CHAPTER II

GENESIS OF REGIONALISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The term 'Southeast Asia' is of a recent origin. Before the Second World War, Southeast Asia was completely overshadowed by the Indian and Chinese influences, and consequently, was known by several appellations such as 'Further India', 'Farther India', 'Greater India', 'Little China', 'Indo-China'. Similarly, some writers preferred the term 'The Far Eastern Tropics' as a regional label for the present-day Southeast Asia. This usage obviously tends to draw our attention to an important aspect of the region's resource pattern i.e., it is a major source of tropical raw materials, not only food stuffs but also industrial crops such as rubber and fibre. Thus, from the use of different designations for Southeast Asia, it appears that in the pre-Second World War period, Southeast Asia was a little or nebulously known region to the majority of the people in the West and was viewed as a mere cultural appendage of India and China. It was not until the early 1940's when the Japanese armies overran virtually the whole of Southeast Asia that the western powers became conscious of the region.


as an entity. In fact, it was during the Pacific War that the term 'Southeast Asia', in its present form, acquired common currency, and came into both limelight and importance when, for the purpose of tackling immediate strategic problems, the territories of South of Tropic of Cancer were placed under South-East Asian Command of Admiral Lord Mountbatten.

Subsequently, the concept of Southeast Asia as a region was given impetus by certain developments viz; decolonisation of the area mainly between 1946-63; efforts towards regionalism in Southeast Asia - culminating in the form of ASEAN which, it may be argued made the concept genuinely indigenous; and three wars, i.e., the Second World War (1939-45), the First Indo-China War (1946-54) and the Second Indo-Chinese War (1965-75). These developments, it appears, proved catalysts in the evolution and popularization of the concept of Southeast Asia and made it

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3 It was created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill at the First Quebec Conference in August, 1943 with Lord Mountbatten as Supreme Allied Commander and General Joseph W. Stillwell as Deputy Supreme Allied Commander. However, at that time it did not include the identical area which, at present, is considered to comprise Southeast Asia. For example, Mountbatten Command included Ceylon also. Russell H. Fifield, "Southeast Asia as a Regional Concept", Southeast Asian Journal of Social Sciences (Singapore), vol. 11, n. 2, (September 1983), pp. 3-4.

a household expression in the West. Furthermore, the establishment and growth of Southeast Asian 'area studies' programmes at the Universities of Yale, Cornell, California, Michigan, and later at Singapore and elsewhere, and intellectual contributions of 'Southeast Asianists' generally strengthened the concept of Southeast Asia as a region.

However, despite popularization, the concept of Southeast Asia remained somewhat amorphous and even today there is no unanimity among scholars as to what exactly constitutes a Southeast Asian region. Hence, the region lacks clearly perforated boundaries and a degree of arbitrariness exists in defining the geographical limits of Southeast Asia. In some instances, the region is considered to embrace as far as Taiwan and Hongkong to the Northwest. For other purposes, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and even the larger states of the Indian sub-continent to the West and North are regarded as members of the region. In still other cases, the Andaman and Nicobar islands (parts of Indian Republic) are also included in the region. However, a substantial and growing consensus seems to be emerging.


7 For example see, Nicholas Tarling, A Concise History of Southeast Asia (New York, 1966), p. 11.
which signifies Southeast Asia as the arc of states stretching from Burma on the Northwest to the Philippines on the Northeast, and comprising ten countries viz., Brunei Darussalam, Mayanmar (formerly Burma), Cambodia (also known as Khmer Republic and Kampuchea), Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Southeast Asia extends from 23 30'N to 11 00's and from 92 20'E to 134 50'E. It is a tropical region and the total land surface of Southeast Asia is approximately, 1,571,000 square miles, and because much of it is insular, it covers a large expanse of ocean. While approximately half the total land surface is accounted for by the single mass of the peninsular mainland, the remaining is divided among several thousand islands which comprise the two archipelagoes of Indonesia and the Philippines. The main sea route between the Pacific and Indian Ocean passes through the area, which also serves as a link between Asia and Australia. With the important exception of Northeastern Indo-China, Southeast Asian boundaries effectively separate it from the nearest land masses on all its sides. In the

* This concept of Southeast Asia will be used in the present study.

In a loose sense, the word 'tropical' refers simply to temperature and is applied to all areas where the mean monthly figure does not fall below 64.4°F. 'Tropical belt' lies between the tropic of Cancer and Capricorn, respectively 23 26' North and South. G.W. Davidson and others, eds., Chambers Concise 20th Century Dictionary (New Delhi, 1986), p. 1065.

North, except for the Northeastern coastal region of Vietnam in Indo-China, high mountains divide the region from India and China. Barring North, Southeast Asia is bordered by water from all sides.

The Southeast Asian countries share a common heritage, and are integrated with the rest of the world as producers of primary products viz; rubber, tin, hemp, sugar, manganese etc., and more than two thirds of rice entering world trade. But paradoxically, despite the presence of abundant natural resources, because of the relatively low living standard of the inhabitants, they represent 'poverty amidst plenty'. The region is veritable 'low-pressure area' (has been exposed to external pressures and influences), and Southeast Asian countries represent a crazy quilt or to put it more aptly, an 'ethnographic museum' of diversity - 'an anthropologist's paradise'. The region, beyond doubt, is marked by copious and astonishing diversity in all fields.


11 Ibid., p. 4.


13 Hall, n. 1, p. 5.

14 However, an important denominator of region's unity seems to be a similarity in matters of dress, types of food, traditions and architectural style, methods of cultivation, and social organization. Perhaps, the Chinese and Japanese saw this unity in the region and called it 'Nan-Yang' and 'Nan-Yo' respectively, both meaning 'Southern Seas' - the latter appellation later borrowed by the Europeans in naming the 'South-China Sea'. Tarling, n. 7, p. XII; and Fisher, n. 9, p. 7.
of human activity and today Southeast Asian countries constitute a complex and kaleidoscopic cluster of ethnic, cultural, racial, religious, economic and political entities whose people have been exposed to and greatly influenced by almost all the major world cultures and religions. 

The principal cause of this diversity in the region is the penetration of the area by outsiders. This penetration it seems, was facilitated primarily by the following three factors:

i) First, geographical location which places Southeast Asia across some of the world's most important sea routes (the Pacific and Indian) and its close proximity to the complex civilizations of India and China.

ii) Second, the presence of abundant natural resources and mineral wealth which lured the Chinese and Indians, and easy availability of tropical spicies which exerted pressure on the early Muslims and at a later date on Spain, Portugal and other European powers which eventually resulted in the

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15 On this point see, Hall, n. 1, pp. 12-40.

16 Since the early history, the Indians and Chinese found the presence of troves of wealth in the region too tempting to be resisted. As a result, the Indians established trade links with Southeast Asia before the end of the first millennium B.C. The exploits of Indian merchants were incorporated into the Hindu epic literature. The fabled land, beyond the Sunrise is referred to in the Indian literature as 'Suvarnabhumi' or 'Suvarnadvipa' which meant 'land of gold'. Gold there was to be found but the voyages were, according to Ramayana, beset by storms and other perils. See, Charles Higham, The Archaeology of Mainland Southeast Asia (Cambridge, 1989), p. 244. However, the Chinese came to the region sometime before the second century B.C. and ruled Vietnam from 110 B.C. to A.D. 940.
Western domination of the region. Thus, an inevitable consequence of this 'favourable juxtaposition' of presence of an advantageous pivotal location and natural resources seems to be that "much of Southeast Asia has, from ancient times, been an arena of conflicting interests, which have markedly influenced its history and development".  

iii) Third, political divisions and underdevelopment of the region.

Thus, it was because of geographical accessibility, natural resources as well as economic backwardness and material weakness that the several lands of the area fell under the sway of powerful European powers seeking to expand their trade.

17 For details see, Fisher, n. 9, pp. 126-30.


19 It may, however, be noted that some scholars object to the use of the term 'under-developed' for Southeast Asia. Rather, they hold the view that the term 'pre-developed' is more accurate designation for the region rather than more usual 'under-developed'. In support of their contention they argue that 'pre-developed' societies of Southeast Asia had attained high degree of cultural, economic and political development long before these were attained by Western Europe. The relative development of the region today, measured in material terms such as standard of living or degree of economic diversification, is primarily due to two reasons. First, sudden technical progress of Europe following the Industrial Revolution. Second, and closely related, destructive impact of militarily superior Europe whose colonial policy warped and retarded the development of Southeast Asia. For further detail see, Buchanan, n. 2, pp. 19-24.

20 Vandenbosch and Butwell, n. 10, p. 10.
Diversity has also been a consequence of the importation of competing religions. Almost every major religious faith has found at least a temporary home in Southeast Asia. It has not only resulted in the evolution and development of divergent religious attitudes, but has also affected the fabric of the society and made it too heterogenous. Buddhism and Hinduism have found their way into the region from the Indian subcontinent, Taoism and animism from China, Islam from the Middle-East via Gujrat, and Christianity from North-Eastern Europe. This diversity has been further compounded by cultural influences that converged upon the region mainly from India and China.


22 Animism is a belief that a governing spirit dwells within every living and non-living thing. The spirits are thought to live in trees, rocks and fields, in people and animals. Emotions and dreams are regarded as traces of these invisible indestructible powers. Animists believe that these spirits can be persuaded to act for good or for evil. Interestingly, in Southeast Asia all religions rest on a substratum of local animistic customs and beliefs and people have incorporated animism into every religion. For details see, Steven Warshaw and others, et al., Southeast Asia Emerges (San Francisco, 1987), pp. 1-9.

23 Thus, at present there are at least four major organised but different religions in Southeast Asia. Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia (except Bali-which follows Hinduism) are over-whelming Muslims; Burma, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand follow Theravada Buddhism and have more cultural borrowings from India than Vietnam, which is culturally Chinese-oriented and follows Buddhism; and lastly, the Philippines is predominantly a christian country. Mehden, n. 21, pp. 7-8.
and to some extent from the Middle-East and Europe. However, it may be noted that there exist divergent perceptions regarding the extent and degree of influence these cultures exerted upon Southeast Asia. One view is that Southeast Asia had been overshadowed by Indian and Chinese influence to such an extent that the region in the process virtually lost its indigenous culture. It is for this reason (as mentioned at the outset) that in pre-Second World War period, Southeast Asia was termed as 'Further India', 'Greater-India', 'Little China', 'Indo-China' etc. Clearly this evokes an image of Southeast Asia as a mere cultural appendage of India and China, and hence, obscures an independent identity of the region under Indo-China veneer. On the contrary, the other viewpoint deprecates the use of such terms for Southeast Asia and warns against insidious tendency to overstress the part played by the imported cultures and underestimate the importance of the indigenous ones. This view regards Southeast Asian culture as distinctly indigenous and holds that if the culture of the region contained anything that was apparently new, it was not necessarily imposed from

24 However, there was a difference between Oriental and Occidental cultural influences. While Oriental influences were assimilated and synthesised by Southeast Asian people voluntarily, Occidental influences were super-imposed form without, thus destroying the indigenous cultural fabric.


26 Hall, n. 1, p. 4.
without; it was adapted from within to fit the existing pattern of things. However, the correct position seems to be that while the region mainly adapted many alien cultural traits to its particular needs without in the process losing its indigenous cultural identity, the fact remains that Southeast Asians did borrow them. In fact, it appears that all the greatest achievements in the region, whether in the realm of art or statecraft, were made under the stimulus of an inspiration, drawn ultimately from India or China. Even today, everywhere in Southeast Asia one comes across practices and devices drawn extensively from these two neighbours and to some extent from Western cultures. But it should be reemphasised that Southeast Asia is neither an appendage of Indo-Chinese cultures nor a 'zone of transition' between India and China. Thus, it seems that Southeast Asians have, no doubt, borrowed and that too extensively, nevertheless they have, in the process, preserved indigenous elements of their culture.

**BASES OF REGIONALISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**

Southeast Asia, as noted, has been primarily perceived and defined as a geo-strategic region. It appears that

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29 Fisher, n. 9, p. 776.
strictly speaking, Southeast Asian countries scarcely constitute a region as discussed in Chapter I. Even a cursory glance through Southeast Asian history and the very notion of Southeast Asia as historical and geographical construct evoke an image of loosely extended empires superimposed on the same map. It is because of this reason that it is argued that there is 'no such thing as Southeast Asia except for cartographic purposes... It is a place on the globe where certain groups of people, holding little in common, live contiguous to one another.

Clearly, though the countries of Southeast Asia are geographically proximate, they lack social, cultural and economic similarity, transactional flows, shared political interests and other interdependencies. Therefore, Southeast Asia may be considered a region only in employing the term in a liberal sense. However, strangely enough, the idea of regionalism is not alien to Southeast Asian people. Notwithstanding their heterogeneous traits derived from disparate social, economic and political structures and different cultural heritages and influences, Southeast Asians generally find the idea of regionalism quite attractive. The exchange of diplomatic missions, establishment of institutions for development, planning, public-administration, higher education, agricultural

30 See, Chapter I, pp. 5-32.
research and so forth at a regional level clearly point to the latent desire for regionalism in the Southeast Asian people. Naturally, in pursuit of these objectives, they have, in the past, often assembled together under the banner of regionalism.

As discussed in Chapter I, there are certain background factors as well as some internal and external catalysts which provide a fillip to the inception, growth and successful working of regional organisations. Do these conditions really exist in Southeast Asia; if so, to what extent?

In this context, therefore, it seems both relevant and interesting to highlight and analyse the centripetal as well as centrifugal forces to regionalism in Southeast Asia.

**Incentives to Regionalism**

There seems to be at least five generally recognised primary incentives that provide fillip, condition, and encourage Southeast Asians towards the idea of regional cooperation.

First, a common colonial heritage and shared historical experience provide a powerful structural base upon which can

32 For a brief but an excellent analysis of various attempts for regionalism in Asia and Southeast Asia, see, Michael Hass, "The Aseanization of Asian International Relations", Asia Pacific Community, vol.10, n. 5, (Fall 1979), pp. 72-85.
be built a citadel of regional cooperation as a vehicle for the furtherance of shared perceptions and interests. Moreover, there can be seen clear linkage between colonial legacy and the growth of regionalism in Southeast Asia. Although at a macro-level, it appears that these colonial influences have left different (in certain cases visibly irreconcilable) imprints on Southeast Asian countries, yet a discerning analysis reveals that colonial divisive policies had certain unintended consequences as well, and that a common colonial experience has brought the countries of Southeast Asia together in ways more than one. In this context, Abdulgani seems right when he cogently observes, 'If the policy of divide and rule of the colonial powers served to divide the area both politically and economically, it had the unforeseen effect of the uniting the nascent Southeast Asian nations under the banner of common cause. This uniting effect took the form of a common endeavour to tread the road of regionalism. The Southeast Asian countries not only have a shared historical experience in the form of colonial subjugation, they (as a consequence of it) also oppose colonialism tooth and nail. This anti-colonial attitude has proved to be an important unifying force in bringing Southeast Asian nations together with a common stand on various regional and transnational forums. Here, mention may be made of three Pan-Asian Conferences

viz., the Asian Relations Conference at New Delhi, in 1947, the Conference of Asian, Australian and the Middle-East Nations on the Indonesian Question, at New Delhi in 1949, and the Asian-African Conference at Bandung in 1955. At these Conferences, Southeast Asian countries have unitedly espoused their cause and voiced their criticism against colonialism and apartheid. The convergence of perceptions at these fora it may be argued, seems to strongly indicate that South Asian countries do have a spirit to cooperate in the matters about which they share a common interest, and given the opportunity, they can successfully tread the road to regionalism.

Second, subsidiary branches and certain agencies of the United Nations with regionally oriented programmes in social and economic fields (such as World Health Organisation, Food and Agriculture Organisation, International Labour Organisation, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, United Nations Industrial Development Organisation and so on) play an important role to bring the representatives of Southeast Asian nations together on these forums. Although the young and ardently nationalistic Southeast Asian countries, it may be noted, are too-zealous and over-possessive about their sovereignty, their participation in these organisations has been made platable by the fact that such participation offers many concrete advantages, while imposing few burdensome
responsibilities. The participation at these forums, it appears, enhances their understanding of national priorities and shared regional interests which, it may be noted, is essential for building up mutual confidence and trust. Besides these organisations, other institutions such as Asian Development Bank, and other professional organizations, within and without the region bring policy makers and scholars of the region in contact with each other. Such meetings and discussions of the matters concerning the region heighten the awareness of Southeast Asians of their mutual interests and seem to contribute towards the evolution of a common regional perception - a Southeast Asian perception.

Third, as a result of certain developments in the arena of international economic relations (such as oil crisis, fluctuations in the prices of commodities, protectionist trade policies of the developed countries etc.), a realization seems to be gaining ground among the third world countries that by using regional cooperation as a mechanism they would be in a position to provide better solutions to their economic problems. They seem to be convinced that the issues ranging from external trade fluctuations to rapid economic development cannot be dealt with effectively within the framework of 'national self-reliance' only. Also, it

is realized that in order to increase their bargaining power vis-a-vis the developed world and to become competitive, if not equal, partners in the international economy, they must act as a unit at a regional level. The Southeast Asian region is no exception in this respect. Rather, Southeast Asian countries are, in essence, growth anxious and development oriented countries whose foreign policy calculations seem to be, to a great extent, geared towards the goal of rapid economic development. Pursuing these objectives, leaders of Southeast Asian nations seem to progressively realize that their economic development can be more easily achieved through regional cooperation and 'regional self-reliance' than individual competition and 'national self-reliance'. Thus, an urge for rapid economic development is an important factor which propels the Southeast Asian countries towards regional cooperation.

Fourth, the question of both internal and external security of the region appears to be an important 'catalyst' to motivate and provide a strong rationale to Southeast Asian states to cooperate to deal firmly with internal turbulence and external penetration. This contention seems particularly true in case of non-communist states of

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35 For details see, Chapter I, pp. 58-65.

the region which share a common perception that the communist rebellions, guerrilla insurgency and infiltration are the principal threat to their existence and survival of their societies. In fact, it seems that the anti-communist denominator has proved to be a strong rallying point for these non-communist states, and it is least surprising that they view regionalism as a bulwark against the spread of communism in the region.

Finally, Southeast Asian states perceive regionalism as a mechanism or an institutional arrangement which may prove helpful in the resolution of intra-regional conflicts peacefully and through consensus at a regional level than on bilateral basis.

**Impediments to Regionalism**

The above discussed centripetal forces, according to regional theorists, are likely to provide a powerful incentive to the nations of a region to join hands for regional cooperation and form some sort of a regional organisation, which might, with the passage of time, result into regional integration. But is regional cooperation, in the purest sense of the term, really feasible within Southeast Asia?

The idea of regional cooperation continues to have vitality, although most of the attempts to make use of this concept in the region have foundered or at best met with a
modicum degree of success. The Asian Conference, Baguio Conference, the SEATO, Bandung Conference, the Colombo Plan, Association of Southeast Asia (ASA), Maphilindo etc., remind one of the prominent and avowed efforts to translate the idea of regionalism into actual practice in the area.

The answer to the failure of these efforts may be sought by enquiring into the obstacles that impede regional cooperation in Southeast Asia. Although, the generally shared assumption is that a common and perhaps the most important impediment to regionalism in Southeast Asia is that the politics in the region, at present, is too burdened with tension and suspicion to allow any hope for meaningful regional cooperation, yet an attempt may be made to identify certain main obstacles that are most often recognized by qualified observers who count themselves in the field:

(i) **Territorial Conflicts:** One of the most striking aspect of Southeast Asia is that its history has been full of intra-regional territorial and related disputes and conflicts. Many of such disputes date back to the ancient Southeast Asia when, as a result of frequent rise and fall of some large kingdoms, numerous small and independent small states emerged. While some of these state acknowledged the suzerainty of such widely separated rulers, as the Chinese,

37 These would be discussed in detail in the later part of this Chapter.
Mongols and Javanese, others preferred to remain independent. An inescapable result of these developments was the frequently changing and often ill-defined boundaries. Thus, even during the ancient history, Southeast Asia lacked clearly demarcated boundaries. But the problem was exacerbated with the arrival and rule of Western powers who, it may be argued, seem to be largely responsible for the present political geography of the region. During their colonial rule, these powers virtually parcelled out among themselves the countries of Southeast Asia depending upon their geo-strategic and geo-economic interests and convenience. The achievement of political independence, it may be noted, has not markedly changed the pre-independence boundaries in Southeast Asia. Rather, it "has meant, in effect, the confirmation of a territorial base when the metropolitan power (s) relinquished sovereignty".  

Thus, an important result of the frequent and arbitrary change of boundaries is that at present, Southeast Asian politics is marred by boundary disputes syndrome. The important illustrations of such conflicts are provided by Cambodian-Thai dispute over the ruined temple of Preah Vihear on their border, which both claimed, fell under their

38 W.F. Speed, n. 28, p. 13.
sovereignty, and the Philippines claim to North Borneo in 1962. Less well-known have been numerous claims and counter-claims by Cambodia and Vietnam regarding certain islands in the Gulf of Siam. Besides these, certain 'latent' claims have characterized Southeast Asian history such as Thai interest in Battambang and Siam Reap Provinces (Khet) in Cambodia; Indonesian disputes with New Guinea, Singapore, the Malaya Peninsula, to mention but the important few. These disputes continue to burden the politics of Southeast Asia. The Philippines claim over Sabah, which continues to be unresolved despite resumption of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Malaysia in 1969 (they were suspended in 1963), may be cited as an example. Although both the countries at the ASEAN Ministerial Council Session in 1969 in Malaysia, agreed not to rub the issue further at the ASEAN meetings and declared that Sabah issue would not prevent them from cooperating, yet the resumption only meant that Malaysia and the Philippines would discuss the claim

41 However, the dispute was resolved, when on June 15, 1962, the International Court of Justice gave its judgement and recognised Cambodian sovereignty over the Temple and said "Thailand is under the obligation to withdraw its troops... and to restore antiquities which may have been removed from the Temple", Asian Recorder (New Delhi), September 3-9,1962, p.4769. Also see, L.P. Singh, "The Thai-Cambodian Temple Dispute", Asian Survey, vol. 2, n. 8, (October 1962), pp. 23-26. The article contains useful and excellent references to and sources of the Temple dispute.

Similarly, during the Second ASEAN Summit Meeting held in Kuala Lumpur in August 1977, the Philippines President Marcos reassured the ASEAN nations that he would undertake definite steps upon his return to Manila to eliminate the claim to Sabah, but the years since then have shown little progress, and the claim, it seems, has not been given an official burial.

Besides Sabah, claims and counter-claims over Brunei (before it became independent in January 1984), too, seemed to have threatened the stability and peaceful relations among Southeast Asian countries. For example, Malaysia, partially because of its geographical proximity and strong cultural affinity with Brunei and partially because of rich natural resources of the latter had since long cherished to incorporate the Sultanate into the Malaysian Federation. But its ambitions foundered, when, during the formation of Malaysia, Malaysian plea was rejected by Brunei, and vehemently opposed by Indonesia. However, the Malaysian move proved to be counter-productive when the Sultanate laid claim to Limbang and Muara districts of Sarawak which divided the territory into two separate areas. Not disheartened, Malaysia continued to harbour designs for inclusion of Brunei into Malaysia till November 1981, when Sultanate

firmly declared that Brunei's decision not to join Malaysia was final.

In addition to these disputes, certain other conflicting territorial disputes (both border and maritime) persist — such as disputes between Vietnam and Cambodia, Vietnam and Indonesia (maritime boundary around Natunar Islands in the South China Sea), Malaysia and Vietnam (South China Sea), Malaysia and Thailand (border). Some other examples of such conflicts which have the potential to disturb peace in the region are provided by the Philippines complaint of Malaysian invasion of its Commodore Reef in May 1980, Malaysian support for Muslim rebels in Mindanao, and publication of an official map of Malaysia which caused Indonesia to object to the inclusion of Palau Ligitan and Sipidam in Malaysian map, the Philippines claim over the Kalayaan group of islands, and Singapore's over Pulau Batu Putch, and so on. Such territorial disputes, it should be pointed out, subvert the evolution and progress of regionalism in the region, and if they go unchecked, would certainly hinder, if not absolutely dampen, the spirit and endeavours towards an effective and meaningful regional cooperation in Southeast Asia.

45 For details see, Ibid., pp. 43-44.


(ii) **Minority Problems:** Another significant problem (which in fact, is a natural consequence of lack of clearly perforated boundaries) that militates against regional cooperation is the problem of ethnic and racial minorities in one State with different degrees of potential and actual loyalty to another state. This problem appears to have two facets viz; i) the presence of overseas ethnic communities and; ii) the transnational settlement of region's ethnic communities.

The settlement of overseas Chinese and Indians in Southeast Asia provides an example to the first dimension of the problem. The region in the past has experienced problems regarding the integration of these communities with the national mainstream. The overseas Chinese and to a lesser extent, the Indians, it may be argued, because of their tendency to look back to their native lands, have failed to merge with the indigenous population to the extent that they could share the same aspirations and feel the same sense of nationalistic pride. As a result of their dubious loyalty, these communities are considered, throughout the region, as undesirable, unassimilable and a 'fifth column'. This is

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50 On this point see, Hall, n. 1, p. 869.
particularly true of the overseas Chinese who, because of their commercial skills and racial loyalty with China are looked upon with xenophobia and hatred by the local people and are dubbed as 'the Jews of the East'.

The second dimension of the problem is the transnational settlement of the region's ethnic communities. Illustrations can be found in the concentration of Shans in Burma, Thais in Burma and Cambodia, Vietnamese in Cambodia, Laos and Thailand; Cambodians (Khmer Kron) in Vietnam.

The reason for the ethnic problem in the region, it may be noted, is partly because of geographical location of the region across the important sea routes viz; the Pacific and Indian Oceans (providing an easily accessibility to overseas population), and partly because of the permeability and openness of the frontiers (encouraging trans-national settlements of regional ethnic communities). Consequently, these 'open' frontiers have largely been perceived "as zones where people intermingle, not as lines on the map, defining juridically, where one state's authority ends and another's begins.... People have flowed across these zones virtually without hindrance except for those impediments placed

51 For details see, Go Gien- tjwan, "The Role of the Overseas Chinese in the Southeast Asian Revolutions and their Adjustment to New States", in Michael Leifer,ed., Nationalism, Revolution and Evaluation in South East Asia (Switzerland, 1970), pp. 59-68. For an excellent and comprehensive analysis of the overseas Chinese problem in the region, see, C.P. Fitzerald, China and Southeast Asia Since 1945 (Delhi, 1973), pp. 81-105.
in man's way by mountains and jungles". It is because of these transnational settlements and the resultant heterogeneous nature of Southeast Asian population that Fisher has duly emphasised the "ethnographic and sociological immaturity of the arc"—considering it a "zone of passage".

This problem, it may be argued, often spoils good neighbourly relations among Southeast Asian states, particularly when one government extends the umbrella of its interests, under domestic pressure or otherwise, over its ethnic or cultural brethren across its own boundaries; and thus, put the endeavours towards regional cooperation in a reverse gear.

(iii) The Impact of Colonial Legacy: Another factor that subverts regional cooperation in Southeast Asia is the divisive impact of colonial legacy. This factor, it may be noted, has largely contributed to the heterogenous nature of Southeast Asian societies.... In this context, Fifield, well sums up the state of affairs during colonial era in

the region. It seems interesting to quote him verbatim:

Southeast Asia, apart from independent Siam or Thailand, actually consisted of separate compartments directly related politically, economically, and psychologically to the metropolitan powers. Telegrams from one country to another were known to be sent via Europe. Policy for Southeast Asia was made in London, Paris, the Hague, and Washington while even Bangkok was greatly influenced by the Western Powers.

Thus, during colonial era, Southeast Asia clearly lacked regional ties. An unmistakable legacy of a protracted rule by different imperial powers has been political and economic isolation, and it appears that the national leaders of Southeast Asia have developed disparate perceptions regarding national, regional and international issues. This factor, it may be argued has resulted into "distrust, and even animosity", an urge for separateness and distinctiveness and above all, a lack of 'regional consciousness' among national leaders. The net result of all this clearly is nationalistic tendencies and undue assertion of national sovereignty. Therefore, instead of

55 Fifield, n. 5, p. 47.
58 For details see, Russull H. Fifield, National and Regional Interests in ASEAN (Singapore, 1979), pp. 25-44.
trying to accelerate intra-regional cooperation to solve mutually shared problems, these countries seem to be concerned with strengthening extra-regional ties with the major powers. Consequently, these countries, it may be argued seem to look at the outside world with their backs facing each other.

(iv) **Economic Hurdles:** It appears that it is less cumbersome and easier to attain cooperation in the economic sphere than in political and security fields. But in Southeast Asia, the situation does not seem to be really encouraging for economic cooperation as well. Although most of Southeast Asian states are growth anxious and their immediate economic concerns such as development, removal of poverty etc. seem to be congruent, yet there are certain vital factors which do not augur well for regional economic cooperation in Southeast Asia.

Even a cursory glance through the direction of trade and nature of economies of these countries reveals that there is very little in their economic circumstances to draw them together. These countries have basically competitive instead of complementary economies. This has two implications: one, since several countries depend on the exports of the same few products (primary commodities), and

59 Michael Leifer, "The ASEAN States and the Progress of Regional cooperation in Southeast Asia," in Dohnu and Dragun, eds., n. 4, p. 3; and Lawrence D. Stifel, "ASEAN Cooperation and Economic growth in Southeast Asia", Asia Pacific Community (Tokyo), vol. 10, n. 6, (Spring - Summer 1979), pp. 115-116.
must sell them in the same markets, a strong element of competition exists among them; two, the nature and uneven level of their economic development are likely to impede future harmonious relations. It is because of these two factors that the countries of the region have a little intra-regional trade as a proportion of their total regional trade.

To overcome these two impediments, the countries of Southeast Asia are trying to diversify and develop their economies, but the situation comes to the square one because to do so they have to compete with one another to woo foreign aid and technical know-how from the same outside quarters.

This list of obstacles can, indeed, be endless. But two additional categories may be put in: (a) traditional and historic enmities, which imply the existence of national memories; and (b) disparate threat perceptions i.e., despite preoccupation with internal as well as external security problems resulting from the communist threat, these countries have different perceptions about the source of such threat.


61 William Henderson, n. 34, pp. 70-71.

After having analysed the centripetal as well as centrifugal forces to regionalism in the region, a question may be asked i.e., is the spirit of regionalism really strong in Southeast Asia? The answer is unequivocal 'yes'. Rather, it may be argued that regional cooperation in Southeast Asia can successfully be attained, continued and enhanced. It is so argued because the impediments to regionalism in Southeast Asia are not so insuperable as to preclude any possibility of successful regional cooperation. It seems that the subvertive forces, most frequently cited and echoed by the scholars, and briefly dealt with above, are not as significant as generally assumed. On the contrary, the oft-cited 'insurmountable' obstacles to regional cooperation do not loom so large when subjected to a micro-analysis. A dispassionate analysis seems to reveal that certain obstacles, particularly block factors such as territorial, minority and ethnic conflicts have been unduly exaggerated and magnified as sources of conflict in Southeast Asia. Further, it may be argued, there is hardly any region in the world which is not beset with one or the other obstacles that are 'theoretically' supposed to hinder regional cooperation. For example, the history of Europe has been full of internecine conflicts and wars, but despite these obstacles (which according to regional theorists, are likely to subvert efforts towards regionalism), the EC has made a success for itself and emerged as a supranational regional organisation. It may, therefore, be stated that
what really matters to make regionalism a success is the will to cooperate. Of course, there is a strong evidence indicative of a pronounced sentiment for regionalism in Southeast Asia.

**Efforts towards Regionalism in Southeast Asia: A Review**

As argued in Chapter I, the major powers do take resort to regionalism to establish, sustain and expand their hegemonical role and influence in other regions as well. Southeast Asia, being a "low pressure area" seems to be no exception in this respect. Therefore, immediately after the first World War, the major powers (notwithstanding the fact that at that time Southeast Asian countries, with the exception of Thailand, constituted colonial countries), thus precluding any possibility of regional cooperation, in order to expand their hegemonical role and ideological influences, did make endeavours to bring Southeast Asian nations together under their leadership. The two nations instrumental in ushering in an era of somewhat 'rudimentary' cooperation were the former Soviet Union and Japan. In this context, the initiative was taken by the former Soviet Union when it convened a Congress of the Orient at Baku in 1920 in

63 These efforts were not confined to the Southeast Asian region alone. Rather, while some of these efforts for 'broader' regional cooperation involved, besides others, the countries of Southeast Asia, others had Southeast Asian region as a focal point. However, their contribution may be viewed from a long-term regional perspective i.e., in the context of the role these efforts played in the eventual evolution and growth of regionalism in Southeast Asia.
which majority of the Asian countries took part. Although the obvious purpose of Baku Conference was to prepare ground for the possible future socialist revolutions in Asia, at a hindsight, it seems to reflect the long-term objective of Soviet Union to consolidate the Russian Revolution by winning over Asian nations at the expense of the western powers.

The second attempt in this direction was made by Japan when it, perhaps taking a cue from Soviet Union, convened Pan-Asiatic Conference in 1926 with the slogan 'Asia for Asians'. Again in 1943, Japan convened an Assembly of Greater Asiatic Nations. The objective of Japanese efforts, it may be pointed out, was to unite the East and Southeast Asian states under the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Plan" under its guidance, and thus establish Japan's hegemony in Asia. However, the Japanese attempt to set up "Co-Prosperity Plan" came to a virtual naught in the aftermath of its defeat and surrender at the end of the Second World War.

After the Second World War, the first major development towards regionalism in Southeast Asia was the appointment of Lord Killearn, on February 18, 1946, as the British

64 Chintamani Mahapatra, American Role in the Origin and Growth of ASEAN (New Delhi, 1990), p. 11.

65 For an excellent and historical analysis of "The Japanese Blueprint" to establish a "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" see, Willard H. Elsbree, Japan's Role in Southeast Asian Nationalist Movements, 1940 to 1945 (Cambridge, 1953), pp. 11-75.
Special Commissioner (later Commissioner General) in Southeast Asia, with headquarters at Singapore. To begin with the main function of this commission was to deal with and "... review the food situation in that part of the world (Southeast Asia) and make recommendations", but its scope was eventually enlarged.

Though an immediate achievement of the Commission was that it played an important role in averting the famine situation in Southeast Asia in the early post-war period, in retrospect, its real and long-term significance seems to lie in the fact that it went a long way in inculcating a regional consciousness among the people of Southeast Asia. Probably, it was for the first time that the food shortage problems of Southeast Asian people were discussed and solved at a regional level. Thus, it may be viewed as the first experiment towards regional economic cooperation in Southeast Asia, albeit through an extra-regional initiative.

However, an important milestone towards broader regional cooperation was the convening of the first of its kind ever held political Conference at Purana Qila (Old Fort), New Delhi, in March-April, 1947, better known as the Asian Relations Conference. Unofficial in nature, it was organised by the Indian Council for World Affairs (a non-

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66 Keesing's Contemporary Archives (Bristol), February 16-23, 1946, p. 7736.

political body established in 1943 for the objective study of international problems) and was a brain-child of Jawahar Lal Nehru. Attended by about two hundred and fifty delegates from some twenty five Asian countries, the main thrust of the Conference was neither on economic cooperation nor did it aim at forming an Asian military bloc. Rather, its primary objective was "to focus attention on social, economic and cultural problems of different countries of Asia and to foster mutual contacts and understanding".

The dominant theme of the Conference was set by Nehru in his inaugural address when he proclaimed the 'breaking of Asian isolation' and its revival on the world scene after a long period of quiescence, and emphasised the need for Asian unity and for greater regional cooperation. Commenting on the nature of the Conference, he said that it was not "some kind of Pan-Asian movement" directed against anybody, but "stretched her hand out in friendship to Europe and America, with whom we should work in supporting the UN, in its

68 These were Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, Ceylon, China, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaya, Nepal, Mongolia, Persia (Iran), the Philippines, Siam (Thailand), Tibet, Turkey, Vietnam, and the Caucasian and Central Asiatic Republics of Soviet Union (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). Egypt was represented by an observer, and the Palestinian Arabs and Jews respectively by delegates of the Arab League and of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Countries not represented were Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and the Yemen (invited but unable to send delegates due to lack of time) and Japan (invited but not allowed to attend by the Allied Occupation Authorities).

69 Kessing’s Contemporary Archives, October 4-11, 1947, p. 8862.
attempt to achieve the ideal of 'one world'. In his closing speech, Nehru reemphasized the need for closer regional cooperation for tackling common problems and evolving a common plan of action for the purpose.

The main work of the Conference was done in committees, whose reports were unanimously adopted by the Plenary Conference. These reports stressed the need for: (a) Asian countries to take effective measures to ensure a speedy terminal of imperialist domination; (b) providing legal equality, complete religious freedom and ending of racial discrimination; (c) developing scientific research in the fields of food, health and sanitation which might contribute to the raising of the standard of living; (d) agricultural and industrial reconstruction through diversification of agricultural production, reformation of land revenue systems, importation of modern agricultural implements and fertilizers etc.

At the concluding session of the Conference, a resolution was passed for setting up a permanent Asian Relations Organisation for achieving greater cooperation among Asian countries and plans were made to convene the next conference in China in 1949, but it was never held.

70. Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
Notwithstanding the applauding statements made by the Asian leaders and laudable objectives of the Conference, it failed to achieve the desired Asian unity. During the Conference, the intense rivalry between India and China surfaced. There was seen a tussle for leadership between these countries and neither of the two wanted to see the other to use the Conference as a springboard to emerge as a leader of Asia. In this context, Levi rightly observes, "The Chinese had no work to be tied to an organisation in which India was predominant. Their tactics at the Conference was to keep India's status within bounds. No more did the Indian wish to surrender any power to the Chinese. They were altogether doubtful of the possibility of close political bonds with China whose political colour and foreign political orientation was uncertain".  

Apart from leadership issue, another factor which subverted the Conference by cutting at its very roots seems to be the morbid distrust and xenophobia among the smaller Asian countries of their two powerful neighbours (India and China). A Burmese delegate expressed such apprehensions when during the Conference he said, 'It was terrible to be ruled by a Western power, but it is even more so to be ruled by an Asian power".

74 As cited in Ibid., p. 39.
Thus, it seems clear that apart from leadership tussle, fear of Big Brothers, mutual distrust and lack of shared perception among the delegates created all sorts of problems. As Henderson sums up, 'Neither the Indians nor the Chinese were prepared to concede leadership to the other, the Arabs were uninterested and the South-East Asians frankly afraid that such an arrangement would mean the end of their freedom, almost before it had been won'.

However, notwithstanding the fissures and dissensions witnessed during the Conference, two points may be made in its favour. First, it was probably for the first time that the people belonging to such a vast continent as Asia assembled at a common platform to discuss the important issues such as imperialism, racialism, status of women and so on. Second, the conference provided both short-term and long-term lessons for regionalism in Asia. In the short term, "the conference was to show what cannot yet be done in Asia". From a long-term regional perspective, its contribution may be viewed in highlighting the problems and impediments that the Asian nations might face in their march towards regionalism.

Another significant development towards the evolution of regionalism involving Southeast Asian states was the Asian Conference on Indonesia held in New Delhi from January

75 Henderson, n. 67, p. 468.
76 Levi, n. 73, p. 39.

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20 to 23, 1949. Officially known as the Conference of the Countries of the Middle-East, Far East and Australia; it was convened at the initiative of Nehru to discuss the situation in Indonesia arising out of the second Dutch "police action" against the Republic of Indonesia on December 18, 1948.

But the Conference, it appears had on its agenda more than Indonesian problem. This became clear when Nehru, in his inaugural address, after taking stock of the situation in Indonesia, made a fervent plea for cooperation "for the pursuit of common aims" and the establishment of "permanent arrangement" at a regional level. He said:

In contrast to the Asian Relations Conference, this Conference was an official and political in nature.

With the exception of Turkey, all countries to whom invitations were sent were represented by delegates or observers. The countries which participated were Afghanistan, Australia, Burma, Ceylon, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Lebanon, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Persia, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Siam, Syria and Yemen. Vietnam was unofficially represented.

Indonesia, which was reconquered by the Allied Forces and was then handed over to the Dutch. Despite the willingness of the Indonesian nationalists to hold peaceful negotiations for independence of their country, the Dutch launched on offensive, without giving any warning, against Indonesia. This resulted in the arrest of the nationalist leaders of Indonesia who were meted out in human treatment in the jails. Flouting a series of revolutions passed by the Security Council of the UN, calling, inter alia, for the release of the Republican leaders and cessation of hostilities, the Dutch, with a plan to install a puppet interim government in Indonesia, continued with their repressive measures. It was against this background that the Conference was convened.
The (UN) Charter recognises regional arrangements as a means of furthering international peace and security. Ours is, therefore, a regional conference, to which we invited Australia and New Zealand... we are living in an age of transition... We see creative and cooperative impulses seeking a new integration and a unity... The Americans have already recognised a certain community of interest and have created machinery for the protection and promotion of common interests. A similar movement is in progress in Europe. Is it not natural that the countries of Asia should begin to think of some more permanent arrangement than this Conference for effective mutual consultation and concerted efforts in the pursuit of common aims, not in a spirit of selfishness or hostility to any other nation or group of nations, but in order to strengthen and bring nearer fulfilment the aims and ideals of the U.N. Charter.

However, to solve in Indonesian imbroglio, the Conference constituted a Committee consisting of the representatives of India, Pakistan, Ceylon, and Australia. At the final session on January 23, 1949, it unanimously adopted three resolutions. First, after strongly condemning the Dutch military action against Indonesian Republic, it called for an immediate release of the Republican leaders and other political prisoners; withdrawal of all Dutch troops from the whole of Indonesia; and urged effective UN action. Second, to ensure close cooperation on Indonesian problem, it asked the countries represented at the Conference to keep in touch through diplomatic channels and their representatives at the UN. Third, it urged the participating governments to "consult among themselves in order to explore ways and means of establishing suitable

80 Keesing's Contemporary Archives, February 5-12, 1949, p. 9792, Emphasis added.
machinery for the purpose of promoting consultation and cooperation within the framework of the UN”.

Thus, the Conference proved to be an important landmark in the history and regional cooperation in Asia which significantly had a Southeast Asian state as the focal point. It appears to have made three important contributions. First, it certainly had a good influence in the final settlement of the Indonesian problem. Second, it seems that it led to the 'Asianization' of the Indonesian issue and became a rallying point of solidarity for the Asian countries. Third, and more significant from a viewpoint of the evolution of regionalism, it highlighted an imperative to provide an institutional base for regional cooperation. The inaugural address of Nehru and the resolution-3 of the Conference primarily reflected this necessity.

However, efforts towards regionalism received a major setback in the aftermath of the communist victory in the Chinese mainland in 1949, and with the emergence of the people Republic of China as a prominent communist state in Asia. This development brought about sudden changes in...

81 Ibid.
82 Fifield, n. 39, p. 457.
83 Nehru described the Indonesian problem as "a challenge to a newly awakened Asia... to all progressive forces of the world" because the consequences of the Dutch action would affect not merely Indonesia but Asia and the entire world. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, February 5-12, 1949, p. 9792.
84 Levi, n. 73, pp. 39-41.

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the Asian political scenario and had far-reaching implications and bearings both for the security of Asian states as well as for broader regional cooperation in Asia. It not only led to the restructuring of foreign policies in many Asian countries, but also in realignment of political forces in Asia. Two dominant attitudes which emerged in this context were that of neutralism, and anti-communism. But both these attitudes adversely affected the evolution and further progress of regionalism. In fact, the Communist victory in China led to the "dilemma in foreign policies" of the neutralist countries. It was so because of two reasons. First, partly because of the xenophobia and suspicion which the emergence of communist China generated and partly because of the fear of the prevalent 'domino-theory', the establishment of any regional organisation which included China was outrightly ruled out. Second, the formation of any regional organisation which excluded China would have been construed as ganging up against the communist China, and toeing the US line. It appears that it was precisely because of this dilemma that the neutralist countries, despite persistent wooing, refused to join any regional organisation which had military overtones and get entangled in the cold war.

But the anti-communists, in view of the changed political situation, wanted to establish a NATO type

85 Strait Times (Singapore), January 11, 1949.
organisation as a bulwark against the spread of communism. The initiative in this respect was, perhaps, taken by Marshal Chiang Kai-shek, the defeated Chinese ruler, who had established his headquarters in Formosa. In fact, even before the final victory of communism in China in 1949, he visited the Philippines and held a meeting with the President Elipidio Quirino of Philippines at Baguio on July 10, 1949 to discuss the communist issue. The communique issued after the meeting stressed the need for the countries of the Pacific and East Asia to collaborate to check the rising tide of communism, and "to device concrete measures" for establishing a union of these countries "to contain and counteract the communist threat".

Also, he held discussions with Syngman Rhee, President of the South Korean Government of Chinhae Bay (South Korea) on August 7-8, 1949. The two leaders agreed argued on the necessity to combat communism 'collectively as well as individually' and decided to request President Quirino to summon a conference with a view to form an East Asian Union for the purpose.

Picking up the threads, President Elipidio Quirino visited the US on August 8, 1949 to garner support for an early establishment of an anti-communist organisation, and pleaded before the US Senate that the debacle in China, the

86 Keesing's Contemporary Archives, August 27- September 3, 1949, p. 10190.
87 Ibid.

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communist threat to Korea, and the communist infiltration in Vietnam had made it necessary for the free countries of the Pacific area to erect a bulwark against the spread of communism in the Far East so that Asia might not be lost to communism by "default". President Quirino did realize that there were strong reasons that the US might not "too readily welcome the obligation that its active participation in the project would entail....", but he tried to coax the US to join the proposed anti-communist organisation by pleading it not to tarry too long in the redefinition of fundamental attitudes towards Asia, and observed:

Freedom is in peril... only the blind will say that the menace did not concern America... the great democracy cannot remain unconcerned wherever and whenever the survival of free men in a free world is at stake.

Despite President Quirino's efforts and strong appeal to the US Senate for the formation of an anti-communist People Pact, the United States cold-shouldered the idea. India, too rejected the proposal on the ground that such alliances (which involved Korea and Nationalist China) would retard the chances of reducing world tension and that an anti-communist bloc by itself was no answer to Asian problem.

88 For details see, Keesing's Contemporary Archives, September 10-17, 1949, p. 10224.
89 Ibid.
90 Peffer, n. 31, p. 313.
Therefore, in view of the lack of US interest and Indian opposition, President Quirino eventually softened his stand, and instead of the Pacific Pact, he proposed the formation of a Pacific Union. It was also decided that both South Korea and Nationalist China, should be excluded from the proposed Pacific Union because "in the eyes of many Asians, sponsorship by Chiang and Rhee compromised the whole enterprise and raised serious doubts about its real purpose".  

It was against this background that a Conference of non-communist countries of Asia was convened at Baguio (the Philippines) from May 26 to 30, 1950. The Conference was presided over by General Romulo, the Philippines Foreign Minister and was held in closed sessions. It had no formal agenda and desisted dealing with specific political issues. The Conference adopted a series of resolutions calling for economic, social and cultural collaboration, cooperation in political field and support for the principles of joint action by member nations to further the interests of the region. During the Conference, General Romulo expressed support for the "creation of a permanent regional

91 Henderson, n. 67, p. 473.

92 The seven countries which attended the Conference were Australia, Ceylon, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand. While Burma declined an invitation to attend, no invitation was extended to the Chinese National Government in Formosa.

93 For details see, Keesing's Contemporary Archives, August 5-12, 1950, p. 10885.
organisation", and in a reference to the security of the region he declared that "the remedy which most of the countries require is not military action but action to forestall internal subversion.

Thus, it seems that due to an apprehension looming large in the minds of the majority of the participants that the Conference might be perceived as an emergence of the anti-communist bloc in Asia, its recommendations were of general nature, with the main thrust on cooperation in social and cultural fields. In fact, it appears that disparate interest perceptions among Asian nations surfaced in the Conference, and consequently, "goal displacement became obvious and the meeting was stated to be one mainly designed to promote political and cultural cooperation".

However, the years following the Baguio Conference witnessed certain dramatic changes in the international situation. Beginning with the emergence of Communist China, certain important developments viz; the situation in Indo-China and Korea, the issue of the hydrogen bomb, the question of Tunisia and Morocco etc. intensified cold war and made Asia the hot bed of cold war rivalry. As a result of these developments, the international relations, it appears, came too close to Mortan Kaplan's description of

94 Ibid.
'tight bipolar system', and most of the states got entangled in the cold war and sided with one or the other ideologically oriented blocs. However, there were certain states which wanted to keep an equidistance from both the blocs, because they, "originally opposed the division of the world into two antagonistic power blocs and sought to steer a neutralist course between them".

The countries which shared such a neutralist perception towards the cold war met in Colombo, the capital of Ceylon from April 28-30, and at Kandy on May 1-2, 1954 to discuss the problems of common interest. The conference was convened at the initiative of Ceylon, and the Prime Ministers of Ceylon, India, Pakistan, Burma and Indonesia participated in it. It adopted various resolutions calling for a speedy cease-fire in Indo-China and the complete independence of the Associated states; the suspension of experimental explosions of the hydrogen bomb; the representation of the communist China in the UN; self-determination for Tunisia and Morocco; the rehabilitation of the Palestine Arab refugees in their original homes etc. On the economic front, however, the representatives adopted a cautious approach and merely stated that they "considered certain proposals relating to economic

96 Henderson, n. 34, p. 73.

97 This political grouping later came to be known as the Colombo Powers.

cooperation and mutual aid, and decided that they should be referred to the governments represented at the Conference for their consideration...."

However, the Conference clearly revealed the effects of cold war, the presence of divergent threat perceptions as well as diametrically different views on the issues of vital importance among the participants. For example, Ceylon emphasised the communist danger and pleaded for greater cooperation among the members regarding this viewpoint. Burma stressed mutual cooperation in the economic field; Pakistan regarded Kashmir as the major issue for the Conference; Indonesia wanted to broaden the membership and urged for an Afro-Asian Conference; and India's major concern was the hydrogen bomb and Indo-China. However, after much discussion and persuasion, a compromise resolution was evolved which nebulously stated that "the Prime Ministers made it known to each other their respective views on and attitude towards communist ideologies... [they] affirmed their faith in democracy and democratic institutions... [and] declared their unshakable determination to resist interference in the affairs of their countries by external communists, anti-communists and other agencies". Indonesia was asked to go ahead with the proposed Afro-Asian Conference.

99 Ibid., p. 13577.
100 Ibid., p. 13576.
101 Ibid. Words within brackets added.
Thus, it may be argued that although the Conference highlighted certain cold war related issues which seemed to have vital bearing on Asia, yet it failed to arrive at any consensus on these issues. Hence, from a long-term regional perspective, it may be viewed as having a limited value.

Then an important step towards regional cooperation (binding at least two Southeast Asian countries together) was the signing of the Southeast Asian Collective Defence Treaty on September 8, 1954, more commonly known as the Manila Pact. For a long time, it may be noted, the United States had been reluctant to play a direct military role in Southeast Asia because of the fear and suspicion it might generate in the region. Even as late as the early 1954, though greatly alarmed at the increasing communist sway, the United States was unwilling to unilaterally assume a direct security role in the region. This becomes apparently clear from a National Security Council (NSC) study on "United States Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Southeast Asia", which President Dwight D. Eisenhower approved in January 1954. The NSC study predicted a bleak future for the "Free World" in the event of communist expansion in the region. For a further appreciation of the Problem, it seems relevant to quote it verbatim:

The loss of struggle in Indo-China would, therefore, have the most serious repercussions on U.S. and free world interests in Europe and elsewhere... In the event of all Southeast Asia falls under communism, an alignment with communism
with India, and in the longer terms, of the Middle-East (with the probable exception of at least Pakistan and Turkey) could follow progressively... The loss of Southeast Asia would have serious economic consequences for many nations of the free world and conversely, would add significant resources to the Soviet bloc...

To avert such a situation, it recommended that "measures (should) be taken to promote the coordinated defence of Southeast Asia... (and the) initiative in regional defence measures must come from the governments of the area".

Thus, despite the geo-strategic and economic interests, the expert opinion in the United States clearly seemed to be against the US unilateral involvement in the region. Therefore, it only recommended 'coordinated defense' arrangement with an active involvement of Southeast Asian countries.

However, it seems that at least two important and closely related developments impelled the United States to take initiative in organising a defence alliance in Southeast Asia and thereby, erect a barrier against communist expansion in Southeast Asia. These were: (i) deterioration of the French military position in Indo-China.


103 Ibid., Emphasis added.
to the point of imminent collapse in the early 1954; and
(ii) change in the Soviet strategy in the region i.e.,
initiation by the Soviet Union the policy of extending
economic aid to neutralist countries in the Third World to
gain support for the Soviet Union at the cost of the West.
Therefore, it appears that the United States, apprehending
that the Soviet strategy might result in the erosion of
support for the Western position in the area, "partially
conceded the demands of the Asian state allies for greater
economic and military support by forming SEATO".

In view of these developments, there was seen a shift
in the United States policy towards Southeast Asia.
Unnerved by the changed political situation, the United
States discarded its 'local initiative' syndrome. Instead,
it did a lot of spade work and thereafter took 'initiative'
in undertaking intensive negotiations with the countries
concerned to device a regional defence alliance to
counteract growing communist sway in the region.

It was against this backdrop that the eight-nation
Conference was held at Manila from September 6 to 8,

104 Fifield, n. 39, p. 456; and Henderson, n. 67, p. 474-75.
105 Leszek Busynski, S.E.A.T.O.: The Failure of An
Alliance Strategy (Singapore, 1983), p. 44.
106 For details of the US efforts see, Keesing's
107 Originally, it was scheduled to be held at Baguio, but
the venue was subsequently changed to Manila.
1954. The countries which participated in the Conference were Australia, France, Great Britain, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand and the United States. Two important non-communist Asian countries viz., Formosa and South Korea were not represented. Similarly, Japan was excluded from the Conference. Burma, Ceylon, India and Indonesia refused to associate themselves with Conference for various reasons. Thus, despite persistent efforts, the United States, it may be argued, failed miserably to draw the majority of non-communist Asian nations together at Manila. Consequently, of the eight countries which participated in the Conference, only three viz., Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand were from the Asian continent.

Barring the opening session, the discussions were held in closed session, and no official statement was issued until the terms of the collective security treaty were disclosed on September 8, 1954.

The Conference culminated in the signing of South East Asia Collective Defence Treaty, under which the organisation SEATO (South East Asian Treaty Organisation) was created. It

136 While India refused to participate on the ground that its attendance at the Conference would mean "the relinquishment of the policy of non-alignment..." and that "having accepted (the) membership and chairmanship of the three commissions on Indo-China, it seems totally inappropriate and unbecoming for us to join a Conference of this type....", Indonesia declared that Indonesian membership SEATO would not be in accordance with the country's independent foreign policy and would mean siding with one of the blocs in the cold war. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, September 4-11, 1954, p. 13763.
called upon the signatories for "common action in defence of peace, and for economic cooperation and development of the ability of its members to resist armed attack and counter subversion directed from outside".

However, the SEATO only partially succeeded in fulfilling the desired objectives. With a passage of time, due to different interest perceptions among the member-nations, fissures developed within the organisation. Besides the disparate interest perceptions, the SEATO, it seems, had certain inherent limitations, resulting from the 'misapplication' of an alliance strategy, which eventually crippled the organisation. In this context, Busynski rightly sums up:

SEATO was established as a part of the same strategy that gave birth to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in Europe... [However] conditions in the two regions were different and would not permit a direct correspondence. The logic of this strategy did not fit local conditions in Southeast Asia where subversion rather than direct communist frontal assault was the main threat. SEATO had no means of reacting to the subversive Viet-Minh-Pathet Laos threat during the Laotian Crisis of 1960-61. The Johnson administration's efforts to involve SEATO in Vietnam where another subversive threat existed directly intensified existing conflicts within the alliance. France clashed with American Policy over the issue of neutralization of the region; Britain carefully avoided any commitments to Vietnam and its withdrawal East of Suez removed any substance to Britain's commitment to the alliance. Pakistan's membership... was unusual, for it had little to do with the Indo-Pakistani dispute... SEATO was the failure of an alliance strategy... It was created to confront the threat of a conventional communist assault in the region.

For details of the provisions of the Treaty, 'Treaty Area' and divergent perceptions of member nations regarding the Treaty. See, Ibid., pp. 13763-64.
Thus, the effectiveness of the SEATO as a defence alliance may, at the best, be described as doubtful. It appears so because as an alliance strategy against communist threat in the region, it caused much embarrassment to the United States. The Indo-China imbroglio proved to be a quagmire for SEATO and the fall of Saigon in 1975 sounded its death-knell. It was formally wound up two years later.

However, an important event in the series of the so-called 'regional' gatherings involving all Southeast Asian states except Malaya and British Borneo was the convening of the Asian-African Conference at Bandung from April 18 to 25, 1955. Variously but aptly described as the "most impressive", "the high-point" in Asian-African unity, or "the first international Conference of the so-called coloured peoples in the history of mankind", it aimed at developing a policy and common approach to the solution of the Asian-African problems. Though an upshot of the Colombo Conference of April 1954, the idea got crystallized only at the second meeting of the Colombo Powers held at Bogota, Indonesia, on December 29, 1954.

President Sukarno in his opening address at the Bandung Conference. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, May 7-14, 1955, p. 14181.

The Asian-African Conference opened at Bandung on April 18, 1955. The representatives of all the invitees with the exception of the Central African Federation attended the Conference. Dispelling the allegations and apprehensions that the Conference might lead to the formation of a 'regional' bloc, Dr. Sartroamidjojo, who was unanimously elected the Chairman of the Conference, reiterated that the Conference did not intend "to create another source of tension by constituting an anti-Western and even anti-White bloc" and added that the foremost reason for calling it, was "the antagonising tension from which the world is suffering today". Therefore, the resolutions adopted at the Conference were primarily on economic cooperation, cultural cooperation, human rights and self-determination, problems of dependent peoples, and the problems of world peace and cooperation.

However, from the viewpoint of regional cooperation, it were the economic and cultural resolutions which seem important. However, notwithstanding these resolutions calling for cooperation; cold war issues and parochial national considerations dominated the Bandung Conference. Besides these, the leadership issue once again prominently surfaced as some other countries (for example, Indonesia)

\[\text{Keesing's Contemporary Archives, May 7-14, 1955, p. 14182.}\]

\[\text{Indonesia decreed that the Indian Ocean had been renamed as "The Indonesian Ocean". Lea E. Williams, Southeast Asia: A History (New York, 1976), p. 276.}\]
joined Indo-Chinese race for regional leadership and wanted to use the Conference as a springboard to realize their cherished aspirations. An expected consequence of all these differences was that no permanent organisation or machinery for cooperation was set up and even the proposal for convening a similar conference in the future was shelved.

However, from Southeast Asian viewpoint a notable achievement of the Bandung Conference was the signing of Sino-Indonesian Agreement between Chou En-lai and Sunarjo, the Indonesian Foreign Minister, on April 22, 1955. It sought to regulate the status of the overseas Chinese in Indonesia, and other Southeast Asian countries were invited to conclude similar agreement with China to solve the overseas Chinese problem. Sharing the concern of other Southeast Asian countries over the overseas Chinese problem, Chou, living En-lai hoped that after the agreement, the Chinese living overseas would "increase their sense of responsibility towards the country whose nationality they have chosen".

Thereafter, the first indigenous step towards regional cooperation in southeast Asia was the launching of the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA), which may be described as the 'predecessor' of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The concept of ASA, it may be noted, was

116 For details of the Agreement see, Keesing's Contemporary Archives May 7-14, 1955, p. 14184.
first aired and publicized in January 1959 by Tenku Abdul
Rehman, the Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaysia,
during his visit to the Philippines. The Philippines
President, Carlos Garcia agreed to the Rehman Plan and a
joint statement issued thereafter contemplated" closer ties
in economic, cultural, scientific, technical and artistic
fields among all countries of Southeast Asia". Subsequently, the two countries tried to enlist the support
of other countries of the region, but because of different
interest perceptions and pre-occupation with national
problems, the plan did not evoke a favourable response from
the fellow Southeast Asian countries. Only Thailand evinced
any interest in the plan. In view of the lack of enthusiasm
among southeast Asian countries, it was thought prudent that
other countries might be persuaded to join the proposed
association at a later date. Three plans – one each from
Malaya, Thailand and the Philippines–were exchanged and
discussed. Thus, on July 31, 1961, Thanat Khoman, Minister
of Foreign Affairs of Thailand; Tenku Abdul Rehman, the
Prime Minister of Malaysia, and Felixberto M. Serrano, the
Philippines Secretary of Foreign Affairs, signed an
executive agreement creating the Association of Southeast
Asia, more commonly known as the Bangkok Declaration. While
the contents of the Declaration were non-ideological, the
context, probably, was not. However, the preface exalted the

"ideals of peace, freedom, social justice, and economic well-being", disclaimed any connection" with the outside bloc", and asserted that it was "directed against no countries of southeast Asia", presumably North Vietnam.

The ASA was an association of Southeast Asian Nations created through regional initiative. It had seven general categories of cooperation; (i) preferential trade arrangements among members; (ii) free trade in certain commodities (iii) lowering of tariffs; (iv) easing of custom rules and procedures; (v) standardization of control of exports; (vi) joint business ventures; (vii) cooperation in commercial aviation and shipping.

To achieve these ideals of cooperation, the Declaration also provided machinery for the Association. It included: an annual meeting of the foreign ministers of ASA; a standing committee; and three permanent committees of experts each for cooperation in the economic, socio-cultural, and technical and research fields. It also provided for national secretariats in each member country.

Although ASA was explicitly a regional organisation for cooperation in economic and cultural fields and attempted to keep a low profile politically, it may be argued that it did have political overtones. Since all the member-nations were anti-communist in ideological orientations and had security

119 Ibid.
linkages with the west, it may easily be inferred that the real motive of regional cooperation was to promote political cooperation. Moreover, the implicit and ultimate goal of ASA became quite clear when General Thanon Kittikachorn, Defence Minister of Thailand, on the eve of signing of the Bangkok Declaration, disclosed that while ASA states were to develop cultural and economic programmes during the early stage of the organisation, this stage of organisation should quickly be replaced by or subordinated to a coordination of military policies.

Although ASA officially existed from 1961 through 1967, it could hardly achieve any cognizable success towards regional cooperation in Southeast Asia. In fact, it appears that the organisation had certain structural as well as political limitations. Structurally, it was a loose organisation and excluded an important state of the region viz; Indonesia, which essentially perceived it as a front for SEATO, and therefore, refused to join it. This proved to be a major weakness of the Association.

120 While Thailand and The Philippines were members of the US sponsored SEATO, Malaya had security links with Great Britain through the Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement.


Politically, the existence of unresolved bi-lateral disputes and divergent perceptions on issues affecting the region did not augur well for the organisation. Thus, as expected, before ASA could make much headway, its activities came to a sudden naught in 1963, when the Philippines renewed its century old claim to North-Borneo (renamed Sabah) in response to the formation of the new Federation of Malaysia comprising Malaya, Singapore, Sabah, and Sarawak. The prospects for cooperation within the framework of ASA were further diluted by the Philippines refusal to recognise the new Federation of Malaysia and consequent severance of diplomatic relations between the two countries. ASA did not flourish thereafter though it continued to exist without much positive activity. It was finally merged with ASEAN as it was realized that there "was no scope for two organisations with a similar objective". 125

Nevertheless, the contribution of ASA seems to lie in initiating a 'new era of awakening' in Southeast Asia. It provided, for the first time, an indigenous regional model and framework within which states with common goals and objectives could cooperate effectively and hopefully, without provoking much reaction from neutralists or communist bloc in the region. Further, ASA, it may be

124 However, they were resumed in 1965.

125 Asian Recorder, November 6-12, 1967, p. 7923.

argued, instilled and kindled much needed confidence among Southeast Asian leaders that real economic cooperation was viable by providing an institutional arrangement at a regional level even in a political atmosphere marred by cold war. Finally, ASA made a significant contribution towards the identification of objectives of cooperation as well as structural evolution of regional institutions in Southeast Asia. So much so, to begin with, ASEAN carried out almost the same business which was initiated by ASA.

In between ASA and ASEAN, another device for regional cooperation in Southeast Asia was the formation of the Greater Malay Confederation by Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia, later dubbed by Indonesia's Foreign Minister Subandrio as Maphilindo—combining the first syllables of the names of the member nations. A brain child of the Philippines President Macapagal, and planned among the above mentioned countries in August 1963 at a Summit Meeting of the heads of these states at the height of tension over the formation of Malaysia, Maphilindo, it may be argued, was essentially a loose confederation and a political necessity. It was perceived as an institutional mechanism to prevent the worsening of dispute among the member nations over the proposed incorporation of Borneo territories into the Federation of Malaysia. But it proved to be a stillborn.

128 Hass, n. 32, p. 75.
However, at a hindsight, it appears that Maphilindo was doomed to be a failure because it was primarily designed for the welfare of the people of Malay area of Southeast Asia and the non-Malay states were naturally uneasy about its intentions. Subsequently, Indonesia's resumption of 'Konfrontasi' (confrontation or crush Malaysia) campaign against Malaysia in September 1963, brought an end to Maphilindo. Thus, its barely two months existence hardly provided an opportunity for cooperation among member nations, and it never amounted to more than a slogan or sentiment. However, despite its short existence, Maphilindo "did provide the Philippines an increased identification with ... Southeast Asia, and also provided an impetus for Indonesia's participation in ASEAN".

Thus, unlike the previous endeavours, the formation of ASA and Maphilindo, it may be argued, should be viewed as important attempts towards the evolution of indigenous regional cooperation through regional initiative in Southeast Asia. Perhaps, in their indigenous character lay their chief merit. These attempts failed primarily because of the existence of the very acute political contradictions among the member nations which never permitted them to begin resolving economic issues of mutual interest.


130 Gennadi Chufrin, "Economic Integration in South-East Asia", in F. Shchepilova, ed., South-East Asia : History and Present Day (Moscow, 1982), p. 120.
Nevertheless, it appears that these attempts did provide valuable experience in indigenous regionalism to the member nations and paved the way for a broader, more effective and viable indigenous regional organisation viz; ASEAN.