Cold War and its Impact on Asia – Pacific Regionalism
The roots of regional bloc formation in the Asia-Pacific region could be traced to the Japanese occupation of South-east Asia during the second world war and post-war supper power rivalry. A series of events, like, the success of the communists in China, upsurge of communist insurgencies in some of the states of South-east Asia and finally, withdrawal of the U.S. forces after its defeat in Vietnam war were perceived as perennial threats by the South-east Asians. Consequent upon the prevailing insecurity, a series of bilateral and multilateral treaties were entered into. The United States was the nucleus of these anti-communist coalitions. The ANZUS and the SEATO constituted two major fulcrums of such regional arrangements during the cold war period.

A major turning point in Soviet policies towards the South-east Asia was reached in 1947, with the formation of the Cominform (Communist Information Bureau) and the enunciation by Andrei Zhdanov of the two camp thesis. Stalin advanced the thesis of the ‘two camps’ as long ago as 1922, wherein he acknowledged only friend and foe in world politics. At the Conference in 1947 when the Cominform was established, Andrei Zhdanov based the strategy and tactics of Soviet foreign policy on the same thesis. He used the expressions ‘anti-imperialist’ and ‘anti fascist camp’ and ‘democratic camp’ in the same sense and later on the term ‘socialist camp’
became universally employed in the Soviet Union. He regarded Yugoslavia, Albania and to some extent Finland belonging to the socialist camp. It was the first official recognition of cold war alliance formation in a nascent form.\textsuperscript{1} The formation to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949 was the first major western reaction to a series of events, like, the revival of Cominform in 1947, the communist \textit{coup d'etat} in 1948 in Czechoslovakia and the Berlin blockade during 1948-49. All these events in a row seemed to pose severe threat to the war damaged countries of the Western Europe.\textsuperscript{2} In the Western alliance system Europe was given top priority, because, for the Americans “it was an area where the free world had most to lose if successful aggression took place and secondly, effective counter-measures could be most constructively taken in this area”\textsuperscript{3}.

\begin{itemize}
  \item[3.] Report \textit{“Military Assistance and the Security of the United States During the period 1947-56”}, prepared for the Senate by William T.R. Fox (Prof. of International Relations at Columbia University) and W.W. Marvel (of the Carnegie Corporation) prepared under the auspices of the Institute of War and Peace Studies of Columbia University pursuant to Senate Resolution No. 285 of 84\textsuperscript{th} Congress and Senate Resolution No. 35 and 41 of 85\textsuperscript{th} Congress (Washington D.C., 1957).
\end{itemize}
The NATO had set certain preliminary guidelines for carving out further alliance patterns. Most unique features of the NATO were its common military institutions and elaborate machinery for consultation.\(^4\) The heart of the treaty is found in the far reaching provisions of Article 5, by which the signatories agree that “an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all; and... that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them ... will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith ... such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area”.\(^5\)

Asia-Pacific Threat Perception and the Formation of ANZUS

Australia, the major actor of South-west Pacific shared the insecurity of south-east Asian countries. Australia also perceived the greatest threat from the communist China. It looked for some solution out of the November 1948, Commonwealth Preparatory Discussions, held in Canberra. But, even before the commencement of the Commonwealth Conference on 9 January


1949, at least five Commonwealth countries had recognised the People's Republic of China. The outbreak of the Korean war on 25 June 1950, further intensified the communist threat for Australia. Australia was the first country to pledge armed assistance to the United Nations under the leadership of the U.S. and directly clashed with the communist China on the Korean front. For, China's move was seen by Australia as a part of a calculated strategy to encourage communist movements in South-east Asia.6

Earlier, on 21 January 1944 the 'Commonwealth of Australia' and the 'Dominion of New Zealand' had signed an bilateral agreement. Both the countries declared it as the Pacific Charter of Permanent Collaboration and Co-operation.7 This Australian - New Zealand Accord (ANZAC) signed in Canberra was, in effect, a formal declaration that the views of the two countries on international affairs had much in common and that their influence would be much greater if they acted together. It was striking


because the two dominions acted without Britain. By signing this Agreement, Australia and New Zealand proposed to establish a regional zone of defence based on the two countries and stretching through the arc of islands north and north-east of Australia to New Zealand’s possessions in the Cook Islands. On the remarkable unanimity shown by both the countries, Dr. Evatt, Australian External Affairs Minister expressed that it is the Pacific war, which had drawn the two countries so close together. According to him, the Agreement is a document which expressed and summarised their joint aims and objectives for the peaceful and prosperous development of the Pacific region. In effect, Australia and New Zealand had realised the bitter experiences resulting from the failure to achieve collective security. Accordingly, they had resolved to establish in their part of the world a regional system of defence and security. The two countries had undertaken to play their part in these great plans within the framework of a world security system, and by their initiative in making and publishing this


Agreement. This could be taken as the foundation stone of Australia’s and New Zealand’s South-west Pacific Policy. This foreshadowed an organisation for the Pacific people also. This reflected joint intentions of the signatories to build an alternative to ‘Japanese Co-prosperity Sphere’. In clauses 7 to 12, the Agreement contemplated Australia’s and New Zealand’s active participation in all armistice and subsequent arrangements. They also agreed that it would be proper for Australia and New Zealand to assume full responsibility for policing, or sharing in policing, certain areas in the South-west and South Pacific. In the planning for the post-war world, regional organisation was a prominent feature. Keeping this in view, Dr. Evatt had stated in 1943 “that there will have to be ‘Zones of Security’ in areas like South-east Asia and the South and South-west Pacific”. He visualised these zones to be guaranteed by co-operation among the colonial power in the Pacific, as well as, by the United States and Great

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11. Ibid., p. 164.

12. Ibid., p. 166.

13. Ibid., p. 167.
Britain. The agreement with New Zealand in 1944 was meant to be the first step toward its realisation.\textsuperscript{14}

However, Australia did not plan any regional organisation consisting of South-east Asian and South-west Pacific States. In 1949 Prime Minister Chifley pointed out that in collective defence scheme, apart from Great Britain, only the United States would really be "of great value".\textsuperscript{15} In September 1946, the South Pacific Commission (SPC) was created. It was a non-political, non-military organisation, essentially for the social benefit of the peoples of the Pacific Australia.\textsuperscript{16} Dr. Evatt, the then External Affairs Minister anticipated a successful outcome of the Asian freedom movements and spoke of the harmonious association of democratic States in South-east Asia with Australia, for which he also planned a similar non-political Commission.\textsuperscript{17} Any sort of military arrangement was expressly excluded. Political and security organisation among this group was

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Werner Levi, \textit{Australia's Outlook on Asia} (Sydeney, 1958), p. 83.
\item \textsuperscript{16} \textit{Current Notes}, vol. 17 (Canberra, 1946), p. 571.
\item \textsuperscript{17} \textit{Parliamentary Debates}, 26 February 1947 (Canberra, 1947), p. 167.
\end{itemize}
considered premature and reserved for 'some day' in the future. Some orthodox critics also criticised the formation of SPF and other efforts at strengthening regional cooperation as a threat to Empire's unity.

But the growing strength of communism pacified these critics and a consensus emerged to mould friendly relations with Asian States. No Asian State had much to offer militarily, yet physical security was the major concern of Australia. Indeed, the rapid victory of the communists in China gave great impetus to that concern. The signing of NATO in April 1949 inspired Australia to demand for a similar Treaty for the Pacific. The British Commonwealth Conference in October 1948 dealt with it, when Chifley was the Prime Minister. But, the only result which finally emerged was a body of staff officers from Britain, Australia and New Zealand cooperating in defence planning for Malaya (ANZAM). But, there was hardly anything striking in military co-operation of these three commonwealth members. The cause of frustration over the lack of any progress in a Pacific

18. ibid., 8 November 1946, p. 100.
19. n. 14, p. 86.
Pact was the opposition of the United States to it.\textsuperscript{21}

The R.G. Menzies’s government successfully launched ‘Colombo Plan’ for economic assistance to the country’s of South-east Asia and went on persuading hard the U.S. Government to obtain its military commitment in the Pacific region. To the Australian Government, an American guarantee against an aggressive Japan, in addition to its intrinsic value, was a big step toward a wider collective system in the Pacific.\textsuperscript{22} As a result of this prolonged efforts, the ANZUS treaty was formally signed on 1 September 1951. However, Britain’s immense post war economic problems, its understandable pre-occupation with events in Europe, its loss of the Indian Empire and, moreover, weakened influence over the Suez Canal, all reflected a decline in Britain’s power and stature. New Zealand had entered into formal diplomatic relations with the United States in 1942. The Washington was the first to receive diplomatic mission of New Zealand outside Britain. Diplomatic links were established with Canberra in 1943. Events during the Second World War had reinforced the Australian and New Zealand’s scepticism about the reliability of the British guarantee

\begin{itemize}
\item[21.] n. 14, pp. 89-90.
\item[22.] n. 16, vol. 22 (1951), pp. 236-37.
\end{itemize}
and confirmed their belief that there could be no security without the U.S.A. This new found consciousness of both the Pacific countries (Australia and New Zealand) helped them seeking a role independently in the regional affairs. They encouraged the United States to retain political territorial stakes in the Pacific, and they searched for means of ensuring that a post war settlement in the Pacific would not ignore their interests. Both these requirements of Australia and New Zealand could be fulfilled by the formation of an institutionalized alliance, namely ANZUS.

In this back drop, the ANZUS treaty was signed in San Francisco in September 1951 and came into force on 29 April 1952. The ANZUS was negotiated as a corollary of the ‘Japanese Peace Treaty’, the ‘U.S.- Japan Security Treaty’ and the ‘U.S.- Philippines Security Treaty’. The ANZUS marked the formal transition from alliance with the U.K. to alliance with the U.S for Australia and New Zealand. The United States already had arrangements pursuant to which its armed forces were stationed in the Philippines, and had armed forces and administrative responsibilities in the


Ryukyus. According to the ‘Japanese Peace Treaty’, the U.S. had promised Japan to assist in the preservation of peace and security in the region. The ANZUS Treaty recognised the military obligations of Australia and New Zealand outside, as well as, within the Asia-Pacific Region. In spite of these, a common pledge for collective defence was established on the following terms:

"...Desiring to declare publicly and formally their sense of unity, so that no potential aggressor could be under the illusion that any of them stand alone in the Pacific Area." 25

Even though the ANZUS Treaty emphasized its concern for non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, prohibition of stationing of nuclear weapons on the sea bed and the ocean floor and in the sub-soil thereof, prohibition of testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere or underwater, including territorial waters or high seas, in practice it was mainly criticised that the ANZUS membership inhibited its efforts to do something positive about halting the nuclear arms race. As an ally, New Zealand could not call upon the Americans to put a stop to their nuclear arms build-up which

followed in the seventies. In New Zealand there was heightened awareness of ANZUS related dangers, such as visits of American nuclear ships to New Zealand’s ports. The ANZUS was further criticised as the medium through which New Zealand is involved in global American militarism.26

Manila Pact and the Formation of SEATO

After the ‘Geneva Truce Agreement on Indo-China’ in 1954, the U.S, Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan agreed to meet in Manila in September 1954 to consider measures for concerted resistance to possible aggression or subversion in South-east Asia. Out of this emerged, the Pacific Charter and the South East Asian Collective Defence Treaty. Although the SEATO was conceived by the West as counterpart of the NATO, the structure and conditions of alliance pattern were quite different in each case.27


In Europe, the problem was to strengthen and organise a group of nations which were geographically contiguous and possessed comparatively larger and diversified industrial economies. In Europe, the highest priority was given to strengthening the defensive capabilities (both military and economic) against the threat of large scale military attack from the East. Whereas, the strategy in Asia had to envisage the greater threat of disorder and subversion from inside.\(^28\)

The SEATO, on the other hand, really masked weakness. The U.S. recognised that according to this Treaty only communist aggression was to be reported to the Security Council of the United Nations.\(^29\) Interests of the member countries diverged and in some cases were obviously incompatible. The logic of the NATO strategy could not fit into the local conditions of South-east Asia, where subversion rather than direct communist frontal assault was the main threat.

The SEATO substantially failed to tackle the Laotian crisis in 1960-61. The American President Johnson’s efforts to involve the SEATO in

\(^{28}\) n. 2. p. 623.

Vietnam entangle directly intensified existing conflicts within the alliance. France clashed with the American policy over the neutralisation of the region. Britain’s withdrawal from the east of the Suez, in effect, removed all substance to Britain’s commitment to the alliance. Thailand and the Philippines had accepted their membership only as counter-measure to anticipated extension of the Chinese influence in the region. The SEATO - as the framework for an American commitment to the region, was retained as interim support for these allies. Once Thailand and the Philippines overcame their reluctance to deal with China after the fall of Saigon in April 1975, the SEATO could be safely discarded.30

The SEATO had produced some significant military advantages. It had made possible joint planning and training, exchange of intelligence, military base facilities and common efforts at standardising weapons among its members. This large scale infrastructural collaborations were mainly used to strengthen anti-subversion programmes. The SEATO’s second achievement was the psychological reassurance which the U.S. provided in mainland South-east Asia on its commitment to give support against either

‘armed attack’ or subversive activities directed from outside.¹³¹ “The SEATO’s policy under American leadership impeded the relaxation of tension between the communists and non-communist countries of East Asia, tended to exacerbate east-west hostility, and to divide Australia and New Zealand form the Asian Members of the Commonwealth”.³²

**Shift from Alliance to Assertion of Regionalism**

Gradually, the Asia-Pacific countries became conscious of their regional identity and their relatively faster economic development enabled them to establish a regional self-support mechanism. The emphasis on alliances with big powers gave way to other priorities dominated by their economic interests.

Broadly it was argued, that the rapid economic growth of Japan and the dynamism of the advanced developing nations of the Pacific had led to a high level of economic interdependence between Pacific countries, which could not be adequately managed by existing institutional arrangements. These regional mechanisms should be more suitable to serve their economic needs than the existing global frameworks for tackling

³¹. n. 2., p. 635.

Since World War II, global economic power has increasingly shifted to the countries of the Pacific Basin. Spurred largely by the opening of international markets for commodity exports of the resource rich region and the need to rebuild the industrial complex immediately after the war, Japan and many of the newly independent states of the Pacific Basin were able to realise significant, if not, spectacular improvement in their economic well being. Increasingly, the U.S. was rivalled by Japan economically. While, in 1955, the United States dominated the world economy producing two-fifths of global output, its share by 1980 had fallen to less than one quarter. Other countries in the Pacific Basin also rose in economic importance. A proposal in 1967 for a Pacific Free Trade Area (PAFTA), intended partly as a counterweight to the growth of EEC in international trade, gave way subsequently to another proposal for an OECD type Organization for Pacific Trade, Aid and Development (OPTAD). But, even OPTAD which


essentially envisaged the role of facilitating consultation between members on common trade, aid and development related problems and opportunities, had failed to gain the endorsement of any Pacific government. It became clear that the Asia-Pacific region lacked the required political-economic cohesion needed for establishing a regional free trade area, at that time. 35

**Formation of the ASEAN**

After the declaration of Guam Doctrine by the American President Richard Nixon in July 1969, whereby the U.S. decided to play a diminished role in the South-east Asian Security, the South-east Asians (excepting Indochina) were left with only option to adopt concerted approach towards the new realities of the Asia-Pacific security. In the decades of sixties and seventies, the Soviet Union also emerged as one of the dominant powers in the region. Along with this, the ASEAN members were also confronted with issues like recognition of the Peoples Republic of China, the need to establish diplomatic relations with the communist states in Indochina which made them feel the urgency of co-ordinating their diplomatic and security policies. Thus, the ASEAN assumed the role of a strong diplomatic

bloc against the further advance of the communist powers.\textsuperscript{36}

Internal political stability of the ASEAN states and the peace and stability of the region were vitally linked for the continued economic development of the member countries. However, it was made clear that the ASEAN would not acquire military character. The ASEAN found its strength, not only in economic cooperation among the members, but also, in their collective endeavours to meet external challenges.\textsuperscript{37} The ASEAN negotiated on behalf of the members on trade and investment related issues. The ASEAN countries worked together and co-ordinated their policies in the United Nations and other international bodies. As a result, the ASEAN assumed the stature of a vital and cohesive regional organisation.

\textsuperscript{36} ibid., p. 292.

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Bangkok Declaration of ASEAN}, ASEAN Publication (Bangkok, 1967), - “that the countries of South-east Asia share a primary responsibility for strengthening the economic and social stability of the region and ensuring their peaceful and progressive national development and that they are determined to ensure their stability and security from external interference in any form or manifestation in order to preserve their national identities in accordance with the ideals and aspirations of their people”.

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**ZOPFAN Concept of the ASEAN**

In the year 1970, Malaysia formally put forward its 'neutralisation' plan which was adopted by the ASEAN in 1971. The proposal for neutralisation was first voiced by late Tun Dr. Ismail and afterwards by Tun Abdul Razak. Since 1971, it became the cornerstone of the ASEAN diplomacy. This policy of neutralisation provided the macro-matrix, as well as, the mechanism for the rethinking about the outstanding problems of national security and regional stability before and after the post-Vietnam war period.38 This proposal called for restraint and consideration from the big powers in their actions and decisions which affect the smaller countries. The essence of this proposal was summarised in the following words of Tun Abdul Razak:

"The Principle of Neutrality system applies both to individual country and to the region as a whole. It is premised on friendship and good will, on an open minded readiness to cooperate, patience, perseverance in working out detailed arrangements and equally on national resilience... the key to our future security and stability lies not in outdated and irrelevant attitudes of the cold war, but, in imaginative and constructive response to the new realities of today".39

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39. ibid., p. 94.
Increasingly in the ASEAN, the term ‘neutralization’ was dropped in favour of the acronym ‘ZOPFAN’ (Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality). By May 1975, at the Ministerial Conference in Kuala Lumpur it was completely accepted by the ASEAN. ZOPFAN has provided the ASEAN an unique conflict alleviation instrument which would entail the pursuit of three essential elements namely, national cohesiveness, resiliency and the observance of a policy of equidistance by the South-east Asian vis-à-vis the major powers. 40 According to Malaysia, the proposal has to be carried out at two levels. On the first level, it asked for regional solidarity by paying respect to each others sovereignty to maintain peace in the region, to promote regional cooperation and to exclude all the foreign powers from the region. On the second level, it asked the U.S., China and the Soviet Union to observe the neutrality in the region. 41


Sino-American Détente and its Impact on Asia-Pacific Regionalism

The beginning of the Sino-American détente is traced to the year 1972, when, President Nixon paid a path breaking visit to China. The ‘Ping-Pong’ diplomacy began even earlier following American disengagement from Vietnam. The Sino-US détente had manifold impact on the Asia-Pacific regionalism. The Sino-Soviet rapprochement, brought the South-east Asian countries closer both towards China and the U.S. Although, Singapore expressed great concern over China’s prospective return to a more active role in the world politics. Singapore apprehended that it might adversely affect Singapore’s interests and have deteriorative effect on its Chinese population. China might also be prompted to intensify the growing US-Soviet rivalry in the Indian Ocean which would drag Singapore into a vortex of major power struggle. Burma became the object of China’s selective ‘diplomacy of friendship’ which improved significantly, after Nixon’s announcement. Burma supported China’s entry into the United Nations and expulsion of Taiwan from the U.N. It opened its border with China to facilitate overland trade.42

New Cold War and the Militarization of the Asia-pacific Region

The Sino-American friendly relation reversed only after a decade, during the President Ronald Reagan’s period. Contrary to the assurance given by the U.S., President Reagan on assumption of his office decided to upgrade the U.S. forces present in Taiwan. China termed it as violative of its sovereignty and interference in China’s internal affairs. In the mean time, the super power rivalry which had subsided in the sixties again became intense towards the end of seventies. With the Soviet Union’s intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979, again the Asia-Pacific region became vulnerable to super power sponsored armed race. Hitherto, the American nuclear arsenals were deployed in the Pacific only as part of America’s forward defensive posture. Now it changed into forward offensive posture. Reagan started designing the arms deployment to guard the Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOCs), simultaneously, to put maximum pressure on Soviet nuclear and other support facilities located at the North-west Pacific Coast of the Russian mainland. This forward offensive strategy led to further escalation of arms race in the region, particularly, in the nuclearisation of the Ocean. In response to Reagan’s steps, the Soviet Union deployed a wide range of nuclear facilities, arsenals, submarines, missiles, etc., along the
Sino-Soviet border and in Vietnam. The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Vietnam and the U.S.S.R. was signed in 1978 which remains in force for next twenty five years. This Treaty had important strategic implications as it was stated, that “In case either party is attacked or threatened with an attack, the two parties signatory to the Treaty shall immediately consult each other with a view to eliminating that threat, and shall take appropriate and effective measures to safeguard peace and security of the two countries”. 

However, neither South-east Asia nor Vietnam has been a region of prime importance to the Soviet Union. Correspondingly, Soviet – Vietnamese bilateral relations have, from Moscow’s point of view, been derivative of larger Soviet interests.

On the part of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev in 27th Congress of the CPSU held in February 1986, declared the Soviet’s Asia-Pacific


policies (His special statement on the Asia-Pacific region released in April 1986). Gorbachev in his Vladivostok speech in July 1986, also emphasised in definite terms his country's stake in the Asia-Pacific region. He also tried to improve relations with China and Japan, thereby, hoping to undermine the trilateral strategic arrangements made by the U.S., China and Japan. Gorbachev also acknowledged the importance of each group, namely, "Indo-Chinese countries, ASEAN states and the Pacific islands and tried to improve political and economic relations with all of them. In May 1985, Gorbachev advanced the idea of an 'all Asian Forum' for discussion and resolution of common security issues".46 

**The South Pacific Forum and Asia Pacific Cooperation**

Australia and New Zealand in their 1944 Canberra Pact, as a complement to their declaration to establish a regional zone of defence, proposed also to set up a 'South Seas Regional Commission', to secure a common policy on the well being and advancement of peoples in their territories.47 This laid the foundation stone of the South Pacific Commission


In 1947, Britain, France, the United States and the Netherlands joined the endeavour, and the six powers established the South Pacific Commission. Subsequently, the Netherlands dropped out, and eight island states joined after they achieved independence: Western Samoa in 1965, Nauru in 1969, Fiji in 1971, Papua New Guinea in 1975, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu in 1978, and the Cook Islands and Niue in 1980. In 1983, all the remaining governments and self-governing administrations of the region were accorded full membership in the Commission. All political issues were specifically excluded from its jurisdiction. It aimed at assisting the members only in the matters relating to economic and social development. However, the most remarkable achievement of the SPC was to play an instrumental role in bringing the island peoples into an association with international effort. The Forum was created out of a need by the newly independent island countries of the South Pacific for an organisation through which they could voice jointly their political views, denied to them by the SPC, which proscribed political expression.


The South Pacific Forum was formed at a meeting in Wellington, New Zealand, in August 1971. This meeting was attended by the president of Nauru (Chief Hammer De’Robourt), the Prime Minister of New Zealand (Sir Keith Holyoake), Prime Minister of Tonga (Prince Tu’ipelehake), Prime Minister of Fiji (Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara), Prime Minister of Western Samoa (Tupua Tamasese Lea foloi IV), Prime Minister of the Cook Islands (Mr. Albert Henry) and the Australian Minister for External Territories (Mr. C.E. Barnes). The first meeting at Wellington was followed in February 1972 by a second meeting at Canberra when the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation (SPEC) was established and became the Forum’s Secretariat. The SPF’s forerunner, the Pacific Islands Producers Secretariat (PIPS), later known as the Pacific Islands Producers Association (PIPA) continued till 1974 and in the same year it voted for its own dissolution. In 1988 the Forum set up the South Pacific Organisations Coordinating Committee (SPOCC) to bring coherence to the proliferation of regional bodies. Melanesian members viewed SPOCC as a mechanism to assert the Forum’s role as the premier regional organisation over the South Pacific Commission. However, the latter refused to join while the Forum’s

50. Ibid., pp. 16-17.
Secretary General was to chair the meetings, so a rotating chair and venue were agreed to, and now the SPOCC brings representatives of regional organisations together annually on a basis of equality.  

The Forum has continued to meet every year and through its SPEC, has co-operated on several projects with the South Pacific Commission. The SPEC has created an elaborate institutional structure with the collaboration of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations, operating in the fields of trade, industry, transport, communication, tourism, etc.  

The Asia-pacific region, unlike Europe, has certain specific characteristics. Two biggest socialist countries of the world, the Soviet Union and China are just next door neighbours and had strong politico-strategic linkages with the region. Existence of Socialist Vietnam in this region is yet another historic fact which enhances the complexities of the


regional socio-economic problems. The division of this region into two blocs during the cold war days perhaps is the most important characteristic feature of this region. The U.S. continues to play a significant role in the region owing to its geo-strategic location and its economic and military might. And now, Japan has emerged as an important economic power in the region. Strategically speaking, the U.S. has four military political allies, i.e. Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and Thailand - all playing crucial role in maintaining the balance of power in the region. Washington still retains its military and political alliance with Australia and though its Asia-Pacific policy is motivated by a wide spectrum of interests, its main direction is to maintain its hegemony and further consolidate its position in the region. Nevertheless, Washington’s cold war concept of transforming the Pacific Basin into an American Lake has been put into jeopardy as anti-nuclear weapon movement is building up in the region.