CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION
The earlier chapters have given a descriptive analysis of India's relations with Southeast Asia from 1947 to 1954. In this chapter it is proposed to take an overview and arrive at certain conclusions.

The first factor that should be highlighted is the historical perspective. It is no exaggeration to say that India's policy towards Southeast Asia, during the period under review, was the logical culmination of the international outlook of the Indian National Congress which after the transfer of power on 15 August 1947 became the arbiter of the destiny of the Indian people. The Indian National Congress showed lively interest in world affairs ever since its inception in 1885. With the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi as the undisputed leader of the Indian national movement, this interest further increased and the Congress began to articulate clear views on various issues regarding foreign policy. It naturally resulted in the Congress conceiving and proclaiming principles and policies, independent of Whitehall, with regard to developments in the international arena. Jawaharlal Nehru acted as a catalyst and hastened this process; through speeches and writings, he kept the nation abreast with the
twists and turns of international politics. Gradually the Indian National Congress gained new perspectives on international affairs and its anti-imperialist orientation became further crystallized. In speeches, both in India and abroad and in international conferences, where Nehru met leaders of Asian and African countries, more especially from Southeast Asia, he repeatedly declared that India was the key to the exploitation of Asia and freedom of India was the essential prerequisite for the liberation of exploited peoples. He also underlined the necessity to forge close links among Asian nationalists in their common struggle against the forces of imperialism and colonialism.

Though India's Southeast Asia policy has to be viewed as an integral part of its external relations, a discerning student can clearly point out three main elements which constituted the core of India's Southeast Asia policy from 1947 to 1954. Most important was the support to anti-colonial struggles. In the attainment of this objective, Indonesia provided both a challenge and an opportunity to India's policy makers. Second, assist the forces of nationalism and non-communism in the newly independent Southeast Asian countries to combat the twin dangers of
Communism and secessionism. Burma falls into this category and the initiative taken by India, along with other Commonwealth countries, to help the U Nu government enabled the latter to successfully contain the serious threat posed by Karen and communist rebels. The third objective was to eliminate cold war, reduce super power rivalry and create an "area of peace", so that the countries of the region can pursue the goals of political, economic and social development in an environment of peace and stability. India's diplomacy in the Genava Conference in 1954 was geared to the attainment of this objective in Indo-China.

With their passionate abhorrence of colonialism, it was but natural for the Indian nationalist leaders to energetically champion the cause of the Indonesian Republic. Nehru made a special reference to the close links between the two countries in his first broadcast as the Vice-President of the Interim Government. The first step taken by the Interim Government was its decision to call back the Indian soldiers sent to Indonesia by the British to secure the surrender of Japan and who later clashed with Indonesian nationalists in Surabaya and other places. The unofficial
Asian Relations Conference, convened in New Delhi in March-April 1947 by the Indian Council of World Affairs, was another important step taken by Indian nationalists to discuss the common problems and forge co-operative links among Asian nationalists. India also played a notable role in the United Nations (U.N.) in this respect. From July 1947, when the issue was first discussed in the Security Council on requests made by Australia and India, Indian representatives energetically championed the cause of the Indonesian Republic. Throughout the deliberations, India was very critical of the ineffectiveness of the U.N. and called for stronger measures. Within India, all sections of public opinion rallied to the cause of the Indonesian Republic. The All India Radio, through its broadcasts in Bahasa Indonesia, exposed the imperialist conspiracy; a medical mission was sent to the Republic to help the wounded and the sick and the Government refused permission to Dutch planes to fly in or across India after the Second Police Action. India's crowning glory was the convening of the international Conference on Indonesia in New Delhi from 20 to 23 January 1949. It was the expression of Asian indignation at the
continuance of colonialism and was also the first Conference of Asian states to fulfil and strengthen the U.N. in its objective of finding a peaceful solution to the Indonesian dispute. It is no exaggeration to say that the resolutions passed by the Conference provided the basis for the eventual transfer of power from Dutch to Indonesian hands in 1949. This goodwill and friendship paved the way for smooth interaction between the two countries in the early 1950's and led to the identity of outlook on major international issues.

If support to Indonesian nationalist struggle was the apogee of India's consistent stand on anti-colonial struggles, the policy towards the neighbouring state of Burma was in perfect accordance with India's commitment to stability of non-communist Southeast Asian governments. Nehru was deeply conscious of the threats posed by communist movements, with powerful support from the People's of Republic China (P.R.C.) and the Soviet Union, to the stability and security of the newly independent Southeast Asian countries. Nehru condemned the communist attempts to overthrow the Indonesian Republic and the armed struggle of the Malayan Communist Party to capture power in Malaya with the same
favour with which he put down the communist uprising in India. While opposition to communist activities in Indonesia and Malaya was repeatedly affirmed, Nehru was aware that these problems could be contained effectively by the Republican Government in Indonesia and the British Government in Malaya. On the other hand, in Burma the secessionist and communist threats assumed very serious proportions and even Rangoon was threatened by rebel forces. Without external assistance U Nu government would not have survived. Nehru, therefore, took the initiative and rallied support to the nationalist government in Burma. New Delhi spontaneously responded to Rangoon's appeal and supplied arms, ammunition and economic assistance to the U Nu government. India also persuaded other Commonwealth countries to provide economic and military aid to Burma. Though Burma did not join the Commonwealth, India, the United Kingdom (U.K.), Ceylon and Australia agreed on an aid programme of £6,000,000 with Indian contribution working out to one sixth of the total.

While New Delhi helped directly or indirectly in the suppression of the communist revolts in Burma, Malaya and
Indonesia Nehru was aware that the situation in Indo-China was different. Ho Chi Minh and the Vietnamese communists were ardent nationalists; what is more, there was no other rival group which could act as a rallying point for the Vietnamese nationalists. In India’s view the Indo-Chinese struggle was essentially an anti-colonialist movement and its solution would depend upon fulfilling nationalist aspirations and guaranteeing the security and freedom of Indo-Chinese states from foreign intervention. The changing international situation and acceptance of India as a mediator enabled New Delhi to play a key role in the Geneva Conference.

By early 1950 India began to play a very active role in international affairs. New Delhi’s independent role and ability to play a mediatory role were clearly demonstrated during the Korean crisis. India’s appointment as the Chairman of the Neutral Nations-Repatriation Commission was evidence of the principled approach that India adopted towards the solution of the Korean problem. The Soviet Union and the P.R.C., who had earlier vehemently condemned non-alignment, began to adopt a conciliatory and constructive approach towards the uncommitted world. The dramatic
changes in the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin and the acceptance of the policy of peaceful co-existence by the new Soviet leadership further facilitated the improvement of relations between the communist and the non-communist world. The high watermark of this new trend in international relations was the signing of the Sino-Indian Agreement on Tibet in April 1954 which incorporated the five principles of peaceful co-existence. The acceptance of these principles, Nehru believed, would enlarge the "area of peace" in Asia, more particularly in Southeast Asia, uncommitted to either of the two power blocs which had bipolarized the post-war world. Prime Minister U Nu and President Sukarno shared Nehru's views; it was, therefore, no accident that India came closer to Burma and Indonesia than to the other countries in Southeast Asia.

The prospect of a world war breaking out in Indo-China as a result of massive American and Chinese intervention in 1953-54 brought Indian diplomacy into full play. Nehru was keen to prevent a war in a sensitive region so close to India. The Indian diplomacy geared into action. The six-point proposals put forward by
Jawaharlal Nehru in the Indian Parliament was later endorsed by the Colombo powers and formed the basis of negotiations and agreement on Indo-China. The proposals called for immediate cease-fire and cessation of hostilities; a negotiated settlement leading to the independence of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos and an international agreement on non-intervention in Indo-China. In other words, India was trying to apply Panchsheel - the five principles of peaceful co-existence - to the Indo-Chinese scene.

The Indian diplomacy in the Geneva Conference was mainly geared to remove all external influences from Indo-China and to ensure that the independence and neutrality of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were guaranteed by the great powers, especially the United States (U.S.) and the P.R.C. In Geneva, thanks to Krishna Menon's diplomacy, Anthony Eden and Mendes-France assured Chou En-lai that there would be no American bases in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, which would pose a threat to Chinese security. Chou En-lai, in turn, assured that the P.R.C. would respect the territorial integrity of Indo-Chinese states and persuade the Vietminh to withdraw its forces from Laos and Cambodia. Thus behind the apparent idea of
neutrality was India's keen desire to keep both the U.S. and the P.R.C. out of Indo-China and thus extend the area of peace and non-alignment.

India's objectives in Indo-China came in direct conflict with those of the U.S. and the Indo-American relations reached a low point. The U.S. was not a signatory to the Geneva Agreement, though it promised not to use force to alter its provisions. During the Conference, John Foster Dulles was very active mobilizing support for the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). Since the policy of military containment was successful in Western Europe, the U.S. leaders believed that a Collective Security Organization would deter further communist advance in Southeast Asia. This militaristic approach was diametrically opposed to the concept of the "Area of Peace" that India advocated. The Geneva Agreement was based on the desirability and practicability of co-existence of states of differing political systems; SEATO was its very negation.

In conclusion, it can be said that, during 1947-1954, India projected the image of a country dedicated to the
removal of vestiges of colonialism, lessening of cold war tensions and promotion of world peace. The Geneva Settlement and the unanimous selection of India as the Chairman of the International Supervisory Commission were widely interpreted in India as vindication of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. The concept of the "Area of Peace" was an alternative to both the American policy of military alliances and the earlier communist policy of supporting communist revolutions in Southeast Asia.