search for Political Stability

Another facet of the landscape of Southeast Asia, which is of concern to Australia, is the political balkanization and the resultant instability. Before the Japanese onslaught on this area during the war, the western boundaries here "came to resemble a series of old and mutilated paintings in cumbrous and badly fitting Victorian frames".(68) All sorts of colonial systems were tried and experimented here. The result of this legacy is that Southeast Asia has a great range of political forms "from fossilised oriental aristocracies to democracies of a new intelligentsia and to would-be republics trying to combine the gestures of democracies with the power of autocracies ... " (69) Now in pursuit of full modern nationhood, these States are groping for new political, economic and social forms, which are still

69 Dobby, n.55, p. 391.
in a nebulous state. As Merdeka came to them, these countries, initially under the guidance of their respective founding fathers (or their protégés), embarked on a journey, the destination of which was dimly visualized in Australia. (70) Australians, for example, looked aghast at the experiment in their neighbouring Indonesia, where the edifice of "Guided Democracy" rested precariously on four pillars, two of which were Army and Partai Kommunis Indonesia. They could not understand how a Laotian prince could form a Cabinet out of his own brothers, cousins and nephews only and got away with it. The forms and norms of the contemporary Asian constitutions have not been of much consequence to Canberra's political pundits. (71) What has been important to them is that these forms, howsoever peculiar, should ensure strong and efficient rule, which is essential for internal cohesion and political stability in these countries. Dissentions

70 For international consequences of internal political instability, see__,"Australia and South-east Asia"; Current Affairs Bulletin, vol.37, no.12 (2 May 1966), p.180. The author has pointed out that in their concern for national unity (and since the balance of domestic forces is unstable), foreign policy has constantly been adjusted in such a way as to restore the internal equilibrium. The process has been particularly noticeable in the case of Indonesia.

71 However, see Dean in CPD, vol. NS& (12 August 1954), p. 266 for the suggestion that teams should be sent to Asian countries to help in bringing democracy to them.
within bring in their train the interplay of power-politics, in which great Powers join in, not merely as auxiliaries but often as principals. So the prospects for Southeast Asia are two. Either its people will settle down into an effective or orderly government (71) or the chaos of political underdevelopment will make way for the coming of Powers, which in future may not be European and even Western. That is a possibility which the Australians will be most eager to avoid.

Southeast Asian Trade and Economy

Southeast Asia has been of enormous value to the colonial Powers, which controlled it in the pre-war days. One can remember that it was the Empire in the East that made the Dutch a "have" nation in the world. (72) Similarly, Indo-China was the prize of the French possessions and Vietnam its brightest jewel. (73) Similarly, Malaya too was of great economic value to the British. (74) Initially, it was the tin belt

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71 For this, see Casey's statement in Current Notes, vol. 21 (1951), p. 442. In this statement, made after one of his Southeast Asian journeys, Casey reported: "Some of the countries in the area I have visited have acquired their independence so suddenly that their peoples, and even their leaders, have in many ways not yet acquired the techniques of government ...."

72 See _, "Indonesia - the Real Issues", The Economist (26 July 1947) for the disclosure that it was estimated in 1947 that the loss of Indonesia would reduce the standard of living in Holland by some 30 to 35 per cent. For the economic value of the Dutch
of Southeast Asia that counted. It stretches from Thailand and lower Burma through Malaya into the Indonesian islands of Singkep, Billiton (Belitung) and Bangka. The partition of Southeast Asia by western colonial powers prevented the tin belt from becoming the strategic heartland of this region. (75) Until 1939, Burma, Thailand and Indo-China constituted the rice-bowl of Asia, with traditional markets in China, Japan and India. Though the pattern of trade has altered since the war, the importance of the rice-bowl remains. (76) Among its produce of raw materials

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73 For the economic value of Indo-China to the French, see Robert Sciglismo, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress (Boston, 1963), p. 9. For a more detailed account, see ibid., pp. 218-9.

74 For the importance of Malaya to the British, see East and Spate, n. 68, pp. 218-9.


76 For the observation that the production of rice and other commodities is going to be increased much more after the restoration of peace in the area, see Sir Wilfrid Kent Hughes in CPD, vol. 208 (8 June 1950), p. 4035. "All the rice that we grow in the riverina", he said, "is just chicken feed compared with the rice that will be grown in Indo-China and Burma when peace, law and order are restored to these countries."
and foodstuffs, rice, rubber, tin (77) and petroleum(78) have special significance in international politics. Their strategic importance was forcibly demonstrated during the Japanese occupation when their flow to European, American and Asian markets ceased abruptly. How significant was the share of Southeast Asia's exports in the world's total production in the period under review is evident from the following table(79):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity exported from Southeast Asia</th>
<th>Percentage of world's total production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manila hemp</td>
<td>91 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber</td>
<td>89 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copra and coconut oil</td>
<td>76 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tin</td>
<td>68 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>68 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

77 Though Western industrial societies are developing substitutes for many of these things, no satisfactory substitute has yet been found for tin.

78 See Robert K. Wolthuis, United States Foreign Policy Towards the Netherlands Indies, 1937-1945 (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, The John Hopkins University, 1968) for the view that when Japan finally went to war after the American embargo upon oil sales to that country in July 1941 (after its occupation of Indo-China), the oil of the Indies was the immediate cause.
Besides, there are other items of export, such as, bauxite, tungsten, iron ore, tea, sugar, spices, tobacco, quinine and pepper. (80)

Significantly enough, the share of the West in Southeast Asia's exports has been much more than that of the Communist world. In 1955, for example, exports to Communist countries from Southeast Asia amounted to $104.3 million, as compared to exports to five Western members of SEATO of $2,230.7 million. (81) However, it would be futile to measure the advantages of Southeast Asian trade to the West, including Australia, in terms of dollar value. Southeast Asia has never figured prominently in Australia's own trade with outside. The reality is that economically at least Southeast Asia is far more dependent upon the rest of the world than the latter is on it. The gain of the West from this trade is indirect, as it adds to the economic stability and general prosperity of the Southeast Asian nations. To the latter, it is a means of increasing

79 These figures are from Study Group of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Collective Defence in South East Asia: The Manila Treaty and Its Implications (London, 1956), p.30.

80 Indonesia alone gave to the world 91 per cent of its quinine, 86 per cent pepper, 37 per cent rubber and 17 per cent tim. Hedley C. Brideson, "Our Pacific Neighbours", The Australian Quarterly (June 1949), p.31.
wealth and productivity and, thus, to improve opportunities for employment, increase standards of living and the capacity to purchase needed imports from abroad.

Despite impressive figures in support of it, it would not be quite correct to argue that Southeast Asia has the whip hand over the world's essential raw materials, some of which are strategically important. It is true that the events in Southeast Asia could deprive the world's economy of some important raw materials, but this loss would not be catastrophic. Alternative sources of supply and industrially produced substitutes would, to an extent, make up for the loss of Southeast Asian raw materials. However, the importance of these can better be explained in power political terms. Economically (as well as strategically), Southeast Asia has been more important to China than to Soviet Russia. It has, therefore, been correctly pointed out by an American writer that

Control of Southeast Asia's rice, rubber, and tin would go far toward solving China's food and foreign exchange problems, if ever the Chinese communist regime ... could move in. (82)

81 Study Group of R.I.I.A., n.79, p.128. For imports of Southeast Asia from these countries, see ibid.
82 King, n. 53, p.10.
It is thus in the interest of the security of Australia and other countries, confronted by China, to aim at denying a control of maximum of Southeast Asia's resources to the regime in Peking.

It would be worthwhile to see what Southeast Asia has meant to the trader and investor in Australia. Before the war, Australian investments yielded half a million pounds per year to the country. (83) Almost since 1938, there was an increasing talk about the need of promoting markets for Australian exports in the Pacific to offset stationary and declining markets in Europe. (84) A writer has explained Australia's support of the Indonesian independence in terms of her desire to have politically stable an area with which she assumed developing trade links, especially, "perhaps" in the matter of oil. (85) It may be difficult to support

84 McBride, n. 3, p. 47.
this opinion with direct evidence, but apparently there is some point in it. In a country where petrol rationing continued for four years after the war and where its removal was pledged by the Liberal Party at the elections of 1949, the prospect of supplementing oil supplies from West Asia with those from Indonesia was likely to hold some attraction. (87) In 1947, the Australian Minister for External Affairs, Dr Evatt, spoke of a "spectacular" growth in the exchange of Australian processed products for the raw materials of the intensely rich areas of Southeast Asia. (88) Though Singapore and Malaya have been centres of concentrated trade effort on the part of Australia (89), there has been no strong tendency for Australian capital to look to Southeast Asia as a field for investment. Australia's economic interests in Southeast Asia are, thus, limited.

86 Spender, n. 40, p. 245. Sir Percy Spender's Memoirs reveal that it required a formal diplomatic approach to Britain, at Foreign Ministers' level, to get the rationing of petrol abolished, as it was linked with sterling-dollar problem.

87 Even now, Indonesia's oil has some importance to Australia. In case of some threat to Australia's sea routes through the Indian Ocean, oil from the Middle East (66% of Australia's total oil imports) may have to be replaced from Indonesia (more cheaply), Venezuela or the US (more expensively).


89 For details on this, see Boyce, n. 65, pp. 354, 366.
However, the unfair deal, which the goods from Southeast Asia have received in the world markets, has frequently been a matter of great concern to Australia, especially, in the period covered by this study. The extent to which the prices of these commodities nose-dived is revealed from the fact that price of rubber fell as much as 60 per cent between 1951 and 1953, of cotton by 50 per cent and of tin by over 40 per cent. (90) As the report of the Colombo Plan for 1954 states, the average price of tin fell from £ 940 to £ 711 per ton during 1952-53. (91) What is more is that prices of these export goods fell without a comparative fall in the prices of import goods. Thus, the gulf between standards of living in Australia and Southeast Asia was further widened. It reduced Governments' revenues, brought about a sudden drop in employment and created unrest everywhere. Casey, the Australian Minister for External Affairs, was voicing the fears of his own countrymen, when he told the Parliament:

A catastrophic fall in the price of rubber, as has happened in the past, would bring sufferings to millions and they visit their resentment upon the Western countries. (92)

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The Zone of Security

It was not just the poet's fancy that impelled James McAuley to write of his countrymen:

They speak as Giants of the South Pacific
And treat the islands as their stepping-stones.(93)

He was, in fact, giving poetic expression to his country's claim for diplomatic and strategic interests in regions stretching from Manus Island off New Guinea to Mawson base in Antarctica. Almost since Australia was founded, the colonists had shown awareness of the geographical principles of preservation of a state, whose military security depended upon sea power. As early as in December 1883, they had passed the Resolution:

That further acquisition of dominion in the Western Pacific South of the Equator by any Foreign Power would be highly detrimental to the safety and well-being of the British possessions in Australasia ... (94)

92 Casey in CPD, HR, vol. NS 4 (10 August 1954), p. 126. Also see ibid., vol. NS 5 (3 November 1954), speech of Bird.

93 From McAuley's poem "From the True Discovery of Australia", The Literary Criterion, n.15, pp. 182-83.

94 Passed by the convention of the representatives of seven Australian colonies and Fiji. Cited in E.L. Piesse, ed., The Spheres of Interest of Australia and New Zealand (6 November 1920).
Eleven years later, Victoria's Premier was writing to its Governor about "the manifest destiny of Australasia to be controlling power in the Southern Pacific". (95) These expressions, promoted by successive fears of France, Russia, Germany and Japan (and the ever-present obsession with the "oriental hordes"), became more pronounced when Billy Hughes proclaimed his Monroe Doctrine for the Pacific in Versailles Peace Conference. (96) "Hands off the Pacific" in 1918 implied the control of captured German New Guinea by Australia. The Australian Monroe Doctrine, thus, meant Australian security. It was, therefore, argued:

> It is not additional territory .... that we seek, but it is greater safety today and for the future, so far as we can secure it ... We are not ... moved by any selfish or grasping spirit ... The one thing that we have in mind is ... greater security and increased protection. (97)

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96 For the statement of Premier Hughes on Australian Monroe Doctrine in America, before reaching Versailles, see Argus (Melbourne), 1 June 1918, cited in ibid. Also see New York Times, 1 June 1918, cited in Werner Levi, American-Australian Relations (Minneapolis, 1947), p.98. Also see Piesse, n.94, p. 86 for his reference to it in Parliament on 16 September 1919.

Realizing that, in the world as it is at present, there could be only one Monroe Doctrine, the Australian statesmen have since talked more and more of an ill-defined "zone of security". Beginning from the islands in the northern approaches of Australia, the term has come to embrace the whole South and Southeast Asia. This "Safety Zone" may be "a ring of friendly buffer states ... against possible threats from China and Japan". (98) It is also described in terms of "defence depending on national sovereignty being gained for the arc of islands to the north of this continent". (99) To Werner Levi, it is "a region surrounding the continent, and particularly in the islands of the immediate neighbourhood, in which no foreign power must be permitted to gain influence". (100) The frontiers of Australia are thus no more at her northern gateway of Darwin, but they are on the Mekong.

99 For a criticism of this view, see Alan Walker, "Planning Peace in the Pacific", The Australian Quarterly (June 1946), p. 94.
100 Quoted in Rose, n.27, p. 304.
Thus, since the Pacific War, Australians have talked and planned in terms of "defence in depth", which, reduced in simple terms, meant, "Well, if there unfortunately has to be fighting, for goodness' sake let it be as far away from our own country as possible". (101) Evatt, who was Minister for External Affairs during the war, told Parliament in 1943 that "... the 3-mile limit of Australia and its territories cannot possibly be regarded as confining or bounding what may be called the Australian defence zone ...." (102) It is interesting to see how the boundaries of this "zone" have been receding farther and farther, to the amazement of the Australians themselves. Frank Forde, a leading Minister in Curtin and Chifley Labour Governments, told his Canadian audience in 1953:


Let us try to imagine the incredulity with which the average Australian of 1900 would have greeted a prophecy that in 50 years' time, Australia would regard its frontier as lying in the jungle of Malaya, where the Marxist enemy would receive instructions broadcast from Moscow and Peking and be reinforced by parachutists flown in from Peking. (103)

Apart from military implications, this strategic concept has clear political and diplomatic overtones. To Australia, it means that useful neighbours must possess more than friendly governments. These governments must possess the power as well as the will to resist the advance of Australia's potential enemies. (104) These are indeed very formidable tasks for those who man the country's diplomatic posts in Southeast Asia and the islands.

Australians were initially concerned with the vast area of islands and ocean, above their continent, where sovereignties have mingled and clashed in the past. As early as in 1927, the


104 For similar views expressed in a Geography text book, see K.B.Kumberland, Southwest Pacific (London, 1954), p.130. The author stated that if Australia was to be made safe from attack, then Indonesia (and the Philippines) must be in the hands of a strong power, or strong local governments, who were ready "to co-operate on security plans on a regional basis".
Sydney Gazette spoke of a "safety zone" consisting of the "... innumerable isles that bespeck of that ocean of which Australia is destined to hold the imperial sway." This "safety zone" was postulated to insulate Australia from any foreign encroachment. (105) In his speech to the Overseas Press Club on 28 April 1943, Evatt spoke of "the arc of islands lying to the North and North-east of our continent ..." (106) His views were reflected in Article 13 of the Australia-New Zealand Agreement (ANZAC) of January 1944, which recognised a regional zone of defence based on these very islands. (107) In the same year, Blamey, the Commander-in-Chief of Australian forces, called this chain of islands from Timor to the Solomons and New Caledonia as the forward base area from which the Asian enemy could organise his armies to isolate or attack the

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Australian mainland. (108) It is interesting that though the Southeast Asian territories had figured prominently in Japan's advance southward, the Netherlands East Indies was the only segment of the region that was included in the defensive arc, as visualized from Canberra. The islands of the Indies were always identified as land bridges between Australia and Asia. The breaks in the land bridge, such as the Straits of Malacca (between Sumatra and Malaya) and the Sunda Straits (between Java and Sumatra), were important in peace and war. They could be used for trade as well as for the naval power. Portuguese Timor was a subject of diplomatic row between Australia and Portugal during the war. (109)

The value of the region of Southeast Asia and, particularly, its mainland was revealed to Australia during the Second World War. The countries


109 For Evatt's statement on a strong Portuguese note on the landing of Australian and Dutch troops in Timor on the eve of the Japanese attack, see *CPP*, vol.170 (25 February 1942), pp. 56-7. For views of Spender on Timor, see Albinski, n.97, p.146. According to this source, Spender, while in opposition, advocated that Portuguese Timor and French New Caledonia should not go back to their former masters after the war and Australia should have a voice in the military situation there, with a right to have bases in them.
of Southeast Asia fell to the enemy one by one. Each became a prominent bridgehead. The military occupation of Indo-China by Japan gave the latter a base for attacking not only China but also the rest of Southeast Asia. Then again, the capture of Singapore and Indonesia gave Japan the command of the passageway from the Western Pacific to the Indian Ocean. It placed Japan in the position to threaten Australia. Burma, in the next place, was a base for westward thrust, but it could easily become a base for a southward advance as well. The islands of Indonesia, as pointed out by Lieut.-Commander Tota Ishimaru, were "the strategic key to Australia, New Zealand and India, not to mention Singapore". (110) As for the Philippines, Casey had stated in 1937:

.... But if they were to lose their independence to any other power, or if their independence were threatened, we would begin to be interested. (111)

110

111
When Australia came out of the war, lessons learnt in the field were quite fresh in the memory of her people. How true, they realized, was the remark of Sir Robert Brooke-Popham (British Commander-in-Chief in the Far East) on Burma, Thailand, the Dutch Indies and Australia in May 1941:

You cannot separate any of these territories. If anything happens to any of them, it will affect the rest. If one is attacked, the others must come in. Malaya, Sumatra, the smaller Indies islands, Borneo, and Australia must be considered strategically as one unit. (112)

Australia's interest in the region was heightened when the success of communism in China left to the non-Communist world only the fringes of the Asian continent and the off-lying islands. Already the area commanded the best sea and air routes between the Antipodes and the continents of Asia and Europe, with some important centres of communication, such as, Singapore, Bangkok, Saigon and Manila.

The United States had placed itself at the geographical centre of the empires of Eastern Asia, and the strategic crossroads of their lines of communication. It is also worthwhile to note that the port of Davao in the Philippines was the advanced base from which the Japanese sent one of the expeditions which attacked the Dutch East Indies.

"Whoever controls Southeast Asia", it has been aptly said, "can grant or withhold passage over the global air routes and sea lanes". (113) Strategically, "Southeast Asia was less important to Soviet Russia than to Communist China and what Japan accomplished by sea would be possible for China by land and coastal shipping. (114)

Australia's first line of defence was now unmistakably linked with the defence of Southeast Asia from a potentially hostile power. The strategic importance of the major Southeast Asian States was amplified by Casey, when he told the Australian Parliament in 1954:

> If the whole of Indo-China fell to the Communists, Thailand would be gravely exposed. If Thailand were to fall, the road would be open to Malaya and Singapore. From the Malay Peninsula, the Communists could dominate the northern approaches to Australia and even cut our lifelines with Europe. (115)

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114 Ibid., p. 162.

The official thinking in Australia was, thus, close to the much talked about "domino theory" (116) which stressed that the countries of Southeast Asia would automatically collapse, one after the other, if one of them were to fall under the Communist control. Whatever be the truth of this theory, it appeared highly probable that Burma, Malaya and possibly Indonesia would experience great difficulty in resisting the pressures of China and Communism, unless Thailand remained friendly to the West (or was effectively neutralized). Thailand, thus, became a "lynch-pin" of any security system, that was to be evolved in Southeast Asia.

While the above analysis does not claim to have taken up all the Australian interests in the region, it seeks to show how Australia faced an increasing involvement in a very "grey" zone of social, political and pseudo-military conflicts. This was when her own international position abounded in anomalies and disparities. A contemporary analyst has, therefore, summed up her predicament in these words:

The obscurity of Australian policy reflects the ambiguity of her position in Southeast Asia. Geographically she is important, demographically she is weak. Her economic interests are limited, her strategic interests are great. At home she is strong industrialised power. But she looks inwards, and has done so for many decades. (117)

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116 Propounded by President Eisenhower in April 1954.