CHAPTER 5: EARLY REGIONAL CO-OPERATION
AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Introduction

Students of international relations have been the main group driving the discussion of regional political co-operation in Southeast Asia between the end of the Second World War and the eve of the formation of ASEAN. However, this chapter discusses economic and cultural regional co-operation, as well as inter-state relations within the region. Most historians also focus on their studies on the Asia-African Conference, other Asian conferences, SEATO, and ASA, but these students have paid little attention to proposals of regional co-operation by indigenous political leaders and to social and cultural regional co-operation in this period.

Therefore, this chapter examines how proposals for regional co-operation were made and how regional organisations emerged in the period starting immediately after Second World War right up to the formation of the ASEAN. This chapter comprises four main sections. The first section focuses on the period between 1945 and 1955. The Asia-Africa Conference, also known as the Bandung Conference, was held at the end of this period. It was the turning point that divided countries in the region into two main camps with regard to regional cooperation. The second section discusses Malaya’s proposal for regional co-operation at the end of the 1950s, as well as the formation and dissolution of the ASA after the formation of MAPHILINDO. The third section analyses regional organisations involved in social and cultural cooperation, which have received little attention in most scholarly sources. The last section attempts to define the terms ‘regional organisation’ and ‘regional cooperation’ in relation to the formation of SEATO in 1954.
Early regional co-operation in Asia from 1945 to 1955

At the end of January 1945, during the Second World War, General Aung San of Burma stressed the necessity for Burma’s co-operation with neighbouring countries in the area of defence: ‘Burma must be strong in her defence, and will need the helping hand of one or more of her neighbours, at least—an entente between Burma, Indo-China, Thailand, Malaya, the Philippines, the East Indies, Yunnan, and Eastern India, on this side of the Brahmaputra.’¹ The Burmese leader also stated his plan to call for an ‘Asiatic Freedom Conference’ in October 1945 for the purpose of forming ‘a united campaign to secure freedom’ from external powers. He proposed the inclusion of Burma, Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka), India, Indo-China, Malaya, the Philippines, and Thailand.² In addition, Aung San stated his desire to form the ‘Asiatic federation in the not very, very remote future’ in the presence of Sarat Bose, the elder brother of Subhas Chandra Bose and a member of the Indian National Congress.³ Noting that Burma must strive to come up with solutions to mutual problems with India and South East Asia,⁴ the Burmese leader suggested the immediate formation of a South-East Asia Economic Union. For this union, his potential members would comprise Burma, Indochina, Indonesia, Malaya, and Thailand.⁵ Interestingly enough, although he recognised the Philippines as one of the Asian countries to be included in his plans for regional co-operation, the country was excluded from his conception of Southeast Asia. Unfortunately, after his assassination by a political enemy, the proposal failed to come to fruition. This, nevertheless, was one of the earliest indigenous proposals for regional co-operation.

² The Straits Times, 1 Nov. 1945, p. 1.
⁴ Ibid., p. 90.
⁵ The Straits Times, 19 April 1947, p. 4.
A proposal for regional co-operation was also put forward by the then President of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh, in 1945, in which he sent a letter to the President of Indonesia, Sukarno, to propose the formation of ‘a Preparatory Commission with the ultimate purpose of creating a Federation of the Free Peoples of Southern Asia,’ that aimed to fight for freedom and liberation from colonial powers. President Ho Chi Minh had plans to extend invitations to India, Burma, and Malaya to become members of the commission. However, Indonesia did not respond to this proposal, mainly because it thought that it would become weaker, and its independence delayed, if it allied with Ho Chi Minh.

Another proposal was later put forward by the then Prime Minister of Thailand, Thamrong Nawasawat, who announced in July 1947 that Thailand and France planned to form a Pan Southeast Asian Union for the joint development of irrigation, fisheries, communication, and other industries. The union would initially include the region of Indochina i.e. Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, and would later include Borneo, Burma, India, and Indonesia as well. However, the Thai people opposed this union with France, and consequently the organisation was not formed.

Although the proposals mentioned above did not come to fruition, India succeeded in taking initiatives towards forging regional co-operation. The first such initiative was the Asian Relations Conference held in New Delhi in 1947. The conference, which comprised twenty-six countries, aimed to pave the way towards co-operation among Asian countries, particularly among Southeast Asian countries. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, called for co-operation among Asian countries, and proposed the formation of a permanent Asian regional organisation. As Werner Levi pointed out, the conference reached the apex of their solidarity at the time, but began to

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7 Ibid., p. 144.
decline after the independence of many Asian countries with the gradual withdrawal of Western colonial powers.\textsuperscript{9} Moreover, a common distrust towards the two major Asian countries, i.e. India and China, held by other smaller countries arose during this time.\textsuperscript{10} Delegates from Southeast Asian countries were reluctant to be controlled by the two largest powers in the Asian region, and Nehru’s proposal was thus not supported.\textsuperscript{11} On the contrary, the delegates from Southeast Asian countries, i.e. Burma, Indonesia, Malaya, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam, built close and meaningful relations in New Delhi, India. Interestingly enough, one of the Indonesian delegates wrote:

I had endless talks and debates, especially with the delegations of Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaya. We felt we had much in common. We were from the same stock, and certainly once belonged to the same Malay race. We debated, talked, and planned a Southeast Asian Association closely co-operating first in culture and economic matters. Later, there could perhaps be a more closely knit political co-operation. Some of us even dreamt of a Greater Southeast Asia federation.\textsuperscript{12}

Though this regional co-operation was not forged immediately, it is worth noting that the conference provided a venue for the Southeast Asian delegates to meet and communicate with each other, since most of the indigenous political leaders whose countries were under colonial powers were not able to meet each other. The leaders who met here became key government figures later.

\textsuperscript{12} Abu Hanifah, \textit{Tales of a Revolution}, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1972, p. 235.
At around the same time, independent of the conference, the communist leader of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), Pham Ngoc Thanh, and the then Prime Minister of Siam, Pridi Banomyong, discussed the necessity of forming a regional organisation in June 1946. Unofficial representatives from Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaya, Thailand, and Vietnam participated in a conference that resulted in the formation of the Vietminh-sponsored South East Asia League in Bangkok in September 1947. The motives to form a regional co-operation with neighbours stemmed from ‘genuine sympathy for the nationalist aspirations of neighbouring peoples’ after the Thai government’s territorial claims in Indochina from France was rejected. As a matter of fact, the French government had proposed to establish a Pan Southeast Asia Union to the Thai government, which comprised France, Thailand, and its neighbours. However, this scheme was shelved because of Thailand’s objection that an independent Cambodia and Laos should join the Union, though Pridi was the first to be interested in this Union. In the unofficial conference, six goals were laid out in relation to the formation of the League: the promotion and development of good understanding among the member states; the realisation of their aspirations for full nationhood and the raising of their economic, social, and cultural standards; the promotion of universal peace and respect for human rights; the promotion of study, research, and exchange of information in Southeast Asia; the publication of matters of cultural, social, economic, and scientific interests relating to the region; and the establishment of a Southeast Asia Federation. However, the conference was not officially recognised by Southeast Asian governments, partly because of the participation of unauthorised representatives from Burma,

Indonesia, and Malaya. The resignation of Pridi also resulted in the League’s unsuccessful formation.

Since the Asian Relations Conference in 1947, indigenous Asian conferences had been held nearly every year until 1955. In January 1949, Nehru called for an Asian Conference to discuss the situation in Indonesia, in which at that time, the Dutch had conquered the main cities of Indonesia as part of its military campaign, in addition to capturing key Indonesian nationalists. Although the conference in 1949 was unofficial, fifteen Asian countries including Burma and the Philippine—with Thailand as an observer—participated in it. From the conference, a resolution to call for the release of the Indonesian political leaders and the withdrawal of the Dutch troops was passed. After this resolution, the United Nations Security Council ordered an end to the aggression in Indonesia and the restoration of the Indonesian government.

The Dutch finally adhered to this order. It can thus be seen that the conference had a great impact on international politics, played an important role in bringing about a peaceful settlement of this issue, and at the same time, reflected an Asian voice in international politics. Interestingly enough, according to Sisir Gupta, during this conference, Carlos Romulo of the Philippines urged for the establishment of a small permanent secretariat base in New Delhi or Manila that could evolve into a permanent organisation for Asian states, but his suggestion was not adopted.

Subsequent to this, the President of the Philippines, Elpidio Quirino, the President of the Republic of China, Chiang Kai Shek, and the President of South Korea, Syngman Rhee, intended to form an Asian Union in 1950. For the purpose of countering communist attacks, Quirino called for a conference in Baguio, the Philippines, to discuss a military pact and the formation of an anti-communism alliance. However, Burma, India, and Indonesia, among other countries, opposed the agenda to discuss the aforementioned

18 Sisir Gupta, ibid., pp. 40-41.
issues when they were invited. Thus, the conference was limited to general economic and social issues. Although the participating countries i.e. Australia, Ceylon, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Thailand passed a resolution, the conference was considered to have ended in failure. As Russell Fifield pointed out, the reasons for this failure were the rivalry between India and the Philippines for regional leadership and the differences among the countries of the region in their attitudes towards the menace of Communist aggression. In the issue of communism, India and Indonesia were neutralists, but other countries were opposed to it.

However, this conference significantly contributed to a sense of regional consciousness of Southeast Asia for two reasons. Firstly, the Asian regional conferences in the 1940s were held mainly in India, but this conference was the first meeting to be conducted within the region of Southeast Asia. Secondly, while many delegates from Middle Eastern countries were invited to the Asian Relations Conference in 1947, the Philippine government mainly focused on inviting the countries within the regions of Southeast Asia and the Pacific to the Baguio Conference because ‘we can complement one another relying on our common historic origin and traditional sympathy with each other, as well as on our geographic propinquity.’ In forging an international collaboration, the President of the Philippines chose to focus more on his immediate neighbouring countries within the Southeast Asian region as opposed to the whole of Asia.

Another important Asian conference during this period that aimed to forge regional co-operation was the Colombo Conference convened by the Prime Minister of Ceylon, John Kotelawala, in 1954, in collaboration with the Prime Ministers of Burma, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan. Unlike the 1949 Asian Conference, this informal conference

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was not called to discuss any specific issues. The Prime Minister of Ceylon merely wished to exchange ideas in an informal manner on matters of common interest with neighbouring countries. He believed that this would be an effective way to forge deeper relationships with neighbouring countries. His original intention was to arrange a meeting with only Burma, India, and Pakistan due to the fact that they are Ceylon’s closest neighbours and have many things in common. However, Kotelawala realised that Indonesia also belonged to the same cultural region and had also ‘shaken off the shackles of colonialism at about the same time.’ In view of this, an invitation was sent to Indonesia as well.

According to Kotelawala, there was no intention to promote Pan-Asianism behind this conference. It seems that he possessed a sense of regionalism pertaining to Southeast Asia, since this conference was officially called ‘the Colombo Conference of the South-East Asian Prime Ministers.’ He also proposed an economic co-operation within Southeast Asia in his opening speech. The agenda of the conference was mainly to discuss issues pertaining to Indochina. At around the same time, the Geneva Conference was also held to seek peaceful solutions to the same issues in Indochina; hence the resolutions that were passed in the Colombo Conference greatly influenced the views of the Great Powers in the Geneva Conference as well. In addition to the resolutions pertaining to the issues in Indochina, the participants of the Colombo Conference also agreed to considerations for economic co-operation and mutual aid between participating governments, as well as to hold a conference comprising Asian and African countries. As the Prime Minister of Ceylon noted, the five participating countries came to know one another and one another’s minds better than before,’ and they drew the attention of the rest of Asia ‘to the possibilities of united actions.’

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23 Sir John Kotelawala, ibid., p. 125.
The then Prime Minister of Indonesia, Ali Sastroamidjajo, had previously expressed a strong desire to hold an Asia-Africa conference during his attendance of the Colombo Conference. In view of the dire circumstances in Indochina at that time, he believed that his proposed Asia-Africa Conference would lead to a removal of tension among the countries. The Colombo Powers, which is what the participants of the Colombo Conference were known as, with the exception of Pakistan, held sceptical views on whether such a conference would be able to become a reality. Nevertheless, Indonesia took bold initiatives, and the country subsequently hosted the Bogor Conference with the other four Colombo Powers to discuss the possibility of the Asia-Africa Conference at the end of December 1954.24

The Bogor Conference mainly aimed to discuss whom the Colombo Powers would invite. They initially planned to invite only the Asia-Africa group within the U.N., but Nehru proposed extending an invitation to the People’s Republic of China as well due to the fact that its representative seat in the U.N. was not yet recognised at the time. This was one of the main points that reflected upon whether or not Asian solidarity could be successfully forged, because China, which was the most populous country, could not be ignored in the international arena. After several discussions, they finally agreed to invite China along with twenty-three other countries. The Joint Communiqué of the Colombo Powers stressed ‘to promote goodwill and co-operation among the nations of Asia and Africa,’25 and, although this is less known, the communiqué also mentioned that the five countries ‘considered setting up a committee to discuss economic questions of common interests to the countries.’26 They also made attempts to forge economic co-operation among themselves.

26 Ibid., pp. 417-418.
Sponsored by the Colombo Powers, the Asia-Africa Conference was held in Bandung in April 1955. The twenty-nine participating countries were not only from East and South Asia, but were also from West and Central Asia. Participating countries from Southeast Asia were Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, the Philippines, Thailand, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and the State of Vietnam. Since Malaya did not yet achieve independence at the time, it was not officially invited, but nationalist parties from Malaya and Sarawak attended as observers.27

It is worth mentioning that this was the first time that all independent countries in Southeast Asia participated in a single conference initiated by the indigenous governments themselves. Since the Asian Relations Conference held in 1947 was an unofficial conference, most of the delegates from Southeast Asia, particularly Burma, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam were not authorised representatives of their respective governments.

It is generally said that the Bandung Conference was successful because the twenty-nine countries, irrespective of their different ideologies, shared similar views on common problems, reached agreements on various issues, and declared their support for the promotion of world peace and co-operation, which was later called ‘the spirit of Bandung.’ As George Kahin pointed out, another significant point about this conference was that China, which was internationally isolated before, participated and directly engaged in discussions with non-communist countries. It helped to ‘allay apprehensions of possible aggressive moves Communist China,’ and to also relieve international tensions. The Prime Minister of Ceylon, who was ‘an avowed and inveterate opponent of Communism,’28 made this statement later: ‘I felt when I came back home that I was not taking an undue risk in prophesying that there would be no war.’29

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27 Ibid., p. 187.
28 Sir John Kotelawala, ibid., p. 123.
29 Ibid., p. 184.
In the context of the spirit of regionalism in Southeast Asia, this conference was also significantly important. This was because of the fact that with the success of the conference, Southeast Asian countries were divided into two groups in their views regarding ‘regionalism.’ As mentioned above, the final communiqué declared the following:

The Asia-Africa Conference declares its conviction that friendly cooperation, in accordance with these principles, would effectively contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security, while cooperation in the economic, social, and cultural fields would help bring about common prosperity and well-being for all.\(^{30}\)

This clause declared two points: the former being the co-operation in international peace and security, and the latter being the co-operation in the economic, social, and cultural fields. Looking at the situation of ‘regional co-operation’ in the 1960s, it can be said that the former was more in line with Indonesia and Burma’s interests, while the latter was more in line with Malaya, Thailand, and the Philippines’ aspirations.

Indonesia has had a strong desire to eradicate imperialism and colonialism since before its independence because of bitter colonial experiences and fierce battles with the Dutch for independence. At the time of the conference, as the West Irian dispute with the Dutch was not yet settled, Sukarno emphasised in his opening speech of the Asia-Africa Conference that ‘colonialism is not dead yet’ and ‘is an evil thing…must be eradicated from the earth.’\(^{31}\) The final communiqué also said that all the participants agreed in declaring that ‘colonialism…is an evil which should speedily be brought to an end,’\(^{32}\).


\(^{32}\) Ibid., p. 81.
incorporating the same expression from Sukarno. Indonesia prioritised the abortion of colonialism and imperialism in its efforts to promote the creation of a peaceful world. Sukarno noted in this speech at the United Nations General Assembly in 1960:

Almost without exception, imperialism and colonialism in one of their many manifestations, are at the root of the tension (and) of the conflict. Imperialism and colonialism and the continued forcible division of nations ... is at the root of almost all international and threatening evil in this world of ours. Until those evils of a hated past are ended, there can be no rest or peace in this world ... [i]n order to make peace, we must remove the causes of tension and conflict.33

It was important for Sukarno to co-operate with countries in the third world for the purpose of ending colonialism. As such, he was more concerned with efforts to develop co-operation among third world countries and thus, as Anthony Reid pointed out, he was less keen on regional co-operation within Southeast Asia. Co-operation among third world countries was his concept of ‘regional co-operation.’34 In this context, Indonesia established its position with the leaders of the third world—India, Egypt, and Yugoslavia—to express opinions of the Asia-Africa group after the successful conference.

On the other hand, the latter group of countries mentioned earlier had been seeking co-operation among Southeast Asian countries in economic and cultural fields since the late 1950s. The first such co-operation was known as the South East Asian Friendship and Economic Treaty (SEAFET), proposed by Malaya.

Regional social and cultural co-operation

Although many scholars have focused on the origins and development of regional organisations within the context of international politics, the regional, social, and cultural organisations before the formation of ASEAN have not been sufficiently discussed. The Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games) and the South East Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO), which were established in 1959 and 1965, respectively, were created for the purpose of promoting regional co-operation through sports and educational activities. Before discussing ASEAN in the next chapter, the focus here should be on these regional social and cultural organisations because they were also instrumental in enhancing regional identity.

The creation of the South East Asia Peninsular Games (SEAP Games) was an initiative by Luang Sukhum Nayapradit, the then Vice President of the National Olympic Committee of Thailand, in late 1957. Although he was interested in organising major athletic sports games such as the Asian Games and the Olympic Games, when it came to organising international games, he had a more particular desire that was more limited in its regional scope, e.g. games that involved only the ‘South East Asia Peninsular,’ or what is currently known as mainland Southeast Asia. Before submitting his proposal to the Olympic Committee of Thailand, he first attempted to convey his ideas to Cambodia and Vietnam through the coach of the Amateur Athletic Association of Thailand, who visited the countries in a private capacity in February 1958. Having received their support, the Vice President of the Committee submitted his proposal to the Olympic Committee. The Olympic Committee approved it in principle, and preparations to set up an organisation to oversee the South East Asia Peninsular Games were made in December of that year.
When the third Asian Games was held in Tokyo in May 1958, Nayapradit called for a meeting of sports organisations from Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Malaya, and Vietnam to discuss his proposal, which was subsequently fully approved. The meeting decided on a new name for the games i.e. the South East Asia Peninsular Games (SEAP Games). Bangkok was the first city to host the games in 1959, and it was then held every two years. Nayapradit explained that the purposes of the new games were to enhance the standard of regional athletes in competing in the Asian Games and Olympics, and ‘to promote closer friendship among the neighbouring countries.’ He also stated his hope that the regional games ‘would stir up interest in sport’ in the six participating countries, seeing that they were 'hopeless' in the Olympic Games and could only win a small number of medals in the Asian Games. He perceived the games as ‘a sort of a family Olympics,’ which could have indicated his intention of developing regional consciousness.

The SEAP Games was limited to only mainland Southeast Asia at early stage. Nayapradit stated that the reason for this was because ‘the people in this region have similarity in climate and in physical appearance.’ Thailand did not invite Singapore to this regional competition. An anonymous Thai sports official gave two reasons for this: firstly, Singapore did not belong to the ‘Peninsula mainland,’ and secondly, Thailand had inadequate facilities to hold a big sports event. However, Singapore expressed a strong desire to participate in the Games. The Singapore Olympic and Sports Council sent a team to Bangkok to discuss the matter at the end of July 1959. Although the contents of the discussions with the Thai officials were not reported, Thailand finally gave its approval and sent an invitation to Singapore for the inaugural regional games in December 1959. There is no clear indication as to why Singapore, which was still a

35 The Singapore Free Press, 4 June 1958, p. 15.
36 SEA Games Federation, SEAP and SEA Games History: 50th Anniversary of SEA Games, 8th December 2009, Vientiane, p. 15.
British colony, desired to join the games, but the island-nation was incorporated into the area of ‘the South East Asia Peninsular,’ or mainland Southeast Asia, under the definition of the SEAP Games Federation.

Although Singapore was accepted into the games and thus the scope of SEAP expanded, the purpose of organising the SEAP Games did not change at all, which was actually to promote cordial relations between neighbouring countries in the region. In mainland Southeast Asia, severe conflicts and hatred had existed for centuries, such as the one between Thailand and Burma, and Cambodia and Vietnam. Thus, it was hoped that sports could promote peace and co-operation between all sovereign states in the region. Nayapradit did mention in a report by the Organising Committee for the First SEAP Games that ‘the Rules of the SEAP Games Federation will serve to bind us together in closer harmony and friendship, thus strengthening and perpetuating cordial relations that have happily existed between us for centuries.’

The SEAP Games has, to some extent, contributed to the development of regional consciousness in mainland Southeast Asia later in the 1960s and the 1970s.

Some members of the SEAP Games Federation proposed enlarging its membership in the 1960s, but the other members did not easily accept this. Thailand and Singapore proposed extending membership to Brunei, Indonesia, and the Philippines in 1967 and 1969 respectively. Malaysia also made a proposal to expand the membership in 1971, but this failed because the other members wished to keep the games within the ‘SEAP family’ only. The Malaysian Sports Minister, Hamzah Abu Samah, proposed adding new member states again in October 1975, but the delegates from Burma, Cambodia, and Laos opposed the proposal because it “would mean heavier financial strains on countries who were finding it difficult to compete, let alone the organiser of the event.” However,
the meeting held to discuss this matter in Bangkok in December of the same year finally came to a conclusion that new members could be accepted to participate. Since Malaysia was the host for the 1977 Games that was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia insisted that it would not organise the games without the participation of the three new members: Brunei, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The other founding members finally bent to Malaysia’s strong will.42

With the admission of the new members, the name of the SEAP Games was changed to its current name, the Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games), in 1977. It took almost ten years to expand the games’ membership since the proposal was initially made. Without Malaysia’s efforts, the games’ membership would not have been expanded.

There are other regional organisations that are not well discussed in the context of regionalism in Southeast Asia, such as SEAMEO. This is presumably because the organisation is limited to co-operation in the area of education, which is not at all related to national and regional security and political issues in Southeast Asia that caused controversial matters during the Cold War. However, political leaders in each country of the region acknowledge education to be the most important factor in national development. Thus, a regional organisation was set up to lay the foundation of development in the education field.

The idea of establishing SEAMEO originated from an informal meeting between Southeast Asian countries and the U.S. government. At the time when the UNESCO Conference of Ministers of Education and Ministers Responsible for Economic Planning was held in Bangkok in 1965, the Ministers of Education of Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, South Vietnam, and the Philippines held an informal dialogue with Eugene Black, the Special Advisor to the U.S. President, following the desire of the U.S.

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President, Lyndon Johnson, to promote social and educational development through a regional co-operation.43

The informal meeting is regarded as the first SEAMEO conference. With encouragement in the form of financial support from the U.S. government, and the offer to provide temporary secretariat staffs by the Thai government, the ministers agreed to set up the regional organisation in the area of education. This meeting should have been considered a landmark in the development of regionalism in Southeast Asia, but it has instead been given little attention.

Apparently, the first conference saw many proposals being put forward, though it was an informal dialogue. The Minister of Education of Malaysia, Khir Johari, made one of these proposals. His proposal was to set up an education research centre to standardise tests, and to develop a curriculum and teaching techniques in Kuala Lumpur. The Minister intended that the centre would serve not only Malaysia, but also other Southeast Asian countries.44

Following this meeting, an interim Secretariat was formed in the Ministry of Education of Thailand. The Secretariat drew up educational project proposals and submitted them during the second SEAMEO conference, which was held in Manila in November 1966. The Manila Conference also approved the acceptance of Indonesia as a new member. It is worth noting that most Southeast Asian countries joined this organisation before the establishment of ASEAN.45 The conference also approved a draft charter of the organisation, and made the decision to formalise the creation of the permanent secretariat located in Bangkok.

The third conference in Singapore in 1968 approved the establishment of the permanent Secretariat in Bangkok, as well as the regional centres. A permanent Director

for the Secretariat was also appointed in this meeting. Another significant event was the signing of the SEAMEO charter, which was drafted in the previous conference, by the member states. As the Minister of Education of Singapore, Ong Pang Boon pointed out regarding the charter, ‘this one is the first one that has achieved concrete results.’

SEAMEO is a regional organisation that cannot be ignored in the context of regionalism in Southeast Asia. This is due to two factors: the rapid establishment of SEAMEO’s internal structures, and the aggressive pursuit of various activities since its inception. As previously mentioned, the establishment and appointment of the Secretariat took place in 1968, and the organisation charter was approved and signed by the member countries in the same year. The establishment of SEAMEO’s Secretariat took much less time compared to ASEAN, which actually took nine years after its inception in 1967 to decide on establishing its Secretariat in Jakarta. The ASEAN Charter was signed and entered into force only forty years after the creation of the organisation.

In regard to the second factor mentioned above, SEAMEO has been active since its inception in 1965. The most significant thing was that the SEAMEO Conference, the highest level of meeting in the organisation, has been held annually and hosted by the member countries on a rotational basis. By holding ministerial meetings each year, the member countries could co-operate more closely in the education field. In addition, the regional co-operation network and the seven regional centres under SEAMEO were established in the early stages of the organisation’s formation. Since the formation of the organisation, various education projects have also been proactively pursued.

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47 The Straits Times, 8 Feb. 1968, p. 21.
48 The network and regional centres are as below: Tropical Medicine and Public Health Network (1966). The central office is in Bangkok; Regional Centre for Tropical Medicine (1967) in Thailand; Regional Centre for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (1966) in the Philippines; Regional Centre for Public Health, Hospital Administration, Environmental and Occupational Health (1967) in the Philippines; Regional Centre for Microbiology, Parasitology and Entomology (1967) in Malaysia; Regional Centre for Education in Science and Mathematics (1967) in Malaysia; Regional English Language Centre (1968) in Singapore; Regional Centre for Tropical Biology (1968) in Indonesia. From the SEAMEO website: http://www.seameo.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=98&Itemid=519 (accessed on 8 Aug., 2015)
An example of this is the Regional English Language Centre in Singapore, which serves to improve language skills for English as a second language in the region, besides providing English intensive courses and training for teachers. Through the centre, the member countries would no longer be required to send people to the West for English training. Each regional centre also produced annual reports, which have shown tangible results through collaboration with member countries.

SEAMEO can be considered a success in the early stages of the history of regional co-operation in Southeast Asia. As little attention was given to this organisation, it can be said that it was a ‘silent success.’ This silent success was a result of politicians and educators alike recognising the importance of education in the region. All Southeast Asian countries suffered from battered economies after the Second World War. Economic development thus became the primary issue; the national development for all newly independent countries in the long term prioritised promoting modern education to all citizens. Sharing common educational problems was inevitable, so countries in the region sought to find solutions and work together to settle these problems through the regional organisation. All the member countries also sought to obtain mutual benefits through co-operation in the field of education. Thus, the organisation led to more success than ASEAN, as Koh pointed out.\(^49\) When the U.S. conducted the informal meeting, the participants might have thought that an educational collaboration within the region would not achieve success in light of the failure of ASA and MAPHILINDO. The U.S. initiated SEAMEO, but the regional members created most projects run by the organisation. It can therefore be said that the maturing of regional consciousness has led to international collaborations within the region and the emergence of ASA and MAPHILINDO by the mid-1960s.

SEATO as a regional organisation?

In regard to regional co-operation and regional organisations from 1945 to 1967, the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) has been discussed in detail. However, this dissertation does not consider SEATO as a regional organisation because of the two factors discussed below. SEATO was simply a military group or alliance in which the Western countries mainly participated to stop the expansion of communism in Southeast Asia, as the then Indian Ambassador to the United Nations, Krishna Menon, made a criticism with the following words in 1954: ‘The Charter provides for a regional organisation, however, it is not a regional organisation but...a modern version of a protectorate. It is an organisation of certain imperial Powers, and some others, who may have an interest in joining together to protect a territory which they say is in danger.’

The first factor as to why SEATO is not considered a regional organisation is that most of its members are outsiders of the Southeast Asian region. As is well known, SEATO was established in Manila in 1954 at the initiative of the U.S., with the co-operation of Great Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines. Meanwhile, only two of the participating countries were actually from the region (Thailand and the Philippines), most of the other member states were former colonial nations. All members had grave concerns over the spread of communism in the entire region, particularly from Indochina. The treaty signed in Manila stipulated the ‘Treaty Area’, which involved protecting ‘the general area of South-East Asia,’ with three countries named in the protocol of the treaty: Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. As mentioned in Chapter 1, no consensus has been reached regarding the definition of the Southeast Asian region among scholars and politicians in this period, thus it seems that

52 Ibid., p. 231.
this broad definition was used instead. However, this definition and the name of the organisation did not indicate that all members belonged to the region. In other words, although the name of the organisation contained ‘South East Asia,’ it is clear that this term referred only to the geographical area designated by all members of SEATO within and outside the region for the purpose of defence. Unlike ASA and MAPHILINDO, the organisation was not formed for the purpose of promoting co-operation between the countries of the region.

The second factor as to why SEATO is not considered a regional organisation is that it hardly involved regional co-operation between the countries in the region. As Michael Leifer argued, a regional co-operation is formed on a multilateral basis (over three countries) with several other additional conditions, ‘however intimate, between states, which share a common geographic location.’\(^53\) As the member states from within the region were Thailand and the Philippines only, this criterion was not fulfilled. In this respect, SEATO was not a regional organisation. However, some members might have recognised Pakistan as one of the Southeast Asian countries. The Muslim country still retained its eastern territory (present-day Bangladesh that gained independence in 1972), located west of Burma, during the formation of SEATO. Apart from the issue as to whether or not this territory was part of the region, even granting the assumption that Pakistan was included in the region and that the three countries forged multilateral co-operation within this organisation, SEATO would still not be considered a regional organisation. Certainly this would mean that the conditions that Leifer laid out would be met, but this military organisation would still not function without the Major Powers, in particular the United States, as the main purpose of SEATO was to prevent the communists from expanding in the region during the Cold War. The countries belonging

to the region did, however, predominantly run this organisation. In other words, a regional organisation is defined as an organisation in which at least three nations within a region take initiatives towards establishing it and predominantly run it themselves.

Although SEATO is far from a regional organisation, what exactly is a ‘region’ as used in the term ‘regional organisation’? Basically, a regional organisation cannot be formed without a region. As the prominent historian Nicholas Tarling defined, a region is ‘like a nation, a region is an “imagined community.”’\footnote{Nicholas Tarling, \textit{Regionalism in Southeast Asia: To foster the political will}, London: Routledge, 2006, p. 6.} When local politicians in a country have a regional consciousness and they share this perception of the region with neighbouring countries, a region emerges. ‘[t]here are no “natural” regions but they are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed, internationally or non-internationally, in the process of global transformation, by collective human action and identity formation.’\footnote{Quoted from ibid., p. 12. Original article is in Michael and Söderbaum, ‘Key Issues in New Regionalism: Comparisons from Asia, Africa and the Middle East,’ in Hettne, Björn et al., \textit{Comparing Regionalism: Implications for Global Development}, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001.} These elements contribute to the creation of a region, but there is one other indispensable prerequisite for the establishment of a region: a regional organisation, which is formed based on the ‘regularity and intensity of interactions’\footnote{William R. Thompson, ‘The Regional Subsystem: A Conceptual Explication and a Propositional Inventory,’ \textit{International Studies Quarterly}, Vo. 17, No. 1 (Mar., 1973), p. 101.} among local politicians in the region. This contributes to the formation of a regional frame and the creation of an ‘imagined region’ and to gain their region for themselves. Through any regionally related activities in a regional organisation, the formation of the region emerges as a common vision. As such, it is clear that the most important element in the creation of a region is the formation of a regional organisation.

As we saw in this chapter, many proposals towards regional co-operation and the establishment of a regional organisation that were made between the 1940s and 1960s hardly materialised, but some of them did result in the establishment of regional organisations. Among them, ASA laid the foundation for the formation of future regional
organisations. Based on this first indigenous organisation, ASEAN was thus born in 1967. As will be discussed in the next chapter, ASEAN created a much more definite image and a common regional consciousness of Southeast Asia through its regional activities.

From indigenous proposals to crystallisation

While Indonesia became a leading power in Asia after the Asia-Africa Conference, in which it sought co-operation with other Asian and African countries, some of the other Southeast Asian countries also took initiatives to forge regional co-operation. Leaders from the Malay Peninsula, a geographical location that strategically connects the mainland and maritime Southeast Asia, proposed a new regional co-operation.

Tunku Abdul Rahman, president of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), and Tan Cheng Lock, president of the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), jointly suggested on November 1954 that a South East Asia Union should be formed for the purpose of defence. The suggested members included Burma, Indo-China, Indonesia, Malaya, the Philippines, and Siam, with the hope of obtaining aid from the United States. Singapore was not included in this plan, but several indigenous leaders agreed with the idea, under specific conditions. Lee Yong Min, Secretary of the Singapore Labour Party, welcomed the idea, but casted doubt on how Malaya could become a member of the union, since Malaya was not yet independent at the time. Thio Chan Bee, a Singapore Legislative Council member, also offered his support for economic co-operation, partly because ‘South-East Asia territories are closely linked’ to each other, but he suggested that the first step for such co-operation should be a confederation of the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, Borneo, Sarawak, and Brunei. Tan Cheng Lock stated that the
formation of the aforementioned union depended on the outcome of discussions with the Thai government in the end, but the proposal failed.

The Tunku subsequently proposed another framework for regional co-operation. During an official visit to Ceylon in early 1958, he suggested to the Prime Minister of Ceylon, Solomon Bandaranaike, that there should be closer co-operation and understanding between smaller Southeast Asian countries, because ‘South-East Asian countries are inclined to dance to the tune of bigger nations.’ He also stated that these nations should not ‘concern themselves unduly with world and Afro-Asian politics when politics in South-East Asia itself are in the melting pot.’ Thus, in order to discuss and sort out common problems with each other, the Tunku proposed holding a conference for regional leaders in Kuala Lumpur, while stating that he did not wish to take the lead. He said that ‘I do not want to take the lead because I consider myself a young brother among South-East Asian leaders.’ He apparently had Sukarno/Indonesia in mind when making this statement. Since Malaya had just gained independence at that time, the Tunku did not wish to take initiatives towards regional co-operation, so as not to be made a regional leader. More interestingly, the Tunku made his proposal for regional co-operation in Ceylon, despite having made official visits to South Vietnam and Thailand immediately before visiting the island. Apparently, the Tunku regarded Ceylon as part of Southeast Asia at the time. After proposing for a Southeast Asian conference to come up with a charter for economic development, which was mooted during the 14th plenary session of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), the Malayan government included Ceylon, India, and Pakistan (but excluded Burma) on the invitation list. This might be seen as the regional demarcation of ECAFE, and Ceylon’s inclusion

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59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid., 22 April 1958, p. 5.
in it was perhaps due to the island’s geographic location, whereby the Tunku might have felt that it shared geographical proximity with Malaya. The cultural similarity and the presence of Malays in Ceylon might have also been another factor that prompted the Tunku to consider the island as one of the regional members. This Malay population is attributable to the numerous immigrants who migrated into Ceylon during the British colonial era.

The Tunku made an official visit to the Philippines at the invitation of President Carlos Garcia in January 1959. In the joint communiqué issued on the last day of his visit by the two Heads of government, they agreed on the need for forging closer cultural ties and collaboration among the countries of Southeast Asia to discuss and solve common problems.62 Immediately before the issuance of the communiqué, the Tunku also stated that Malaya might call for a meeting of leaders from Southeast Asian countries as the first step towards the realisation of Malaya’s proposal for an economic and cultural alliance.63 The Prime Minister of Malaya emphasised forging economic co-operation between the Southeast Asian countries because ‘the only way to combat the infiltration by the Communists’ was ‘to ensure that the conditions in South-east Asia are very much better than they are today.’64

As a matter of fact, Garcia proposed the formation of an anti-communist alliance among member countries, but he pointed out that this would antagonise many other Asian countries if it were formed.65 The Tunku would have wanted both neutral and pro-Western nations to join his regional framework. However, when the idea was disclosed to Garcia, he thought that the South East Asian Friendship and Economic Treaty (SEAFET) was ‘too broad and grandiose.’ Garcia preferred to associate with the pro-

Western nations in the region. The two Heads of government also held different ideas regarding regional co-operation. Tunku’s idea of regional co-operation was only in the economic and cultural fields, but Garcia sought co-operation in more areas, including politics and security. As the Tunku believed that regional co-operation could help defend against communist expansion by increasing the living standards in the region, he attempted to persuade the President during the meeting. After the conclusion of the official visit, the two governments discussed the implementation of the joint communiqué, and the Malayan government subsequently submitted its draft proposal to the Philippines.

At the same time, Thailand was also keen on setting up a regional association. According to Bernard Gordon, a working paper on a regional co-operation made by the Foreign Ministry of Thailand was sent to other Southeast Asian countries, and was widely circulated. Thailand wanted to call the association the ‘Southeast Asia Community Organisation (SEACOR).’

On 28 October 1959, the Tunku sent a letter to Garcia, in which he stated that he had already sent his proposal to Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. This reflected his concept/definition of the countries that comprised the Southeast Asian region. While the objectives of the newly proposed regional organisation were to promote closer relations between the countries of the region and to find solutions to common problems in economic, social, cultural, and scientific fields, more interestingly, the Tunku desired to develop a sense of regional consciousness through the organisation. He explained in his letter his motivation behind such a desire:

67 Ibid., p. 167.
For historical reasons, the cultural and economic development of most countries of South East Asia has been principally influenced in the present century by the relations, which they have had with other countries outside South East Asia. As a consequence, the growth of any sense of South East Asian consciousness, or of a common heritage in the great cultural achievements and possibilities of this part of Asia has been arrested.  

The Tunku suggested that the first quarter of 1960, specifically around February or March, might be appropriate for a meeting of regional leaders. However, only the Philippines and Thailand favoured his idea to set up a new regional association. Other invitees rejected it, including the largest and most populous country in the region, Indonesia. President Sukarno replied to the Tunku in a letter dated 31 December 1959, giving a somewhat positive opinion by stating that ‘it is good, in fact necessary,’ but also adding at the same time that ‘a new association …will only raise doubts and … become a stumbling block to our desire to cooperate.’ Instead, he suggested that Southeast Asian countries should concentrate on bilateral arrangements. In regard to regional co-operation, he stated that as and when it was needed, he ‘can foresee possibilities within the Afro-Asian context.’ Laos gave no reaction, while Burma, Cambodia, and Vietnam finally objected to the establishment of the association, though the three core members, i.e. Malaya, Thailand, and the Philippines, preferred Burma and Indonesia to join on the basis of their neutralist political stands in international politics. When the Tunku expressed the idea of forging regional co-operation in Ceylon in 1958, it seemed that his

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68 Malayaw/Philippine relations, p. 16.
69 Ibid., p. 17.
concept of Southeast Asia included the island nation, but a formal invitation to be part of this new association was never sent.

When the sixteenth session of the ECAFE was held in Bangkok in March 1960, in which the agenda focused on regional co-operation in Asia, the Philippine delegate formally proposed the formation of the South East Asia Economic Bloc. The Minister of Commerce of the Philippines who was also the Chief delegate, Dr. Perfecto Laguio, stated that the Philippines, Thailand, Malaya, and South Vietnam would join it, while Indonesia could become its founding member.\textsuperscript{72} However, Malaya negatively responded that ‘[t]he Philippines’ proposal is too limited in its scope. It lacks the social aspects of our proposal...Malaya’s proposal is neater, more modest, and more workable.’\textsuperscript{73}

At the end of July 1960, the Tunku announced that the three countries (Malaya, the Philippines, and Thailand) agreed to form their own Secretariats to handle preparatory work towards the establishment of the Association of South East Asia States (ASAS). This announcement was made after the three countries engaged in discussions on the topic for months. The Tunku said that there had been general agreement that the proposed co-operation between the countries should be established ‘on a practical and informal basis.’ He also added that ASAS would involve no formal treaty.\textsuperscript{74} In this announcement, the name SEAFET was dropped and changed to ASAS, and this was partly because SEAFET sounded like SEATO.\textsuperscript{75}

After two weeks, Indonesia rejected the idea of joining ASAS, and emphasised that it would only agree to bilateral treaties with other countries based on mutual co-operation.\textsuperscript{76} The three countries discussed the regional co-operation for a few months, and finally a meeting was held in Kuala Lumpur in February 1961 between the Tunku,

\textsuperscript{72} The Straits Times, 11 March 1960, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 23 March 1960, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 28 July 1960, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{76} The Singapore Free Press, 11 Aug. 1960, p. 2.
the Thai Foreign Minister, Thanat Khoman, and the Philippine Foreign Minister, Felixberto Serrano. It was in this meeting that the three countries decided to go ahead to form ASAS.77

The Association of South East Asia (ASA) was finally established in July 1961. The name of the organisation was changed again to reflect the word ‘hope’ in the Malay language. It involved many conferences among Foreign Ministers, and committees and projects until September 1963,78 when the Federation of Malaysia was formed. At this time, Malaysia broke off diplomatic relations with Indonesia and the Philippines. After restoring relations with the Philippines, a standing committee was held again in Bangkok in March 1966. Afterwards, a Joint Working Committee was also held, but the conference of Foreign Ministers at the end of August 1967 became the last meeting for ASA. Since the Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN) was established at the beginning of the month, the three countries agreed in principle to transfer ASA programmes and projects to ASEAN in order to avoid duplication of activities.79 After the conference, the Tunku stated that ‘[w]e have not quite suspended ASA. We are carrying on with it until the time is ripe for ASA to back out for ASEAN to go ahead.’80 Before the conference, Khoman also mentioned that ‘[t]he dissolution of ASA depends on the work remaining for the organisation to do. If there is no more work, it would fade away and stop.’81 No announcement was made to dissolve ASA, and the organisation gradually faded.

The first regional organisation in Southeast Asia, ASA, thus ceased with the formation of ASEAN, but it is worth noting that it was the indigenous leadership that created the organisation. Although many political leaders in Asia proposed regional co-

79 Foreign Affairs Malaysia, Vol. 1, No. 6 (Sept. 1967), pp. 60-61.
81 Ibid., 27 Aug. 1967, p. 5.
operation and organisations after the Second World War, as previously mentioned, all of these indigenous proposals never came to fruition. Thus, it is important to discuss here the background of ASEAN and the factors behind its successful formation. These factors can be divided into domestic and international factors.

The major domestic factor that encouraged regional co-operation in this period was the fact that each country had not achieved economic independence due to economic stagnation, despite their political independence from the colonial powers except for Thailand. For this reason, all Southeast Asian countries were given financial aid from the major powers to develop their economies. Despite this fact, Southeast Asian countries did not wish to depend unduly on these major powers. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Thanat Khoman, said later that:

We want to be free, we do not want to be under the influence of anyone, large or small. We do not want to depend on the outside world, we want to depend on each and everyone of us ... We do not want to be dictated from Europe, or from America, or from Moscow, or from Peking, or from anywhere else.82

Another additional factor contributing to the economic stagnation in the Southeast Asian countries was the revolts from local communist forces. Therefore, the three countries agreed that the best way to develop their economies and gain economic independence was to discuss common problems and find solutions with the developing countries neighbouring them. This was Tunku’s opinion, and Thailand and the Philippines also accepted this opinion.

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The ASA’s successful formation is also attributable to two international factors. The first factor was the regional organisations that were formed in the 1950s in Europe such as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the European Economic Community (EEC), the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or Euratom), and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), which provided the inspiration for ASA’s formation. The second factor relates to the Cold War. The Cold War had impact on the entirety of Southeast Asia, especially with the Indochina region becoming the ideological battleground between the communism and capitalism. In 1954, Thailand and the Philippines joined SEATO for the purpose of protecting their sovereignty from being threatened by the communist camp, but in view of the SEATO alliance becoming dysfunctional, the two countries became distrustful of the alliance, especially after the Laos crisis from the late 1950s to the early 1960s. In the aftermath of this, the two countries desired to create a regional organisation for economic co-operation with their immediate neighbours, a move which finally resulted in the signing of the Bangkok Resolution on regional economic co-operation during the 16th ECAFE assembly in 1960, and this became the impetus for the formation of ASA. The Bangkok Resolution aimed to promote regional co-operation, especially in Southeast Asia.

ASA is significant not only for being the first indigenous regional organisation formed by indigenous leaders. As Gordon argued, the most important element was that ‘the concept of regionalism has a remarkably strong appeal to the indigenous elites in Southeast Asia.’ In other words, the three member countries took leadership via ASA to re-define and further develop the concept of Southeast Asia. As discussed in Chapter 1, ‘Southeast Asia’ as a region has been defined differently by scholars and politicians.

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The concept of Southeast Asia was originally a Western concept, and the indigenous political leaders were aware of its rough geographical scope based on the Western concept. However, ASA sought to re-define the geographical scope of the region from the indigenous point of view. This resulted in the various efforts of its member countries, but most significantly the Malayan leaders, who were the ones who proactively pursued this aim. They approached the countries within the region to join the organisation, and in so doing appealed to them to define their own region. Although most of ASA’s objectives and projects were subsequently transferred to ASEAN, it still remains an important organisation in terms of regional identity, because ASEAN would not have been able to define the region without ASA.

Another significant entity in Southeast Asia that was aimed at developing regional co-operation and helped mature regional identity existed at around the same time, and this was MAPHILINDO. This was not an official regional organisation, but it was a significant entity involved in ASA’s transition to becoming ASEAN. By analysing the background of this entity, its significance can be seen. Nationalists in the Philippines and Indonesia had wished to create a confederation of the Malay race since the nineteenth century. As discussed in Chapter 2, Jose Rizal and other Filipino nationalists envisaged a union of the Malay stock. In the 1930s, the Young Philippines, a nationalist student organisation under Wenceslao Q. Vinzons, set a goal to form ‘Republic of Malaysia’ and used the slogan ‘Malaya Irredenta.’ Manuel Quezon also had a dream of forming a federation that included Burma, Thailand, and Indochina, of which its people were considered as related to the Malays culturally.86 For the Philippines the closest thing to a ‘Malay Union,’ which Rizal and Vinzons suggested, was MAPHILINDO.87 Indonesian

87 Interview through e-mail with Associate Professor, Augusto V. de Viana, Department of History, Faculty of Arts and Letters, University of Santo Tomas on 26 July, 2017. For more details, Augusto V. de Viana, ‘The dream of Malayan unity: President Diosdado Macapagal and the Maphilindo,’ Jurnal Sejarah, Vol. 23, Bil. 1 (Jun 2015), pp. 42-76.
nationalists also harboured a similar dream in the 1920s. Later in 1959, Mohammed Yamin, the Minister of Special Affairs of Indonesia, stated that it was desirable to establish a non-political Austronesian confederation comprising Indonesia, Malaya, and the Philippines, on the basis of its people originating from a single stock of identical culture.  

The President of the Philippines, Diosdado Macapagal, proposed the formation of MAPHILINDO during the time of the Indonesian Confrontation against Malaysia. The proposal was an embodiment of the idea of establishing a confederation of nations of Malay origin, and it was discussed during a conference involving the Foreign Ministers of the three nations in June 1963. They agreed, in a joint communiqué, that they would accept the idea as a means of bringing together the three countries into closer association.

However, the framework of MAPHILINDO was not well defined. The heads of the three nations signed the Manila Accord on 31 July 1963, during the summit conference, which defined MAPHILINDO as ‘the grouping of the three nations of Malay origin working together in close harmony, but without surrendering any portion of their sovereignty.’ Although Gordon wrote that it was ‘a loose consultative grouping of Indonesia, Malaya, and the Philippines,’ Mackie argued that it was ‘much less than a confederation, and hardly even an alliance.’ As it was an ‘association for the Malay race,’ it was criticised as an anti-Chinese association, especially by Singapore. In spite of the fact that the entity involved the Malay stock, Tun Razak, the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, stated that it was possible for any country to join, because ‘[t]he
idea is purely based on friendship for the benefit of all the people.’

During the Foreign Ministers’ conference, Malaysia did consider the option of extending membership to other countries. In response to this, the Head of Cambodia, Norodom Sihanouk, expressed the desire to join MAPHILINDO at a later time.

Through the Accord, the three nations agreed that they would attempt to co-operate in matters of security and economic, social, and cultural development, as well as set up a national secretariat and hold conferences for the Heads and Foreign Ministers of the three governments at least once a year. In short, this organisation was set up for the purpose of comprehensive co-operation. The summit conference that was held at the end of July 1963 endorsed the Accord. As a matter of fact, Kuala Lumpur perceived that Indonesia had accepted the formation of Malaysia from its agreement to form MAPHILINDO, but Jakarta and Manila saw MAPHILINDO as an entity that would hinder the formation of Malaysia. Thus, when the Prime Minister of Malaya declared the formation of the Federation of Malaysia on 16 September 1963, the Accord was disregarded, and so were the plans for the yet unformed association, though no country officially declared its dissolution. MAPHILINDO was short-lived during the transitional period between the births of ASA and ASEAN, but the entity made three important contributions in the development of the concept of regionalism.

The first of these was that MAPHILINDO provided the opportunity to seek a peaceful resolution of mutual conflicts through a series of discussions. As Macapagal noted, the summit was ‘in fact the first exercise in mushawarah or brotherly consultation by the three MAPHILINDO countries.’

\[\text{97 Closing statement of President Macapagal at http://www.gov.ph/1963/08/05/closing-statement-of-president-macapagal-at-the-}

\[\text{94 Ibid., 17 June 1963, p. 1.}\]

\[\text{95 Ibid., 12 Jan. 1964, p. 1.}\]

\[\text{96 Malaya/Philippine Relations, p. 33 (Appendix X).}\]
Malaysia, when it broke off diplomatic relations with Indonesia and the Philippines. The intensified Confrontation, in which Indonesia engaged in armed conflicts in Sarawak and other areas in Malaysia, also resulted in attempts to mediate and peacefully settle this dispute by other Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand and Cambodia. It can be said in a sense that this conflict offered an opportunity to regionally co-operate.

The second contribution was, as Macapagal pointed out, the fact that MAPHILINDO brought together the leaders of the three nations for the first time in history to discuss common problems together.\(^{98}\) The MAPHILINDO summit between the leaders of the three Southeast Asian nations was evidence that countries of the region had sought solutions together over the urgent issue involving the formation of Malaysia. ASA had only involved conferences between Foreign Ministers, but it never involved any summit. After the summit of MAPHILINDO, a summit of Southeast Asian countries would not be held again until 1976 during the ASEAN meeting in Bali.

Lastly, MAPHILINDO contributed to strengthening Indonesia’s commitment to the Southeast Asian region. While Indonesia had by then focused on global politics as one of the core members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), as well as one of the unifiers of the third world after the Asia-Africa Conference in 1955, Sukarno was inclined towards regional politics after the formation of Malaysia, thus breaking away from Indonesia’s previous trend in international politics. After he failed to stop the formation of Malaysia, the President of Indonesia sought to form ‘a new South-East Asian union.’ Coincidentally, this proposed union was similar to the one that Ho Chi Minh proposed to Sukarno in 1945. While the Foreign Secretary of the Philippines, Salvador Lopez, stated that MAPHILINDO was not a closed association, but rather an expanding association of like-minded nations,\(^{99}\) Malaysia had negative views regarding


the formation of this union. The Malaysian Minister of Agriculture and Co-operatives, Khir Johari, stated his personal view in November 1963, that the proposal for the formation of a new South-East Asia confederation was a ‘stunt to deviate attention from the immediate problems facing Malaysia’ regarding its conflicts with Indonesia and the Philippines. He saw no point in this move, as MAPHILINDO left ample room for the inclusion of other States.\(^{100}\) The Singaporean Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, was at the same time accused of trying to isolate Malaysia from its immediate neighbours in the region by letting Burma, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand join together. Lee also expressed his view that Sukarno decided on this new attempt because he realised that the four month old confrontation had failed to stop the formation of Malaysia.\(^{101}\)

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Thanat Khoman, perceived that MAPHILINDO’s objective was the same as that of ASA, except for the former’s ethnic similarity, i.e. being an entity of nations of the Malay stock. He also mentioned that Thailand could not be part of MAPHILINDO, because it was an entity based on the Malay stock, and complained that the concept of the entity should be expanded.\(^{102}\) The Thai Consul General to Singapore suggested that the confederating states of MAPHILINDO should change its name so that other Southeast Asian countries could join ‘without feeling inferior.’\(^{103}\) After exhausting all its efforts to stop the formation of Malaysia, Indonesia attempted to find another solution by approaching other countries in the region. As such, it is evident that Indonesia has by then begun to concentrate on regional politics.

The conceptions of ASA and MAPHILINDO, as Gordon argued, were fundamentally different,\(^{104}\) though the Malaysian government regarded that the two

\(^{100}\) Ibid., 18 Nov. 1963, p. 8.
\(^{101}\) Ibid., 13 Jan. 1964, p. 16.
\(^{102}\) Berita Harian, 4 Jan. 1966, p. 3.
\(^{103}\) The Straits Times, 2 Jan. 1964, p. 6.
organisations ‘would not affect’ their activities with each other.\textsuperscript{105} ASA’s aim was to enhance the living standards in each country and to counter the infiltration of communism among the people through economic co-operation. In contrast, the Malay-based MAPHILINDO aimed to collaborate not only in economic and cultural fields, but also in political and security fields, that is, overall co-operation.

MAPHILINDO subsequently died off naturally, and while its members attempted to expand its membership, other countries in the region were not very keen to join because of its Malay identity. Indonesia then attempted to create a new regional union, but other countries might have thought of the risk that the large country had taken initiative of. After the 930 Incident that led to Sukarno’s downfall, Indonesia and Malaysia resumed diplomatic relations. In regard to the regional associations, neither ASA nor MAPHILINDO survived. MAPHILINDO’s founding members, together with Thailand and Singapore, would go on to establish a new regional association: ASEAN.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Various proposals for regional co-operation in Southeast Asia were made between the end of the world war and 1967, but most of them failed to take off. At the early stage, proposals from political leaders in Burma, Vietnam, and Thailand were made but in vain. While the neighbouring major country, India, took initiatives for regional co-operation in the late 1940s, the Philippines sought to regionally co-operate for anti-communism efforts and held the Baguio Conference in 1950. The conference was an epoch-making event, as it was the first time one of the Southeast Asian countries has ever held a meeting for regional co-operation. But in contrast to its intention, the conference promoted co-operation in the economic field only.

\textsuperscript{105} Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, \textit{Malaysia in brief}, Kuala Lumpur: Department of Information, 1963, p. 103.
Subsequently, after the conferences in Colombo and Bogor, the Bandung conference was held in 1955, which was initiated by Indonesia. This conference drew leaders from two large regions, i.e. Asia and Africa, and attracted much global attention, successfully propelling Sukarno as the leader of the Third World. On the contrary, it did not lead to solidarity among the countries of the small region, Southeast Asia.

After the successful conference, two approaches for regional co-operation in Southeast Asia were taken: the first being the ‘hard approach group’ that focused mainly on international politics for global peace, security, and elimination of colonialism. This group, represented by Indonesia, approached not only the Asian region, but also the Third World, but little attention was paid to neighbouring Southeast Asian countries. On the other hand, the ‘soft approach group’ aimed for economic and cultural co-operation. To this end, the group placed emphasis on co-operation with border countries, so that the group countries would cultivate a regional sense of awareness and consciousness. The two approaches remained until the formation of ASEAN in 1967.

As per the hard approach and political regional co-operation, SEATO is a good example to illustrate this point. This military organisation was formed by the U.S. for the purpose of defence against communists in Southeast Asia, but most of its members originated from outside Southeast Asia, and among its members, only Thailand and the Philippines belonged to the region. SEATO is regarded as a regional organisation not because it was formed by regional countries, but because the members, in particular the Western countries, targeted the region that would defend against communists. The name of the organisation also gave rise to some misunderstanding. On the other hand, the organisation became a troublesome group because it created hatred and political differences in the region. SEATO never advocated for regional consciousness, let alone forged any strong unity between the regional countries.
Regional co-operation in economic, social, and cultural fields started to emerge in the late 1950s. Initially, the SEA Games consisted of members mainly from the mainland of Southeast Asia. Burma, Cambodia, and Vietnam, which objected to political and economic regional co-operation, joined the sports organisation much later. This helped to inculcate regional consciousness under the title of Southeast Asia. SEAMEO for the educational field, formed in 1965, had six members initially. Through this initiative, a secretariat was set up and a charter was adopted at quite an early stage before the formation of ASEAN. Most of the Southeast Asian countries had, by 1968, joined this regional organisation, and shared regional consciousness through SEAMEO regular conferences. Although the two regional organisations hardly attracted the public, they successfully contributed to building regional awareness among members.

A proposal of economic co-operation was put forward in the late 1950s. The Tunku made this pioneering proposal in 1958. In the following year, the Tunku suggested calling this proposal SEAFET and brought it to the Philippines, and went on to discuss the formation of a regional organisation. The Tunku put forward a proposal for political co-operation in 1954, but failed. This time he considered stopping the communist expansion by enhancing the living standard of each country through economic co-operation. At the same time, he intended to instil regional consciousness. The SEAFET proposal was carried out under the name of ASA in 1961. Although the members were made up of only three countries, the body already had a regional concept of the present-day Southeast Asia. Initially, the name of SEAFET included ‘Economic,’ but the name of the new organisation, ASA, left out this ‘Economic’ aspect. ASA originally aimed for economic and cultural co-operation, but it was also possible to opt for political co-operation, so the term ‘Economic’ was dropped. Although the organisation was short-lived, it was significant in that it was the indigenous leaders that formed it and the regional concept spread out to include regional leaders.
During the closing of ASA, the three countries, i.e. Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia, formed MAPHILINDO. This was to increase comprehensive co-operation including security. This move was significant for the fact that it provided an opportunity to seek a peaceful solution. Also, as a result, a summit was held for the first time. Most importantly, in the regional co-operation of Southeast Asia, MAPHILINDO showed the path for regional co-operation to Indonesia, which was not keen on the region. The organisation was more short-lived due to the conflicts between its members, but it finally paved the way for the formation of ASEAN.