CHAPTER VI

INDIA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA TREATY ORGANIZATION (S.E.A.T.O.)
The momentous developments in Indo-China in 1954 brought to the fore the differing perceptions of big powers on issues relating to peace and security in Southeast Asia. In the successive victories of the Vietminh in Indo-China the United States (U.S.) saw growing communist threat to the Southeast Asian region from Peking. In order to check communist expansion the U.S. suggested a policy of containment of the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) through a regional defence organization which later came to be known as S.E.A.T.O. Despite differences the United Kingdom (U.K.) and France ultimately agreed to join the defence alliance. Moscow viewed the creation of S.E.A.T.O. as an attempt to continue Western imperialist's domination in Southeast Asia. Peking felt that the American military alliance was mainly intended to encircle and endanger the security of the P.R.C. India's conception of Asian security was quite different from that of the U.S. India wanted the newly independent countries to stabilize their political systems. They should be allowed to develop politically and economically with an undertaking from the super powers that they would not interfere in their affairs. India, therefore, felt that the security of Southeast Asian countries could best be guaranteed
by allowing them to develop according to their wishes with least outside interference.

India's policy towards issues relating to security can be appreciated better if we understand the strategic perception of Indian nationalist leaders. During the nationalist struggle not only did the Indian leaders champion the cause of freedom loving peoples, they also believed that once the countries of Asia become free, they would co-operate on a footing of equality to safeguard their freedom. India's location, size and resources naturally could not be ignored and many Southeast Asian countries occasionally looked to India for leadership.

C.R.Das was the first important nationalist leader to give serious thought to the subject. Presiding over the annual session of the Indian National Congress in 1922 C.R.Das said:

In my opinion, there should be established Congress Agencies in America and in every European country. We must keep ourselves in touch with world movements and be in constant communication with the lovers of freedom all over the world. Even more important than this is participation of India in the great Asiatic Federation, which I see in the course of formation. It is the union of the oppressed nationalities in Asia... I admit that our freedom must be won by ourselves but such a bond of friendship and love of sympathy and co-operation between India
and the rest of Asia, nay, between India and all the liberty loving people of the world is destined to bring about peace.1

Four years later Srinivasa Iyengar, President of the Indian National Congress, pointed to the need for the formation of a "federation of Asiatic peoples for their common welfare". Presiding over the annual session of the Indian National Congress in 1927, Ansari repeated the suggestion of his predecessors for an Asian federation under India's leadership. Eventhough the Congress leaders had been entertaining the idea of Asian federation for quite sometime, the suggestion received the approval of the party for the first time only in 1928 when it passed resolution in its Calcutta session for the establishment of a pan-Asian federation with India.


3. Prasad, n.1
as the headquarters. With the prospects of independence becoming brighter, the Indian National Congress adopted a more forthright stand on the subject. On 8 August 1942, the Congress went a step further and proposed a world federation of free nations. To quote the resolution:

While the A.I.C.C. must primarily be concerned with the independence and defence of India in this hour of danger, the Committee is of opinion that the future peace, security and ordered progress of the world demand a world federation of free nations.... Such a world federation would ensure the freedom of its constituent nations, the prevention of aggression and exploitation by one nation over another, the protection of all backward arms and peoples, and the pooling of the world's resources for the common good of all.

It is interesting to note that the Congress party made a specific mention of a world federation of free nations in its election manifesto issued in December 1945:

In the international affairs the Congress stands for the establishment of a world federation of free nations. Till such time as such a federation takes shape, India must develop friendly relations with all nations and particularly with her neighbours. In the Far East, in Southeast Asia and in Western Asia, India has had trade and cultural relations for thousands of years and it is inevitable that with freedom she should renew and develop these relations. Reasons of security and future trend of trade also demand closer contacts with these regions.

4. M.V. Rajkumar, *The Background of India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi, 1952), p.47
6. Ibid, Appendix V, p.5
Nehru spoke emphatically and clearly on the subject of Asian federation. In November 1940 Nehru said that in the event of many "groupings of nations" or "large federations" coming into existence as the first step to the larger world grouping of nations "there should be an Eastern federation, not hostile to the west, but nevertheless standing on its feet, self-reliant and joining with all others to work for world peace and world federation". Nehru had the foresight that independent India would be called upon to play an important role in world affairs. In an interview to The Hindu correspondent on 21 January 1946, Nehru claimed that by virtue of its "intrinsic importance" and its "strategic position", India was bound to take an active interest in any "system of defence" from the Middle East to Southeast Asia. Addressing the Bombay branch of the Indian Council of World Affairs, just a fortnight before assuming office in the Interim Government, Nehru declared:

Many persons think that in the course of the next generation or so, a world federation will be established. Ultimately, I suppose it is bound to come - if the world survives till then - but short of that it is inevitable that larger and larger federations will develop .... In Asia it seems inevitable that two or three huge federations will

8. The Hindu, 22 January 1946
develop. But whichever way you look at it ... India immediately becomes the centre again of everything. India is going to be the centre of a very big federation ... .

The talk of regional organization was not confined to the Congress alone. An eminent Indian scholar, diplomat and administrator, K. M. Panikkar, advocated a security system for Southeast Asia with India taking a leading role. In 1943 Panikkar suggested a regional organization comprising India and Southeast Asia with India and Indonesia assuming the responsibility for the security of the region. Two years later, he declared that it was in the interest of India to promote the security of Indian Ocean area:

Unless India is prepared to stand forth and shoulder the responsibility of peace and security in the Indian Ocean, her freedom will mean but little. She will be at the mercy of any power which has the command of the sea ....

Asian federation or world federation proposed by Indian nationalist leaders did not have any aggressive overtones. It was not directed against any power or powers or group of powers. It was clearly intended

9. Jawaharlal Nehru, "Inter-Asian Relations", India Quarterly (New Delhi), vol. 2, p. 327

10. K. M. Panikkar, The Future of India and Southeast Asia (Bombay, 1945), pp. 88-90

11. K. M. Panikkar, India and the Indian Ocean (Bombay, 1971), Reprint, p. 91
to promote better understanding and co-operation among the member-states which in turn would contribute to peace and security in the world.

The idea of Asian co-operation was in the offing at the time of Asian Relations Conference. The Conference, as stated earlier, was attended by delegates from Asian countries, including all Southeast Asian countries. John Thivy, a delegate from Malaya, suggested the formation of a "neutrality bloc" "to prevent aggression by alien powers that dominate certain portions of Southeast Asia and also to prevent a world war". Haschid, a delegate from Burma, proposed a "defensive union" for Southeast Asia. The Filipino delegate wanted the Conference "to find ways and means" to free Asian countries which were under "some form or other of imperialism and economic exploitation". An Indonesian delegate

12. Explaining his views on "One World" Nehru said that it was "a world in which there is the free co-operation of free peoples, and no class or group exploits another" Jawaharlal Nehru, India's Foreign Policy : Selected Speeches, September 1948-April 1961 (New Delhi, 1971), Reprint, p.2


14. Ibid., p.88

15. Ibid., p.72
expressed the hope that something would emerge from
the Conference which would be of concrete assistance
to them. A delegate from the D.V.K.V. proposed the
formation of "one great federation" in Asia to protect
the freedom of Asian peoples. Inspite of these
sentiments the Conference did little in the direction
of creating a regional organization. By its very nature
and composition, the Asian Relations Conference could not
accomplish such grandiose objectives. The Conference
was not intended to form either a 'neutrality bloc' or a
'defensive union' or any other body of a military nature.
On the contrary, the Conference was convened "to promote
good relations with neighbouring countries" and to
"strengthen cultural, social and economic ties among
the peoples of Asia."

Burma which became independent in 1948 and the
Philippines which attained freedom in 1946 continued their
efforts to form a regional organization with India's
coopération. Immediately after independence Burma, as
stated earlier, had to face serious security problems

16. Ibid., p.74
17. Ibid., p.89
18. The only thing that the Conference practically
accomplished was the creation of two new
non-governmental bodies - an Institute of Asian
Studies and an Asian Relations Organization - which
did not satisfy the aspirations of the Southeast
Asian delegates.
19. Nehru, n.9
created by Kachin and Karen rebels. Compounding the situation was the presence of Kuomintang (K.M.T.) guerrillas in northern Burma and the violent struggle unleashed by the Burmese Communist Party (B.C.P.) with powerful ideological support from Moscow and Peking. Faced with such serious threats, the Burmese nationalist leaders turned to India for co-operation and guidance. Since these problems were similar to those faced by other countries U Nu, the Prime Minister of Burma, felt that the newly independent countries could come together to fight against common dangers. During his visit to India in December 1947, U Nu discussed with Nehru "various matters of common concern". In the course of the talks U Nu suggested a "closer association" not only between India and Burma but also between the various other countries of Asia for promoting their own defence interest. In December 1947 U Tin Tut, the

20. Burmese were also not free from the fear of possible Chinese invasion. In an interview in 1951 U Kyaw Nyein, one of the important members of the U Nu cabinet, expressed this mistrust: "Small nations always mistrust bigger ones, especially those close by. For years past, every Burman has mistrusted China, whether under Mao Or Chiang .... We don't consider China a menace, but we accept the possibility of China one day invading us". Frank N. Trager, "Burma's Foreign Policy", *Journal of Asian Studies* (Ann Arbor, Michigan), vol. 16, p. 93

Foreign Minister of Burma, proposed a defence arrangement with India: "Together we should be able to form the nucleus round which could be created an alliance of Southeast Asian countries united in a desire for world peace and impregnable against external aggression". In January 1950, U Nu again suggested a "defence pact" among India, Burma, Ceylon and Pakistan.

The Philippines also made repeated attempts to form an organization of Asian states in co-operation with India. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Filipino government was staunchly anti-communist and was keen to bring together all non-communist Asian states together into one organization to fight against the menace of communism. The Filipino leaders wanted India to take the initiative and provide leadership to such an organization. In the Asian Conference on Indonesia Carlos P. Romulo suggested that the Conference should also consider measures for the establishment of a "continuing machinery" including a small permanent secretariat either in New Delhi or in Manila for promoting collaboration on matters of common interest and also to take concerted

action. He hoped that this would be a prelude to the establishment of a "potent permanent organization of Asian states" which would function as a regional body as sanctioned by Article 52 of the U.N. Charter. The Filipino proposal did not get any support and the Conference did not constitute any such machinery. However, the Conference suggested that the "participating governments should consult among themselves in order to explore ways and means of establishing suitable machinery... for promoting consultation and co-operation within the framework of the United Nations". The Philippines was naturally very disappointed with the outcome of the Conference. Manila did not lose hope and availed of the earliest opportunity to convene an international conference in Baguio in May 1950. Its main objective, according to the convener, Romulo, was to form a Pacific Union composed of non-communist Asian states. Romulo added that the Pacific Union was merely taking forward the suggestion made by the New Delhi Conference.


25. For the text of the resolution adopted by the Conference on Indonesia see G.H. Jansen, Afro-Asia and Non-alignment (London, 1966), pp.408-11
for establishing suitable machinery for co-operation among Asian states. To quote Romulo, Manila was "picking up where New Delhi had left off". The absence of communist states in the New Delhi Conference seemed to have encouraged Manila to continue its efforts to form a non-communist Asian union. Speaking in Chicago, a few months after the New Delhi Conference, Romulo said:

"It is significant that no communist delegate took part in the New Delhi deliberations. The evolving Asian Union would be non-communist..." Romulo unfortunately did not understand the true significance of the Conference on Indonesia. It was a regional conference from which both sides of the cold war were excluded. Nehru himself clarified this point when he said:

We have not invited the great powers or some other countries, because that would have converted this conference into something different from what it was intended to be. That again should not mean hostility or opposition to any of the other powers.

The initial response from New Delhi was negative because it did not want to play a partisan role in the

26. The Hindu, 4 September 1949
27. American Newsfile (Bombay), 1 June 1949
28. India Record (London), 23 January 1949
cold war. New Delhi finally relented and agreed to send a delegate to Baguio after securing assurance from Manila that the Conference would discuss neither political nor military matters. The Baguio Conference which took place from 26 to 29 May 1950, was a lame affair and did not accomplish much except passing some general resolutions. The Conference agreed to act in consultation with each other through normal diplomatic channels to further the interests of the peoples of the region. This resolution simply was a reiteration of the resolution passed by the New Delhi Conference.

Why did India remain indifferent to the proposals made by Burma and the Philippines for a regional arrangement? It was obvious that New Delhi did not share the views of Rangoon and Manila on the nature of communism and the foreign policy objectives of the P.R.C. Since 1949, India, to quote Professor Gopal’s words, followed a policy of “cautious friendliness” towards the P.R.C. In New Delhi’s thinking the way to promote peace and security

   See also *The Hindu*, 25 May 1950. At this time even in India certain quarters urged the government to form a third bloc. In 1950 Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, a distinguished leader of the Socialist Party of India, suggested the formation of “third force”. Since Nehru was averse to the formation of blocs the suggestion did not get off the ground. M. Ganji, *India’s Foreign Policy* (Bombay, 1951), pp.11-12

30. *The Hindu*, 31 May 1950

31. Gopal, n.23
in Asia was not to contain, isolate or confront the P.R.C., but to create conditions in which Asian countries could attain political stability and pursue their goals of social and economic advancement. If the outside world did not pose any threat to the security of the P.R.C., Peking could be committed to a policy of peaceful co-existence. Nehru did not, therefore, support any proposal which had anti-Chinese or anti-communist overtones. Nehru also did not expect any aggression from the P.R.C. during this period. In 1951 Nehru expressed his views to Norman Cousins:

> At the present moment what China desires above everything else is peace to solve its terrible problems and consolidate itself. Therefore, it cannot possibly think in terms of extension towards Southeast Asia or any other direction. 32

Pursuing a "friendly approach" to Peking, India withheld support to the opponents of the P.R.C. New Delhi also disapproved the formation of any bloc which would

be regarded as anti-Chinese or anti-communist. As far as aggressive communism was concerned, India believed that communism could be best resisted in Southeast Asia by removing all vestiges of colonial domination and by strengthening the nationalist forces. In the meeting of the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers in Colombo in January 1950 Nehru secured general acceptance to his proposal that what was needed in Asia was not a Pacific Pact on the lines of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (N.A.T.O.) but the raising of the economic standards of the region with the assistance of the Commonwealth countries.

33. Gopal, n.23. India's "sympathetic interest" in the P.R.C. was tempered with a certain "uneasiness". As Professor Karunakaran points out "India was not certain of the intentions of the new leaders of China and there was some apprehension lest the revolutionary movement in China should spill over and overwhelm neighbouring countries like Burma. Moreover, India did not necessarily approve of all the internal developments and all the drastic measures employed in China to secure the aims of the revolution". K.P. Karunakaran, India in World Affairs (Calcutta, 1958), vol.2, pp.77. For a good discussion on India's attitude to the P.R.C. see K. Subramaniam, "Nehru and the India - China Conflict of 1962", in B.R. Nanda, ed. Indian Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years (New Delhi, 1976). For a western view of Sino-Indian relations see John Rowland, A History of Sino-Indian Relations: Hostile Co-existence (Princeton, N.J., 1967)

34. Gopal, n.23
With the intensification of the cold war the western powers began to exhibit great interest in the defence of Southeast Asia. They viewed with great apprehension the emergence of the P.R.C. as a united communist country and the intensification of anti-colonial struggle in Vietnam. France and the U.K. which wanted to retain their colonial possessions in Southeast Asia were interested to form a defence plan for Southeast Asia. During the formal discussions in the Three Power (the U.S., the U.K., and France) Conference in London in June 1952 M.Schuman, the French Foreign Minister, proposed the creation of a permanent military organization for the defence of Southeast Asia. Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, favoured this plan. During his visit to the U.S. in early 1953 Churchill proposed a Southeast Asian defence pact on the model of the N.A.T.O. Its objective was to defend Malaya, Hong Kong, the Indo-China by joint efforts of the U.S., the U.K., and France. The U.S. at that time did not evince any interest on the ground that it could not accept "commitments on


36. The Hindu, 28 January 1953
the mainland of Asia where both the U.K. and France had colonial possessions. Further, Washington was reluctant to assume the initiative in organizing a defensive alliance for an area where resentment and suspicion of the West were still strong.

U.S. PROPOSAL FOR A DEFENSIVE ALLIANCE:

American reluctance to associate itself with the French and British defence plans for Southeast Asia did not mean that the U.S. disagreed with its allies on the question of the P.R.C.'s expansionist designs in Southeast Asia. In fact Americans, more than anybody else, were perturbed by the developments in East and Southeast Asia during this period. The fall of K.M.T. regime in mainland China which the U.S. had hoped to develop as a "stabilizing force in the area" upset all its calculations in Asia and increased its suspicions of rising communism. Washington viewed the communist victory in China as the starting point of communist expansionism in Asia. The U.S. leaders as an Indian


journalist remarked, viewed communism as "a form of syphilis", which if not checked would ultimately "wipe out the American way of life". These fears were confirmed by the determination with which the P.R.C. fought in the Korean war. In a bid to avert this catastrophe and strengthen the defence of the "Free World" the U.S. entered into defence agreements with Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the Republic of Korea in 1950-1951. Besides, the U.S. also gave an explicit warning to the P.R.C. that its "aggressive designs" on Asian states would have far reaching consequences. Dean Acheson, the U.S. Secretary of State, declared on 15 March 1950 that if the Chinese were led by their new rulers into "aggressive or subversive adventures" beyond their borders, they would


41. Surinder Bhandari, "Problems of Security in Asia", Foreign Affairs Reports (New Delhi), vol.4, p.140. See also Kenneth Younger, "Western Policy in Asia", Pacific Affairs (Richmond), vol.25, pp.115-29

42. United States. Department of State, Department of State Bulletin, vol.23, no.594, 30 October 1950, pp.701-2. See also Ganganath Jha, Foreign Policy of Thailand (New Delhi, 1979), p.39

43. See United States. Department of State, Department of State Bulletin vol.25, no.365, 27 August 1951, p.335; (2) Ibid., vol.25, no.630, 23 July 1951, pp.148-9; (3) Ibid., vol.25, no.638, 17 September 1951, pp.464-5 and (4) Ibid., vol.25, no.632, 6 August 1951, p.212
only bring "grave trouble" on themselves and their friends both in Asia and beyond.

If the collapse of the Nationalist regime in China and the outbreak of the Korean war compelled the U.S. to enter into a series of military pacts in Asia, the deteriorating situation in Indo-China convinced Washington of the necessity of concluding a collective defense treaty in Southeast Asia. The Vietminh, who controlled more than half of Vietnam by early 1953, extended their military operations to Cambodia and Laos by the spring of 1953. By January 1954 they were able to control more than half of Laos and also established footholds in northern Cambodia. The rapid military successes of the Vietminh convinced the American policy makers that Ho Chi Minh was bent upon establishing a federated state in the Indo-Chinese peninsula under North Vietnamese leadership. High officials in Washington described the strategic significance of a Vietminh victory in such metaphors as a "chain reaction", "a cork in a bottle" and a "row of dominoes", implying that

44. Ibid., vol.22, no.560, 27 March 1950, p.469. See also "Acheson on Asia", The Economist, 18 March 1950, p.575

all Southeast Asia would become communist should the Vietminh emerge victorious. The commanding position which the Vietminh came to enjoy in the Indo-China war was helped by the P.R.C.'s aid which began to increase substantially from the middle of 1953. In order to compel the P.R.C. to desist from assisting the Vietminh, the U.S. government resorted to threats of military action. This plan of action was suggested by President Eisenhower, who warned the P.R.C. on 16 April 1953 that "aggression in Korea and in Southeast Asia are threats to the whole free community to be met by united action". The statements of John Foster Dulles, the U.S. Secretary of State, were more forthright and aggressive. In a warning issued on 3 September 1953, John Foster Dulles declared:

Communist China has been and now is training, equipping and supplying the communist forces in Indo-China. There is the risk that, as in Korea, she might send her own army into Indo-China. The communist Chinese should realize that such a second aggression could not occur without grave consequences, which might not be confined to Indo-China.

46. It H., p. 17. Senator Knowland said on 16 May 1954: "It would be a calamity if the communists overran all of Indo-China, even all of Vietnam. Vietnam is the door to Southeast Asia, to India, to Pakistan and perhaps to the Middle East. It is so to speak, the cork in the bottle". William F. Knowland and Mike Mansfield, "Our Policy in the Far East: A Debate", in Robert A. Divine, ed. American Foreign Policy since 1945 (Chicago, 1969), p. 104

47. United States, Department of State Bulletin vol. 29, no. 722, 27 April 1953, p. 101

48. Ibid., vol. 29, no. 742, 14 September 1953, p. 342
He made similar statements on 12 January and 29 March 1954. These threats of military action, however, did not produce desired results. The battle of Dien Bien Phu had reached a crucial phase by early April 1954 and the chances of French victory were getting reduced. In order to meet this serious situation, John Foster Dulles approached the U.K. and France with fresh proposals to form an "ad hoc" coalition which might later develop into a Southeast Asia Defence Organization. The U.S. government thought that it would help not only to deter the P.R.C. from further interference but would also strengthen the Allies' position in Geneva by giving evidence of their solidarity. John Foster Dulles' proposal met with lukewarm reception in Paris and London. Anthony Eden feared that the American move instead of deterring the P.R.C. might infuriate and drive Peking to take retaliatory measures and would give the P.R.C. "every excuse for invoking Sino-Soviet Treaty" which "might lead to a world war". Further, with the impending conference in Geneva the British public opinion was "firmly opposed" to any commitment which would involve the U.K. in a war in Indo-China.


50. Eden, n. 35, p. 95

51. Ibid., pp. 95-96

52. Ibid., pp. 94-97
There was also serious disagreement on the question of membership of the proposed defence alliance. Anthony Eden was emphatic that "on no account should India and the other Asian Commonwealth countries be deliberately excluded. This stand was in tune with the British policy that while considering the security arrangements for Southeast Asia India should also be brought into the picture. In view of its geographical proximity India was vitally concerned with the peace and security of Southeast Asia. Further, it was believed that India as the largest democracy in the world was equally interested in checking the spread of communism. What is more, the U.K. was anxious that the West should avoid any precipitous action which would range India against them in the Geneva Conference.

It was widely believed in the U.K. that the outcome of the Geneva Conference would, to a large extent, depend upon the stand taken by India. India wielded great influence and commanded much respect not only in Asia but also in the world. Hence the British were eager to associate India in the security arrangement. Moreover,

53. Ibid., p.96
54. Ibid., p.94
55. Ibid.
the British relations with the P.R.C. during this period were not unfriendly. In view of American military threats, the P.R.C. too on its part was making considerable efforts to conciliate India in particular and Asian opinion in general. The U.K., in fact, was hoping to exploit the cordial ties between India and the P.R.C. for the success of the Geneva Conference. Anthony Eden, therefore, was interested in India playing its benign role "behind the scenes". All shades of public opinion in the U.K. felt that while negotiating a system of Southeast Asian defence it was "essential not to alienate India". This feeling was evident in the debate in the House of Commons. Clement Davis, a Labour member, emphasized that there could not be any lasting peace in Southeast Asia "unless there is concurrence in any action and any agreement with the governments of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon".

56. Ibid. Commenting on India's plausible role G.F. Hudson wrote in the Foreign Affairs: "It is expedient to listen to the Indian Prime Minister's sermons without showing irritation and to make the most of the channels of contact and information which are made available by India's friendship with the People's Republic". G.F. Hudson, "How Unified is the Commonwealth", Foreign Affairs (New York, N.Y.), vol.33, p.687

57. Eden, n.35, p.94

Warby, another Labour member, demanded a categorical assurance from the British government that "Britain would not enter into Southeast Asia security pact without the agreement of India and other Southeast Asian countries who are directly concerned with the area". Declaring that the "desire to keep in step with India" sprang from the determination of the people throughout the country, Julian Amery suggested to the British government to ask "our American friends" to "show more understanding of our attitude towards India". In the annual conference of the Labour Party, Clement Attlee, leader of the Labour Party, warned: "Any defence organization must have, if not active participation, then, the goodwill of Asiatic countries". Sir John Slessor, former Chief of the British Air Staff, asked the Allies to pay due regard to Asian countries: "A Pacific alliance on the model of the N.A.T.O. was desirable but one should not ignore the fact that the job of preserving freedom in Asia was chiefly one for the Asians themselves". The Economist advised the western powers to strive to secure the

59. Ibid., vol.526, no.99, 28 April 1954, col.1615
60. Ibid., vol.529, no.133, 23 June 1954, col.497
61. The Hindu, 28 September 1954
62. Ibid., 17 June 1954
co-operation of leading powers of Asia: "No area can be successfully protected if the major countries to be defended refused to take part in the defence plan or actively oppose association with the would-be defenders".

If the U.K. was particular to secure India's participation (or atleast New Delhi's goodwill) the U.S. government took equal, if not more, care to exclude India from the proposed alliance. In the course of his talks with Anthony Eden in London on 11-13 April 1954, John Foster Dulles warned the U.K. not to make any attempts to include India. John Foster Dulles argued that "if there was any question of extending the security arrangements westwards to include India there would be a 'strong demand in the United States to extend it eastwards as well, to include Nationalist China and Japan". He, therefore, suggested that the discussions should be confined to Southeast Asia avoiding "controversial issues of India on the one hand, and Formosa on the other".

The American bid to exclude India was not unexpected in view of serious differences, deep misunderstanding and increasing resentment that prevailed in the U.S. against

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63. "Shield for Asia", The Economist, 21 August 1954, p.565
64. Eden, n.35, p.97
India. Immediately after Indian independence the U.S. official circles applauded India with the hope that as the largest democratic country in the East, India would resist the P.R.C. just as the U.S. itself was doing in the West to check the Soviet Union. Writing in 1949 the New York Times expressed the hope that "Washington wanted India to be a bulwark against communism .... India is potentially a great counterweight to China". Nehru was given a rousing reception during his visit to the U.S. in October 1949. He was described as "the world's most popular individual" and was compared with George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Woodrow Wilson and Abraham Lincoln. The goodwill and friendship began to dwindle as Indian and American policies began to conflict over many vital international issues like the Korean war; P.R.C.'s admission into the U.N. Japanese peace treaty and American military assistance to Pakistan. These differences led to considerable misunderstanding and resentment against India in the U.S. As Tibor Mende put it, Americans began to feel that since India was not "with" the U.S. it was "against" the U.S. They believed that Nehru was "unconsciously" opening the "gates to

66. Ibid., p.120.
communism" because his sympathies were with the other
side. With such an understanding it was not surprising
that many American leaders viewed Indian efforts at
mediation in the cold war as an attempt "to weaken the
American and to strengthen the Communist case".

Indian opposition and criticism, sometimes in very
strong terms, of the U.S. policy further embittered
Washington. Criticizing the U.S. for its role in the
cold war K.M. Panikkar observed: "The course of the cold
war, whatever its origin, was being determined by the

67. Tibor Mende, Conversations With Nehru (Bombay, 1958),
pp.82-83. For a good account of relations between India
and the U.S. see also (1) Edwin C. Hoyt, "Foreign Policies
of India and the United States: A Comparison", India
Quarterly, vol.17, pp.277-93; (2) George V. Allen,
American-Indian Relations", India Quarterly, vol.10,
pp.2-11; (3) Ved Vatia Chaturshani, Indo-US Relations
(New Delhi, 1980); (4) Srinivas C. Mudumbai, United
States Foreign Policy Towards India, 1947-1954
(New Delhi, 1980); (5) S.C. Tewari, Indo-US Relations,
1947-1976 (New Delhi 1977) and (6) S.N. Verma, "Trends
in India's Foreign Policy, 1954-57" in Aspects of
India's Foreign Relations (New Delhi, 1957), mimeo,
pp.31-37

68. Explaining Indian view of the U.S. an Indian scholar
wrote in Foreign Affairs: "In India most people are
inclined to consider that the United States is
deliberately opposing India at every stage and is
following an anti-Asian policy with the object of
reducing the new countries of Asia to a condition of
practical dependence". P-Middle Ground Between America
and Russia: An Indian View", Foreign Affairs, vol.32,
p.259. In the eighth session of the U.N. General
Assembly in 1953 the Indian delegate condemned the
U.S. for establishing and perpetuating a new form of
colonialism in Puerto Rico. See GA OR, session 8,
cttev.4, mtg.321, 30 September 1953, pp.29-30; Ibid.,
session 8, ctttev.4, mtg.352, 4 November 1953, pp.235-6
and Ibid., session 9, ctttev.4, mtg.355, 5 November 1953,
pp.252, 253 and 263
opportunist policies of the U.S. Dr. S. Rarhakrishnan, Indian Ambassador to the Soviet Union, made an oblique reference to the U.S. paranoia of communism and said:

We find that at present there is a group of western nations trying to crush Russia. If Hitler were alive today he would have considered the present moment a supreme triumph of his philosophy.

Negotiations for the formation of a collective security organization were meanwhile continuing. On 13 April 1954, at the end of their talks, Anthony Eden and John Foster Dulles issued a statement in which they declared:

We are ready to take part with the other countries principally concerned in an examination of the possibility of establishing a collective defence within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations to assure peace, security and freedom of Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific.

An analysis of the joint statement suggests that the U.K. did not concede anything and firmly held to its earlier stand. The U.K. expressed its readiness to examine the possibility of establishing a collective defence along with "the other countries principally concerned".

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70. Karunakar Gupta, Indian Foreign Policy (Calcutta, 1956), p. 93
71. American Foreign Policy n. 43, p. 2381
The "countries principally concerned" naturally included India for it was intimately connected with the developments in the Southeast Asian region.

**INDIA'S REACTION:**

India viewed American attempts to forge a collective security alliance with serious misgivings. New Delhi regarded the western move as an obstacle to the success of the Geneva Conference. In a statement on 9 April 1954, Nehru said that the American proposals for "mass retaliation" and "united action" might not be helpful for a successful outcome of the Geneva Conference. Soon after the Eden-Dulles joint statement India expressed "grave concern" at the western plan. On 24 April 1954 Nehru said in Lok Sabha:

> The Government of India regret deeply and are much concerned that a conference of such momentous character, which was called together obviously because negotiation was considered both feasible and necessary should be preceded by a proclamation of what amounts to lack of faith in it, and of alternatives involving threats of sanctions. 73

The failure of the British government to consult India, an important Asian member of the British Commonwealth,

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72. The Hindu, 10 April 1954

73. Nehru, p.12, p.398
before entering into discussions with the U.S. to set up a defence organization caused deep resentment in India.

Expressing Indian feeling Eastern Economist remarked:

"Indian opinion was a little incredulous that a decision of this magnitude could have been taken without any consultation whatever with Asian countries!" The Hindu observed in an editorial:

It is a matter for disappointment to India, which is the most important Asiatic member of the Commonwealth that Britain should not have consulted us on a vital issue of war and peace which affects this part of the world.

The Dulles-Eden joint statement evoked misapprehensions in the U.K. also. In the British Parliament, opposition group asked why the Commonwealth countries, "particularly the Government of India", were not consulted before an agreement was reached on the defence pact. Anthony Eden, however, clarified the point. He said:

No agreement has been reached. What we have agreed is to examine certain possibilities. All the Commonwealth Governments, including of course the Government of India, have been informed of these proposals and will be consulted as the matter develops.

74. "Southeast Asian Defence", Eastern Economist (New Delhi), 23 April 1954, p.665. Even though the U.K. informed India immediately about the joint statement, India was unhappy because the U.K. did not consult India before issuing the joint statement.

75. The Hindu, 21 April 1954

The British government during this period was engaged in the difficult exercise of narrowing the differences between the U.S. on the one hand and its Asian Commonwealth partners on the other. Instead of appreciating this delicate situation, John Foster Dulles poured oil over troubled waters by his statements and actions. On 20 April 1954, John Foster Dulles invited the Ambassadors of the U.K., France, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand and the three Associated States of Indo-China in Washington to set up "an informal working group to study the collective defence of South East Asia". This precipitous action aroused the indignation of Anthony Eden so much that he instructed Roger Makins, the British Ambassador in Washington, not to participate in the meeting. What made Anthony Eden unhappy was not so much the timing but the composition of the meeting. Anthony Eden felt that John Foster Dulles showed utter disregard to the British feelings by deciding the membership issue unilaterally. To quote Anthony Eden's Memoirs:

(It) appeared that Mr. Dulles had taken steps to settle the question of membership in advance, on his own terms .... This was an extremely serious matter. Quite apart from

77. Eden, n.35, p.98
the timing of such a meeting, it was clear to me that it would ... be regarded as already constituting the proposed organization. I could not possibly accept this. 78

The British refusal to take part in the Washington 79 meeting was shocking to Dulles. According to Eisenhower, John Foster Dulles saw the invisible Indian hand in the British refusal to attend the meeting. John Foster Dulles "guessed" that the British insistence on ceasing off the meeting was probably "due to pressure from Nehru who had very little sympathy with any efforts to assist the French". 80

It may also be pointed out that some sections in the U.S. itself underlined the importance of taking into consideration India's views on the proposed defence treaty. Walter Lippmann, the well known American columnist, wrote: "It need not become the kind of military alliance to which Pandit Nehru and the Indian Nation are very much opposed. It is in American interest that it should not become that kind of pact. For, if it were, the future would be 81 desperate". Chester Bowles, former U.S. Ambassador in

78. Ibid.
79. Randle, n.45, p.82
81. The Hindu, 25 April 1954
India, gave a clear warning that "a defence system in Asia not supported by the Colombo powers is a limited military expedient carrying obvious political liabilities".

Similar views were expressed by the American allies too. Lester B. Pearson, the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, asserted that unless India and other Asian members were included in the S.E.A.T.O. it was difficult to mobilize public support to the American proposal. Richard Casey, the External Affairs Minister of Australia, expressed the view that since the S.E.A.T.O. was an all Asian affair, it should be composed of as many countries of South and Southeast Asia as possible.

The British warnings and the suggestions from other allies persuaded the U.S. foreign office to hold discussions with Asian countries including India. Robert Murphy, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, held a meeting with the Ambassadors of Colombo Powers in Washington in the

82. Chester Bowles, "A Fresh Look at Free Asia" *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 33, p. 65


84. *The Hindu*, 10 June 1954
beginning of May 1954 and explained to them the
intentions of the U.S. in proposing a defence pact
for Southeast Asia. During this period Dulles also
made some complimentary references to India in order
to assuage Indian feelings. In June 1954, John Foster
Dulles praised Nehru as a leader "dedicated to the
democratic form of government". He further said that
even though Indian and American policies differed on
some issues, "India's principles - the principles of
democracy - are basically those which we cherish". In
June 1954 he also pleaded with the American Senate for a
continuance of aid to India eventhough Indo-U.S. relations
were under severe strain because of the U.S. decision to
supply arms to Pakistan.

85. Randle, n.45, p.218. Murphy met the Ambassadors of
Colombo Powers in Washington not with the hope of
getting a favourable response for the U.S. proposal
but to placate the U.K. which was at that time
having close contacts with India on this issue.

86. World Press on India, 7 June 1954

87. Burke, n.65, p.255
In June 1954, the U.K. made a fresh proposal of an "Asian Locarno" which it felt would be welcomed by India and other Colombo Powers. Announcing his proposal in the House of Commons on 23 June 1954, Anthony Eden said:

I hope that we shall be able to agree to an international guarantee of any settlement that may emerge at Geneva. I also hope that it will be possible to agree on some system of Southeast Asian defence to guard against aggression. In other words, we could have a reciprocal arrangement in which both sides take part, such as Locarno.

Anthony Eden believed that Indian reservations to the American proposal was because it was an organization of a group of powers against some other country. The Indian

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88. Locarno was a treaty signed by France, Belgium, Germany, the U.K. and Italy on 16 October 1925 to safeguard the frontier already drawn by the treaty of Versailles between Germany and France and Germany and Belgium. In case of aggression the signatories undertook to go to the aid of the victim. The hypothesis that Asian Locarno was mainly intended to draw India into Southeast Asia defence plan can be supported by the American press reports which suggested that Anthony Eden had proposed Locarno type guarantees "to please the Labour Party and India". Randle, n.65, p.293

90. For a good discussion on Anthony Eden's proposal of an "Asian Locarno" see Randle, n.65, p.292-5
objection could be removed by the proposal of an "Asian Locarno" in which communists, anti-communists and non-communists could become members. Asian Locarno, as envisaged by Anthony Eden, was an international guarantee system in which countries with differing interests and ideologies could come together with the hope of resolving their disputes through peaceful means without resorting to war. Joining such an organization would not require the sacrificing of India's policy of non-alignment. Further Locarno type guarantees envisaged co-existence among communists and non-communists.

Anthony Eden's proposal for an Asian Locarno was welcomed by Nehru. Nehru told Lok Sabha:

I say that type of arrangement has some meaning. It takes you somewhere...it gives you an assurance that if any member of that group breaks the law or breaks the treaty, the other would come down upon it. That is an equal assurance to every member.91

Nehru, however, refused to join such a pact for Asia. India's stand, he said, 92 in consonance with its policy of "non-involvement". In India, an influential section led by V.K.Krishna Menon, opposed Anthony Eden's

92. The Hindu, 23 July 1954
move for different reasons. Krishna Menon pointed out that the motive behind Asian Locarno was to stabilize status quo, which would perpetuate French power in Indo-China, British authority in Malaya and adjacent areas, Dutch control of New Guinea and Portuguese settlements in the Far East.

The U.S. strongly objected to the Locarno proposal. Locarno was associated with the Munich Conference and the Americans felt that it was an expression of British willingness to pursue a policy of appeasement. The U.S. official circles felt that Locarno might pave the way for the P.R.C.'s admission into the U.N. The American press suggested that Anthony Eden had proposed Locarno to please the Indian government and also get the support of Labour opposition. Several Congressmen made an unsuccessful bid to amend the Mutual Security Act through a provision which would withhold funds from any country that supported communist aggression in Asia. Thus, for diametrically different reasons both New Delhi and Washington opposed the British proposal. Hence the British proposal for Asian Locarno could not get off the ground.

93. Ibid., 4 August 1954
95. Randle, n.65, p.294
96. Ibid., p.294
Neither the persuasive efforts of the U.K. nor the friendly postures of the U.S. had any effect on Indian decision making. However, on the eve of the Manila Conference, Anthony Eden made a final attempt to conciliate the Colombo Powers. On 30 July 1954, Anthony Eden sent a message to the Prime Ministers of India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma and Indonesia asking them to consider the proposal to convene a meeting in September 1954 to discuss possible measures for collective defence for Southeast Asia. To quote the message:

Your participation would do much to determine the nature and policies of the projected organization. I have always hoped to see the Asian powers play a leading role in the defence of Southeast Asia .... Even if you feel that you must stand aside, therefore, I am sure you will understand why we, for our part, shall feel it right to go ahead with such countries as are willing to join with us. Though we should still do our best to take account of your views, our task would be far more difficult without your participation, at least in some form.

Consequently John Kotelawala, the Prime Minister of Ceylon, addressed letters to the Prime Ministers of India, Pakistan, Burma and Indonesia proposing a meeting of Colombo Powers to "discuss the matter and come to a

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97. Eden, n.35, p.144
decision unanimously". While Pakistan responded positively, Indonesia and Burma opposed the move. The Government of India also reacted negatively. It pointed out that it was "premature and inopportune" to organize another meeting to consider the Western proposal since all the Colombo Powers had already made their stand very clear. It is interesting to note that John Kotelawala's proposal was opposed by the Ceylonese cabinet and several members of Parliament. Pieter Keuneman, a leading member of Parliament, told the House of Representatives that John Kotelawala was "trying to help Americans" by calling a conference whose sole purpose was "to offset the rejection of S.E.A.T.O. by India". In a cabinet meeting on 12 August 1954, majority members disapproved John Kotelawala's moves. Faced with stiff opposition within the country, John Kotelawala

98. The Hindu, 4 August 1954
99. Ibid., 9 August 1954
100. Ibid., 5 August 1954
101. Ibid., 9 August 1954
102. Ibid., 4 August 1954
103. Ibid., 13 August 1954
reversed his earlier stand and identified himself with other Colombo Powers and declared on 12 August 1954, the inability of Ceylon to attend the Manila Conference.

The issue of Indian participation in the military to fore alliance brought differences between American and British policies towards India. Like John Foster Dulles, Anthony Eden too never entertained great hopes on India's participation. But at the same time, Anthony Eden wanted the Asian feelings to be taken into consideration before any security pact was implemented. To quote Anthony Eden:

I repeatedly emphasized that although India and other Asian countries might well choose to remain outside such an arrangement, they should nevertheless be given every opportunity to participate and should be kept fully informed.105

Though both John Foster Dulles and Anthony Eden started with the same hypothesis that India might not join any collective security organization, they differed sharply about the policy to be adopted towards India on this question. In view of India's opposition and criticism of American policies, John Foster Dulles wanted to condemn

104. Karanjia, n.40, p.38
105. Eden, n.25, p.97
India. Anthony Eden, on the other hand, adopted a pragmatic and positive approach after making an objective assessment of the Asian situation. Even if India was not willing to join S.E.A.T.O., Anthony Eden felt, the western powers should not provoke India by their actions to line up against them. Anthony Eden believed that if India was made to understand the imperatives as to why the western powers wanted to go ahead with their defence effort in Southeast Asia, it would go a long way in securing at least India's "benevolent neutrality".

The U.K.'s persistence to associate India in some form with the proposed S.E.A.T.O. caused so much anger in the U.S. that on 25 April 1954 Bedell Smith, the U.S. under Secretary of State, came out with the idea of "by-passing British participation or even its symbolic association in a coalition".

OPPOSITION TO S.E.A.T.O.: Despite the persistent efforts of the western powers, particularly the U.K., India refused to join the American sponsored military alliance in Southeast Asia. What were the factors which conditioned India's attitude

106. Ibid., p.109
107. Kandlc, n.65, p.103
to the Manila pact? The primary reason for Indian opposition to S.E.A.T.O. was the fact that it was an anti-thesis to the Geneva spirit. The Geneva agreement provided a framework to work for peace and security in Indochina by trying to create an "area of peace". The American attempts were intended to thwart the implementation of the Geneva Agreement. The creation of S.E.A.T.O. which was a part of American policy of creating situations of strength and military alliances in Asia was directly opposed to India's positive policy of forming and enlarging "area of peace" in Asia and Africa. Not unexpectedly India denounced this American bid to project the "cold war" into the "area of peace" in Asia and Africa. The "area of peace" envisaged by Nehru was one comprising of countries pledged not to interfere in other's matters and not aligned to this group or that group but friendly to both. In a nutshell, as Harish Kapur put it, it is a "no-man's land between the Western and Communist blocs".

Explaining the basic features of "area of peace" Nehru had told Indian Parliament as early as on 12 June 1952:

I should like an ever increasing number of countries in the world to decide that they will not have another war. I should like the countries of Asia ... to make it clear to those warring factions and those great countries that are so explosively bitter against each other that they themselves will remain cool and not enter the arena of warfare whatever happens and that they will try at least to restrict the area of conflict, save their own regions and try to save the rest as best they can. 109

Since Southeast Asian countries were on the threshold of independence Nehru hoped to enlarge the "area of peace" by bringing them as members. The formation of S.E.A.T.O. ran counter to these Indian wishes. Expressing his disappointment Nehru declared:

We in India have ventured to talk about an area of peace. We have thought one of the major areas of peace might be Southeast Asia. The Manila treaty rather comes in the way of that area of peace. It takes up that very area of peace and converts it almost into an area of potential war. I find this development disturbing. 110

Pointing out the adverse effect of S.E.A.T.O. on Indochina Nehru told a press conference:

110. Nehru, n. 73, p. 89
Now just when a certain new atmosphere is created a certain diversion is made from the previous line of action and line of thought in Indo-China and Southeast Asia. At a time when people are thinking more and more in terms of peace and building themselves up, to do something which stops that process of peaceful thinking, that process of calming down and gradually developing a climate of peace seems to me a very unfortunate thing. I am afraid that all this business of the S.E.A.T.O. has to some extent had that effect or is likely to have that effect. 111

The formation of S.E.A.T.O. also affected the security interests of India. Pakistan became an American ally and joined S.E.A.T.O. Just before the establishment of S.E.A.T.O., the U.S. began to provide arms aid to Pakistan. New Delhi feared that the military aid programme would make Pakistan more intractable and intransigent and encourage it to become more aggressive. Expressing his "intense concern" Nehru

111. The Hindu, 10 September 1954. Krishna Menon considered the formation of S.E.A.T.O., as "an embryonic infringement of our peace area approach". The Hindu, 18 April 1954. The Indian National Congress regretted that S.E.A.T.O. "has added to the insecurity of that region and extended the area of cold war". Indian National Congress, Resolutions on Foreign Policy 1947-57 (New Delhi, 1957), p.33

told Parliament that the U.S. military aid to Pakistan instead of creating security created "insecurity, instability and uncertainty" in South Asia and brought the war mentality and climate of war to "this area, this area of peace". Similar fears were expressed by other members of Indian Parliament too. Taking part in the debate on international situation in Lok Sabha, Hirun Mukerjee expressed grave concern over the U.S.-Pakistan military pact. He said that "the forces which are represented by public enemy No. 1 of world peace and world peoples—the imperialism of the United States" would not triumph. Lanka Sundaram expressed the fear that Pakistan would utilize the military aid received from the U.S. against India. In rajya sabha also members expressed apprehensions of the American offer of military aid to Pakistan. C.G. Misra declared that Pakistan's real motive in obtaining military aid was "to bring military and other kinds of pressure on India" so that it could get a decision in its favour in respect of Kashmir.

115. Ibid., col.2946
116. India, Rajya Sabha Debates pt.1, Appendix VII, Annexure 119, 8 March 1954, p.314
The Indian apprehensions of the U.S. military assistance to Pakistan were further strengthened by the statements made by responsible persons in Pakistan. Defending American arms aid to Pakistan, Mohammed Ali, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, said: "We know that danger (from India) exists, that being so we think fit to strengthen our defences. Decision to receive military aid from America is one such step". Even the American President's

117. The Hindu 6 March 1954. Indian views over this issue were shared by sections of western press and commentators abroad. (1) The Western Economist regarded the U.S. military aid to Pakistan as "a direct slap to India". Quoted in Janki Sinha, Pakistan and Indo-U.S. Relations (Patna, 1978), p.143; (2) The New Statesman and Nation characterized the U.S. arms aid as "a direct challenge to Nehru's cherished concepts of 'dynamic neutrality' and the 'area of peace'. "Foodgrains or Bombs", The New Statesman and Nation, (London), vol.47, 16 January 1954, p.62; (3) Werner Levi believed that the American arms plan for Pakistan would help neither India nor Pakistan, but would become a "favourable factor for communist expansion". Werner Levi, "Nehru's Foreign Policy : U.S. estimate", The Hindu, 3 June 1954; and (4) Chester Bowles pointed out: "Whatever its compensating advantages, our military assistance to Pakistan has in fact seriously weakened our relations with India". Chester Bowles, n.82, p.57
assurance that he would take "appropriate action" against Pakistan in case Rawalpindi "misused" American arms to commit aggression against India and also his offer of similar military aid to India neither convinced nor brought solace to India.

Pakistan's membership of S.E.A.T.O. created further apprehensions and misgivings in India. Since neither the Soviet Union nor the P.R.C. posed a security threat to Pakistan, New Delhi felt that Pakistan joined S.E.A.T.O. "because of India". Explaining the probable reasons for Pakistan's entry into S.E.A.T.O. Nehru told Indian Parliament:

"Either they are apprehensive of India, or they want to develop strength and ... speak from strength. Whatever it is, they have joined ... S.E.A.T.O. essentially because of their hostility to India". 119

Just as in the case of its arms aid to Pakistan the U.S. took special efforts, at the time of signing the Southeast Asia Defence Treaty, to clarify that by "aggression" it meant only "communist aggression". In spite of these assurances mainly designed to placate Indian fears about the possible extension of S.E.A.T.O.'s

118. American Foreign Policy, n. 43, p. 2192
119. Nehru, n. 73, p. 94
120. For the text of S.E.A.T.O. Treaty see United States, Department of State, Department of State Bulletin, vol. 31, no. 795, 20 September 1954, pp. 393-6
area of operations to India, Nehru continued to reaffirm his "whole-hearted distaste for the project". India believed that when countries get interlocked with one another they might be, at times, persuaded to do things even against their will. Denouncing this evil system of interlocking in international affairs, Nehru told Delhi Press Association on 9 September 1954: "Interlocking is bad enough in business, but it seems to me infinitely worse in international affairs because you do not quite know where you are". India had special reasons to detest interlocking system in view of its bitter experience with N.A.T.O. N.A.T.O., which was the first in the system of western military alliances, started as a defensive organization and gradually developed to cover the colonial possessions of all those powers such as the Portuguese colony of Goa. Nehru wondered whether S.E.A.T.O. which started at India's "door-step" might not extend its scope, likewise, to cover India.

122. The Hindu, 10 September 1954
123. Nehru, n.73, p.90
Joining military alliances was not in consonance with non-alignment, one of the basic principles of India's foreign policy. As Nehru puts it:

Apart from every other reason, big or small, it is obvious that our participation in the Manila Conference would have meant our giving up our basic policy of non-alignment. We were not going to give up that basic policy, which we have followed for so many years, merely to participate in that Conference. 124

Further, the appointment of India as the Chairman of the International Supervisory Commission for Indo-China ruled out India's participation in the Manila Conference. If India joined S.E.A.T.O., it would compromise its independent position and would shatter the confidence the Geneva Conference reposed in India. On 26 August 1954, Nehru told Rajya Sabha:

Having accepted the membership and the Chairmanship of the three Commissions in Indo-China, it seemed totally inappropriate and unbecoming for us to join a conference of this type which really would come in the way of our functioning with that impartiality with which we are expected to function in these Commissions. 125

In India the formation of S.E.A.T.O. was viewed as an attempt of the western powers to prop up dying

124. Ibid., p.87
125. India, Rajya Sabha Debates vol.7, 26 August 1954, col.448
colonialism in Asia. According to a publication brought out by Chatham House many Indians believed that the Manila Treaty was a "subtle attempt on the part of the western powers collectively to force colonialism in a different guise on Southeast Asia". Nehru summed up Indian feelings when he said that instead of encouraging "the progress of liberation from colonialism" S.E.A.T.O. put "deliberate obstructions in its realization".

Indian opposition to S.E.A.T.O. gathered momentum as days passed. Addressing a press conference on 9 September 1954 Nehru charged the parties to the treaty with "double talk" and "double thinking". Even though the members of S.E.A.T.O. expressed their desire to promote world peace, in actual practice the steps they took in that direction encouraged aggression. To quote Nehru:

We talk of peace in the most militant terms. We talk of communism, anti-communism, aggression. We refer with fervour to the United Nations Charter all in a spirit of enchantment with those words. But those words, when we use them, seldom have any real connection with what we mean or do. In fact they often are probably in conflict with the original meaning of those words. 128

126. Chatham House Study Group, n.39, p.94
127. The Hindu, 10 September 1954
128. Ibid.
Nehru also took strong exception to the Treaty area, as defined in para 2 Article 4 of the S.E.A.T.O.
Nehru declared that the treaty area comprised not merely the territory of the member countries but went far beyond. Nehru told Lok Sabha on 25 September 1954:

The area, which they have mentioned, is partly determinate and partly indeterminate, because the countries concerned can expand that area, if they so agree unanimously, by saying, 'This is also in our area'. If anything happens in that area — that is, even outside the territories of the Treaty powers concerned — they can take such steps as they feel like taking.129

He did not object to a few countries having common interests coming together for purposes of defence. But Nehru described the move of some countries to join together to protect other countries which were not prepared to join them as an "extra-ordinary thing". Nehru said:

Other countries do not want their protection, they shout out that they did not want it, and yet they are told 'No, you must have our protection'. These things are very odd and I do not understand them.130

Nehru also assailed para.2 of Article 9 which provided for the ratification and carrying out of the

129. Nehru, n.73, pp.88-89

130. The Hindu, 10 September 1954
treaty provisions by the parties, "in accordance with their respective constitutional processes". He felt that even though the Treaty powers agreed to respect the sovereignty of each state, in practice the weak and small Asian members of the treaty were bound to lose their sovereignty and independence of action. "After all", Nehru said, "it is the big and powerful countries that will decide matters and not the two or three weak and small Asian countries that may be allied to them". He disapproved military alliance between "a huge giant of a power" and "a little pigmy of a country" on the ground that it would be most disadvantageous to the small country. He feared that in a long war small countries might become a strategic base and "a target for attack" and "possibly even destroyed".

Regional alliance presupposes the grouping of the states of a particular region. S.E.A.T.O. was meant for Southeast Asian region. But only two countries in

131. Department of State Bulletin, n.120
132. Nehru, n.73, p.90
133. Bande, n.67, p.76
134. Norman J. Padelford defined a regional organization as follows: "Broadly speaking, a regional arrangement in the sphere of international politics may be described as an association of states, based upon location in a given geographical area, for the safeguarding or promotion of the participants". Norman J. Padelford, "Regional Organization and the United Nations", International Organization, vol.8, p.204
Southeast Asia, Thailand and the Philippines, joined it. The rest of the countries were from outside the region. Even Thailand and the Philippines had already entered into some kind of military understanding with the west. Pointing out this odd feature of S.E.A.T.O., Nehru said that "many Asian countries have nothing to do with it. Therefore I refer to it as the Manila treaty and not S.E.A.T.O."

Krishna Menon also pointed out that S.E.A.T.O. was not a regional organization in the true sense of the phrase. He said:

This organization cannot by any stretch of interpretation of the United Nations Charter come under the United Nations Charter because United Nations Charter provides for regional organizations but this is not a regional organization. This is an organization of some people to protect a region. It is a modern version of a protectorate.

135. Okazaki, former Foreign Minister of Japan, pointed out that the only countries willing to enter into S.E.A.T.O. for the defence of the area were those already committed to do so under existing treaties—namely the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, Thailand and the Philippines. Victor Purcell, "Indo-China and the Prospect in Southeast Asia", The Year Book of World Affairs, 1955 (London, 1955), p.145. See also (1) Chester Bowes, n.82, p.58, (2) "Curtain at Manila", The Economist, 11 September 1954, pp.793-4; (3) The Hindu, 30 June 1954; (4) Karanjia, n.40, p.64 and (5) Nathaniel Peffer, "Regional Security in Southeast Asia", International Organization vol.8, p.315


137. India, Rajya Sabha Debates vol.7, 27 August 1954, vol.585
Within India all sections of public opinion supported the government's stand. In a resolution passed on 11 September 1954, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India said that the S.E.A.T.O. pact sought to sabotage the Geneva Agreement which was hailed by all peace-loving and freedom-loving peoples.

It added:

Through this pact, to which Pakistan is also a signatory, the Anglo-Americans seek to intensify their pressure on the Government of India and bully them into a complete line up with the war-bloc. The S.E.A.T.O. thus constitutes a threat to the peace, security and freedom of the entire people of Asia.

The Praja Socialist Party condemned the efforts of the "Atlantic camp to form Southeast Asia Treaty Defence Organization and thus draw South Asian governments in its orbit and the war area and also those of the Soviet camp to expand into South Asia". Deen Dyal Upadhya, General Secretary of Bharatiya Jana Sangh, considered the formation of S.E.A.T.O. as "a violation of the letter and spirit" of the U.N. Charter and also the Geneva Agreement. In a public meeting organized in Madras...

138. The Hindu, 14 September 1954
139. Janata (Bombay), vol.9, no.21, 21 June 1954, p.11
140. Organizer (New Delhi), vol.8, no.5, 13 September 1954, p.3
to observe the Asian solidarity month, Congress, Communist
and trade union leaders disapproved the western defence
plan for Southeast Asia. S.L. Poplai, an Indian scholar,
criticized the "American match-stick defence alliances"
as they helped neither the western powers nor the Asian
powers. Majority of Indian newspapers also criticized
the collective defence treaty editorially. They maintained
that S.E.A.T.O. had reversed the process of history, that
it was intended to disrupt the Geneva Agreements and that
it had created new tensions in the area and that it
posed a danger to peace.

ALTERNATIVE TO S.E.A.T.O.:  

India, thus, opposed S.E.A.T.O. consistently ever
since the idea was mooted by the U.S. in March 1954.
India not only opposed S.E.A.T.O. but also worked
incessantly to create a situation in Southeast Asia
which would make S.E.A.T.O. unwarranted and unnecessary.
Since military alliances tended to create great tensions,
India felt that the only alternative to collective
security was collective peace. Co-existence was the
only alternative to war and mutual destruction. Pointing
out the relevance of co-existence Nehru said:

141. New Age (Bombay), vol.3, no.10, October 1954, p.32
142. S.L.Poplai, "Asian-African Conference" Foreign Affairs
Reports, vol.4, p.48
143. See "Editorials of the Week", India News (Washington),
24-31 July 1954. For the Views of Indian Press on
S.E.A.T.O. see J.C.Kundra, SEATO Seen Through Indian
Eyes (New Delhi, 1956)
Security springs by bringing about a new climate, of a new approach and recognizing that in this world we can only exist by a policy of 'live and let live', by tolerating others - tolerating no aggression, tolerating no interference - but tolerating others to exist as they want to exist. 144

The Indian diplomacy was geared to secure the support of as many countries as possible to the five principles of peaceful co-existence. These principles were enunciated for the first time in the agreement signed between India and the P.R.C. in April 1954. The preamble to that agreement enunciated the five principles which should govern international relations. The five principles were (1) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, (2) non-aggression, (3) non-interference in each other's internal affairs, (4) equality and mutual benefit and (5) peaceful co-existence. Thus the principle of peaceful co-existence along with other four principles, later came to be known as Panchsheel. The importance of the concept of peaceful co-existence was further emphasized by Nehru and


145. For the text of the Panchsheel Agreement See *Foreign Policy of India: Texts of Documents 1947-56* (New Delhi, 1958), pp.87-93
Chou En-lai when in a joint statement issued at the end of the latter's state visit to India on 28 June 1954, they observed:

If these principles are applied not only between various countries but also in international relations generally they would form a solid foundation for peace and security and the fears and apprehensions that exist today would give place to a feeling of confidence. 146

India not only signed Panchsheel agreement with the P.R.C. but also encouraged Southeast Asian countries like Burma to enter into a similar agreement with the P.R.C. During his visit to Rangoon immediately after his Indian visit, Chou En-lai along with U Nu, the Prime Minister of Burma, issued a similar joint statement affirming the Panchsheel. Panchsheel indirectly secured world recognition because the six-point peace plan put forward by Nehru and which became the basis for the Geneva Agreement was only an elaboration of the five principles of peaceful

146. For the text of the joint statement issued by the Prime Minister of India and the P.R.C. see S.L. Poplai, ed. The Tempest of Peace: Select Documents 1954-55 (New Delhi, 1955), pp. 10-12

147. Rosemary Brissenden, "India, Neutralism and SEATO" in George Modelski, ed. SEATO: Six Studies (Melbourne, 1962), p. 213 It was believed that Chou En-lai visited Rangoon on the request of Nehru. The presence of the Secretary General of the Indian External Affairs Ministry, who travelled in Chou En-lai's party as far as Canton, was primarily intended to facilitate closer understanding between Chou En-lai and U Nu. Ibid.
co-existence. On 29 September 1954 Nehru declared in Lok Sabha that the Agreement reached in Geneva was "largely based upon what was stated, what was suggested in this House early this year in regard to Indo-China". 

Knowing fully well that the problem of large Chinese populations and the encouragement given by the P.R.C. the local communist parties in Southeast Asia formed the greatest barrier to the promotion of good neighbourly relations between the P.R.C. and Southeast Asian countries. Nehru persuaded Chou En-lai to take steps to "remove some of the difficulties and apprehensions in those Southeast Asian countries." Further India made the best use of the office of the Chairman of the International Supervisory Commission for Indo-China to undermine the importance of S.E.A.T.O. The untiring efforts of India largely


149. Nehru, n.73, p.92 See also (1) The Hindu, 14 November 1954; (2) G.H. Brimell, Communism in Southeast Asia (London, 1959); (3) Victor Purcell, "The Dual Nationality of the Chinese in Southeast Asia" India Quarterly, vol.11, pp.344-54

150. For a detailed discussion on this aspect see D.R. Sardesai, Indian Foreign Policy in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam 1947-1964 (Berkeley, 1968), pp.59-65
contributed for exposing the redundancy of S.E.A.T.O. This was also obvious from the insignificant representation of Southeast Asia in S.E.A.T.O. Only two Southeast Asian countries, Thailand and the Philippines, became members. Even these two countries, as stated earlier, had already entered into some sort of military understanding with the U.S., Burma and Indonesia, which realized that the policy of non-alignment was more meaningful, preferred not to join S.E.A.T.O. Even though the Manila Treaty encompassed the areas covered by Cambodia, Laos and the State of Vietnam under the Treaty area, legally they were not members since they did not join the Organization, as the other Treaty members did. It will not be out of context to mention here the positive Indian efforts to convince Cambodia and Laos to keep themselves out of the military organization. Throughout this period New Delhi pointed out to Cambodia and Laos the necessity of neutralizing Indo-China, as the only guarantee of peace in the region. After the Geneva Conference, India also explained the implications of the Geneva records in order to win over Cambodia and Laos to the India viewpoint. Making a statement in Rajya Sabha at the Geneva Conference Nehru said:

151. Justice M. Van der Kroef pointed out that "over the years, the alleged irrelevance or importance of SEATO became something of a source of wistful grim amusement among many SEATO officials themselves". Justus M. Van der Kroef, The Lives of SEATO (Singapore, 1976), p.2

152. Sardesai, n.150, p.60
In the decisions at Geneva in regard to the Indo-China countries—Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam—it has been specifically laid down that they should not have military alliances with other countries. That is to say, they should be more or less unaligned, and should more or less belong to what we call the area of peace. 153

Thus the membership of S.E.A.T.O. became a barometer as to the effectiveness of the organization.

In limiting the membership of the Southeast Asian countries to two India's role was not insignificant. The success of Indian diplomacy in crippling S.E.A.T.O. was acknowledged by western observers. Commenting on the drawbacks of S.E.A.T.O. Le Monde, a French daily, observed in an editorial:

The list of Asian countries who were absent is eloquent. India, the main force of the region, remained aside .... It is doubtful if the Manila pact will stand out as a proof of the desire to ease tension on the part of anti-communist nations or will encourage moderation and compromise in communist countries. 154

Writing in the Year Book of World Affairs, Victor Purcell pointed out that "the Manila pact remained

153. India, Rajya Sabha Debates vol.7, 26 August 1954, col.446
154. World Press on India, 11 September 1954