

“‘Why Is There No NATO in Asia?’ The Normative Origins of Asian
Multilateralism”

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ABSTRACT

The absence of a regional military alliance in Asia, and the related tendency of Asian regional institutions to avoid multilateral defence cooperation constitute a key puzzle of Asian regional order. Available theoretical explanations of this puzzle tend to focus heavily on the US role, both the nature and extent of US power, or its perceptions of collective identity. Challenging this, this paper offers a normative explanation. The absence of a “NATO in Asia” argues this paper, is explained by a norm against collective defence which emerged and evolved through early post-war regional interactions. These interactions, which have been ignored in the theoretical literature on international organization, were shaped by the interplay of the ideas of key local agents, and the evolving global norm of non-intervention. The paper’s investigation into the normative origins Asian multilateralism contributes to the theoretical literature on the diffusion of sovereignty norms in the international system. International relations scholars generally assume that the “history of sovereignty is largely the history of Westphalia’s geographic extension,” but ignore the crucial agency of local actors in the developing world in translating the idea of sovereignty into norms of conduct in a regional setting. This article shows how regional interactions in early post-War Asia that led to a regional norm against collective defence, also helped to strengthen the global norm of non-intervention, and shaped subsequent regional institutions in Asia. In this process, Asian interactions made a distinctive contribution to the evolution of post-war international order, which has been seldom acknowledged, much less analyzed, by scholars of international relations.

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“*[T]here is no friendship when nations are not equal, when one has to obey another and when one only dominates another.*” Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India. Closing Speech at the Bandung Conference.¹

On April 23, 1955, speaking before the Political Committee of the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, launched into a bitter denunciation of collective defence pacts being promoted by the US in Asia and the Middle East. Membership in such pacts, argued Nehru, rendered a country a “camp follower” and deprived it of its “freedom and dignity.” “It is an intolerable thought to me that the great countries of Asia and Africa should come out of bondage into freedom only to degrade themselves or humiliate themselves in this way.”² Responding to Nehru’s attacks, Prime Minister Mohamed Ali of Pakistan, a member of both Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), asserted that as “an independent sovereign nation”, Pakistan followed its “national interest” and did not feel it “necessary for us to justify our actions to anybody except to ourselves.”³ A more eloquent response to the Indian Prime Minister’s harsh words came the next day from Carlos Romulo, the lead delegate of the Philippines, a SEATO member. In a barely disguised dig at Nehru, Romulo urged delegates to be “realistic and not be starry-eyed visionaries dreaming utopian dreams.” He reminded Nehru that as a smaller nation, the Philippines could not follow India’s path in renouncing collective defence to safeguard its new-found independence.⁴

¹ Speech of Jawaharlal Nehru at the Closing Session of the Bandung Conference, *Asia-Africa Speaks From Bandung* (Jakarta: Department of Foreign Affairs, 1955), p.175.

² Nehru’s Speech in the Political Committee, 23 April 1955, in *Proceedings of the Political Committee Meetings of the Asian-African Conference*, Bandung, 20-24 April 1955 (Hereafter known as *Bandung Political Committee Proceedings*).

³ Mohamed Ali’s Speech in the Political Committee, 23 April 1955, *Bandung Political Committee Proceedings*.

⁴ *Ibid.*

This particular exchange at the Asia-Africa Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955 captures a crucial moment in the process of contestation and compromise that marked the normative beginnings of Asian multilateralism. It holds the clue to an important puzzle about Asian regional order: why Asia did not develop a multilateral security organization (“why is there no NATO in Asia”) in the post-war period. Investigating this puzzle also contributes to the theory of international relations; it offers new insights into the diffusion of sovereignty norms and the evolution of the post-war global sovereignty regime.

Alternative Explanations of Asian Multilateralism

Recent explanations of the absence of a collective defence organization in Asia come from both realist and constructivist perspectives.⁵ From a realist perspective, Crone blames it on the huge power differentials between the US and its Asian allies (a condition he calls “extreme hegemony”) in the post-war period. Power differentials between the US and its Asian allies then were so huge that there would have been no point in a regional security organization since the Asian states had little to offer either individually or collectively to such a security grouping.⁶ Such a calculation by the US would have been all the more likely because US policymakers viewed its putative Asian allies to remain permanently weak, in contrast to Europe, where its allies were expected to recover sooner

⁵ I define the dependent variable of the essay as the absence of a “NATO in Asia”, meaning the absence of a viable multilateral collective defence organization binding the US and a group of Asian states. This essay is not specifically concerned with the absence of a collective defence organization which could have developed among the Asian countries without US involvement. But as the paper would show, the initial norm of “no Asian NATO” did broaden into a more general injunction against any kind of collective defence pact which could be seen as institutionalizing Cold War geopolitics.

⁶ Donald Crone, “Does Hegemony Matter? The Reorganization of the Pacific Political Economy,” *World Politics*, Vol. 45, No.4 (July 1993), pp. 501-525. The power disparity argument shaping US strategic choice also forms a major part of Galia Press-Barnathan’s explanation of why the US did not create a NATO like security organization in Asia. *Organizing the World: The United States and Regional Cooperation in Asia and Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

or later. Seeing multilateralism as a superficial aid and a needless constraint, Washington preferred bilateralism in its approach to Asian security. Its Asian allies also shunned multilateralism, calculating that it would have lessened their opportunities for free-riding.⁷

But the “power gap” explanation suffers from three major limitations. First, as pointed out by Hemmer and Katzenstein, if alliances between great powers and weak states were of little value in early post-war Asia when America’s allies were deemed to remain permanently weak (unlike Europe, where the allies were expected to recover), then why didn’t the US bring Japan (a once and future great power) into SEATO?⁸ Second, available evidence does not show the US (or for that matter, its allies like South Korea and the Philippines) to have been irrevocably predisposed to a primarily bilateral mode of security cooperation in early post-war Asia (the later half of the 1940s and the first half of the 1950s). Crone does not take into account several early post-war US initiatives for Pacific security cooperation: President Roosevelt’s proposed post-war Pacific collective security system, the Truman and Eisenhower administrations’ ideas about a Pacific security organization, especially efforts by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to create a Pacific Ocean Pact during 1950 and 1951.⁹ These early post-war efforts to create a multilateral security organization in Asia were enthusiastically backed by the would-be free-riders like South Korea and the Philippines.

⁷ Donald Crone, “Does Hegemony Matter? The Reorganization of the Pacific Political Economy,” p. 505.

⁸ Christopher Hemmer and Peter J. Katzenstein, “Why is there No NATO in Asia: Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origins of Multilateralism,” *International Organization*, Vol. 56, No.3 (Summer 2002), pp. 575-607.

⁹ David Capie, *Power, Identity and Multilateralism: Rethinking Institutional Dynamics in the Pacific, 1945-2000*, Ph. D. Dissertation, Department of Political Science, York University, Toronto, Canada. 2003, p. 36.

A third problem concerns the assumption that the fear of being constrained often leads a great power to avoid multilateralism with less powerful states.¹⁰ If so, then the US should have had a greater fear of being constrained in dealing multilaterally with its European allies since the power gap between them and the US was smaller than that between the US and its Asian allies and whose recovery was more expected. It's doubtful that being involved in a regional multilateral institution in Asia would have really constrained independent decision-making in Washington any more than it did in Europe.

A second explanation for the absence of an Asian NATO stresses bilateral disputes and quarrels among America's prospective Asian allies.¹¹ Instead of the US-Asia power gap, such an explanation would focus on the intra-regional level (See Figure 1). From this perspective, America's putative Asian allies were too divided among themselves due to bilateral disputes to join a collective defence system under the US umbrella. But among America's allies (Pakistan, Thailand, Philippines, South Korea and Taiwan), there were few such disputes. The main inter-state rivalry among the five Colombo Power countries who were at one stage seen as possible members of a US-led collective defence organization was between India and Pakistan. Yet, as this paper will show, India's opposition to military pacts involving great powers owed to Nehru's

¹⁰ Steve Weber, "Shaping the Postwar Balance of Power: Multilateralism in NATO." In John G. Ruggie, ed., *Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Praxis of an Institutional Form* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp.233-92.

¹¹ The impact of intra-regional conflicts in undermining the prospects for an Asian collective defence pact has been noted by several authors writing of the early post-war period. Dick Wilson wrote that, "Asia differs little from Europe in the rivalry of nations and the chauvinism of national leaders... The limitations on political co-operation among the countries of Asia are self-evident." Dick Wilson, *Asian Awakens* (London: Widenfeld and Nicholson, 1970), p.269. Truman's Secretary of States, Dean Acheson, was supposed to have said that "the present internal conflicts in Asia" made it premature to think of a regional collective defence pact "corresponding to the North Atlantic Treaty". Evelyn Colbert, *Southeast Asia in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p.114. Evidently Acheson's successor, John Foster Dulles, believed that the escalating seriousness of the communist threat would override intra-regional considerations and justify his initiative towards such a pact in 1954 when he pushed for SEATO.

beliefs, which predated the partition of India and the first India-Pakistan Kashmir war of 1947. Consistency between these beliefs and the criticisms of SEATO articulated by Nehru in 1954-55 period shows that the India-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir was not the only, or arguably not even the main reason behind his opposition to SEATO.

Moreover, there was no conflict amongst the three other Colombo Power nations; or between any of them and the countries which became members of SEATO: Thailand, Philippines and Pakistan. But the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan should not have prevented other Colombo Powers, especially Indonesia and Ceylon and Burma, from joining SEATO had they so wished. This is especially striking because at least two of them, Ceylon and Burma, took the threat of communist subversion extremely seriously (hence the Ceylonese Prime Minister Kotelawala's infamous speech at Bandung equating communism as a new form of colonialism, which was both encouraged and endorsed by the UK and USA).

Furthermore, multilateral alliances between a hegemonic power and weaker states have been feasible despite quarrels and conflicts among the latter. A hegemonic power usually possesses the resources to bring such quarrelling partners into a system of collective defence, as the US was able to do in the case of NATO in relation to Greece and Turkey. Realist and materialist explanations which stress power as the central variable in alliance formation would be especially amenable to envisaging alliances between a hegemonic power and quarrelling weaker states, especially if the power gap between the hegemon and the latter is a huge one. Since Crone and others characterize America's power position vis-a-vis Asian allies as a condition of "extreme hegemony", if material power is what really matters, then this should have helped the US to bring the

local actors in post-war Asia together, despite conflicts among them, including suspicions and rivalries among the non-communist Asian states, such as India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines.

A third effort to explain the puzzle of the absence of an Asian NATO (the upper right in Figure 1) comes from Hemmer and Katzenstein in a recent article in *International Organization*.¹² Multilateralism, they argue, requires a strong sense of collective identity in addition to shared interests. But American policy-makers in the early post-war period “saw their potential Asian allies...as part of an alien and, in important ways, inferior community.”¹³ This was in marked contrast to their perception of “their potential European allies [who were seen] as relatively equal members of a shared community.” Hence, Europe rather than Asia was seen as a more desirable arena for multilateral engagement because the U.S. recognized a greater sense of a transatlantic community than a transpacific one. From this perspective, it was not the preponderance of American power (“extreme hegemony”), but America’s conception of Europe as the “self” and Asia as the “other”, which explains why Washington seemed disinclined to develop a “NATO in Asia.” They argue that differing conceptions of collective identity were crucial in explaining why Washington favored multilateralism in Europe and bilateralism in Asia.

But this is at best an incomplete explanation. Despite their relative emphasis on perception over power, Hemmer and Katzenstein share with Crone a tendency to explain the absence of regional security organization in post-war Asia from the vantage point of

¹² Hemmer and Katzenstein, “Why is There No NATO in Asia”. They reject not only the power disparity explanation but also neoliberal explanations, which would see alliance design as a function of differing calculations about what would be the most efficient institutional response to the threat at hand. Europe and Asia differed in this area; the threat in Europe was a massive cross border Soviet invasion, while the threat in Asia was insurgency and internal conflict. But cross-border threats were also plausible in Korea as well as Taiwan, but the US did not address them through a multilateral alliance, an interesting outcome since the Korean War itself was a major catalyst of NATO.

the US. It was either *American* power or *American* perceptions of collective identity that mattered. Missing from the picture is any consideration of the norms and collective identities of the Asians themselves and intra-regional interactions in shaping the prospects for a regional security organization in post-war Asia. This neglect is symptomatic of the literature on Asian regionalism; while the literature on European regionalism has paid growing attention to regional “collective identities and norms of appropriate behavior,”¹⁴ theoretical work on Asian regionalism continues to ignore “local, national, or regional political contexts central to those writing on Asian regionalism,” especially ideational forces originating from within the region.¹⁵

¹³ Hemmer and Katzenstein, “Why is There No Asian NATO?”, p. 575.

¹⁴ Thomas Risse-Kappen, “Collective Identity in a Democratic Community”, in Peter Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

¹⁵ Katzenstein, “Introduction: Asian Regionalism in Comparative Perspective,” p. 6. Hemmer and Katzenstein (pp. 598-99) acknowledge that they had “not explored all empirical and analytical aspects” of the issue, including “the effects that the policies of the European and Asian states had on U.S. foreign policy.” They also acknowledge that “there remains a great deal of potentially valuable historical material that could shed further light on the development of these regions” - precisely the kind of material I have drawn upon. The primary sources of this essay include the verbatim and summary records and minutes of the proceedings of all the relevant conferences. This has been supplemented by a personal interview with Roselan Abdulghani, the Secretary-General of the Bandung Conference, especially to elaborate on and clarify points made in the latter’s own invaluable writings: *The Bandung Connection: The Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung in 1955* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung (S) Pte/ Ltd., 1981); and *Bandung Spirit* (Jakarta: Prapantja, 1964). To the best of my knowledge, there is only a single piece of academic writing, by Kahin, drawing partially upon the Verbatim Records of the Bandung Conferences’ most important forum: the Political Committee, where the leaders met. George McTurnan Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference: Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956). But as Kahin himself notes (on the cover of his personal copy of the Summary Records of the same proceedings available at the Cornell University library), he was given access to the Verbatim Records for a 12 hour period, during which he managed to copy brief extracts in his own handwriting. I have obtained and consulted the Verbatim Records. Kahin’s short book (38 pages) does not make much use of the verbatim records or those of the previous Bogor and Colombo conferences. My other sources include declassified materials from the British Public Records Office and the Foreign Relations of the United States (*FRUS*). The previous major works on SEATO, by George Modelski and Leszek Buszynski, were published in 1962 and 1983 respectively, before the PRO materials became available in 1984-85. The *FRUS* volume dealing specifically with SEATO was published in 1984, although some of the documents were available in *The Pentagon Papers* collection or could be consulted at the Dulles and Eisenhower collections. Moreover, almost all the analysis of the Bandung conference, including Kahin’s, was published within two years of the event, these could not have taken into account the long-term implications, normative, institutional or otherwise, of the conference, that this essay is able to identify.

In this essay, I offer an alternative explanation. The absence of a NATO in Asia is the result of normative forces shaping post-war Asian regional interactions, which delegitimized collective defence by presenting it as a new form of great power dominance and intervention.¹⁶ American administrations and their free-riding allies in post-war were not culturally or strategically predisposed against an Asian multilateral security organization. Their capacity to create such an organization, however, was challenged and constrained by opposition from an influential segment of Asia's nationalist leaders. The normative reasons behind Nehru's opposition to military pacts involving great powers predated the formation of SEATO (or for that matter NATO), and the partition of India, and hence were not simply a strategic response to India's immediate security challenges or inter-state disputes in post-war Asia. They were inspired among others by a strong aversion to colonialism which aggravated his fear of the risk of renewed Western dominance inherent in weak power membership in great power-led alliances. Although Nehru was perhaps the most vocal advocate of these beliefs, they were not exceptional among the newly-independent states of Asia and Africa, which made the no NATO norm easier to diffuse and be embedded in subsequent Asian regional institutions.¹⁷

¹⁶ I use norm to mean "standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity." Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change", in Peter Katzenstein, Robert Keohane and Stephen Krasner, eds., *Exploration and Contestation in the Study of World Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998). To avoid confusion in the usage of the term "norm", I distinguish between the "meta norms" of sovereignty, such as non-intervention, and "regional subsidiary norms", such as the Asian norm against collective defence. The former is an integral element of the global sovereignty regime, but the subsidiary norms can be region-specific, at least in their original construction. Local actors build subsidiary norms to preserve the meta-norms in accordance with local circumstances and need. For example, in post-war Asia, local actors like Nehru were concerned that the sovereignty of local states and the norm of non-intervention was under challenge from superpower rivalry and the consequent weakness of the UN. Hence the need for locally-constructed subsidiary norms to defend the global sovereignty regime.

¹⁷ Surveying nationalist and anti-colonial ideas in Asia and Africa in the post-war period, Rupert Emerson found V.K Krishna Menon's (Nehru's key foreign policy adviser) remark that membership in SEATO was

I make three arguments concerning the effects of this normative opposition to collective defence in Asia. First, it thwarted British efforts (and an implicit American desire) to broaden the membership of SEATO at its foundation and thereby legitimize it as a “regional” alliance. Unlike conventional views of SEATO which sees as its major weakness the half-hearted US commitment to the alliance (whether it was NATO type or Monroe Doctrine type), I argue that the main reason for the weakness and eventual demise of SEATO had to do with its lack of regional representation and participation. This in turn made the only Southeast Asian members of the alliance, Thailand and the Philippines, more self-conscious of their sovereign and Asian identities. Second, when other ideas about regionalism presented themselves, especially those that were more representative of the region, these states were quick to abandon SEATO and turn to the latter. This explained the appeal and eventual success of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which was conceived by its founders as an indigenous and more representative form of regionalism. Third, this norm against collective defence provided the basis for delegitimizing other forms of collective defence that could be seen as a successor to SEATO or an attempt to revive SEATO “through the backdoor”.¹⁸

“return in a pact form to colonial rule” to be “representative of a widespread sentiment concerning this and similar groupings.” Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation: The Rise of Self Assertion of Asian and African Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), p.395.

¹⁸ The norm I describe in this paper is specific to alliances centered around a hegemonic power, rather than intra-regional collective defence *per se*, but as the article would show, so strong was the aversion to hegemonic alliances that regional actors who were friendly to the US also avoided entering into multilateral defence cooperation for the fear of being perceived as creating a hegemonic alliance with indirect US backing.

Figure 1. Alternative Explanations of “Why is there No NATO in Asia”

	Material	Ideational
Dominant Power	Power Gap	Identity Dissonance
Local Actors	Intra-regional Disputes	Normative Delegation*

* I define “normative delegitimation” as a process through which agents (such as norm entrepreneurs) use principled ideas to argue against and weaken support for a particular policy (in this case an Asian collective defence system).

Where these normative delegitimation preferences came from is a crucial part of my explanation. I argue that this was the result of the localization of global norms of sovereignty, especially non-intervention, in which Asian ideas and actors played a crucial role.¹⁹ Asians of course did not invent non-intervention. This norm had its origins in the European states system and had been institutionalized in the Latin America regional system during the inter-war period and through the UN charter in 1945.²⁰ But its diffusion into Asia was not an uncontested process. Rather, in post-war Asia, the meaning of what constituted sovereign status, what was the true meaning of non-intervention, what sort of behavior (including alignment policy) enhanced or undermined it, were concepts actively constructed through a process of contestation and compromise. In this process, Asian actors like Nehru and the early post-war Asian conferences played an important role.

¹⁹ On norm localization and how this compares with other theoretical perspectives on norm diffusion, see Amitav Acharya, “How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism”, *International Organization*, Vol. 58, No.2 (Spring 2004).

²⁰ It is noteworthy that a good number of states attending the Asian and Afro-Asian conferences between 1947 and 1955 were yet to be members of the UN, thereby undercutting the claim of the UN to be the teacher of the non-intervention norm.

Theoretical Argument and Methodology

This perspective seeks to make a contribution to the theoretical literature on the diffusion of sovereignty norms in the international system. International relations scholars generally assume that the “history of sovereignty is largely the history of Westphalia’s geographic extension.”²¹ The idea of state sovereignty originated in Europe and spread through decolonization; indeed, decolonization was “the achievement of sovereignty by dependent states.”²² Once independent, the Third World states “took to Westphalian sovereignty like ducklings to water;” their approach to sovereignty after 1945 was “overwhelmingly to protect rather than to subvert it.”²³ This was reflected in regional institutions and orders in the Third World, especially in Asian and African regional organizations of the post-war period.

But these explanations leave out several key questions. How did sovereignty as a condition of legitimate statehood translate into sovereignty as rules of conduct in international affairs? To what extent did ideas and agency from within regions matter in the diffusion of sovereignty norms that formed the basis of Third World regional orders? How did these local forces feed back into the global sovereignty regime?

Most important, the simple attainment of sovereign statehood does not explain the nature of regional orders in different parts of the world. Otherwise, we would not have seen important variations in the institutionalization of sovereignty norms in different regional settings. Take, for example, the norm of non-intervention. Jackson argues that

²¹ Daniel Philpott, “Westphalia, Authority and International Society”, in Robert Jackson, ed., *Sovereignty at the Millennium* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p.160. For extended discussion of this framework, see: Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

²² Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 317.

“[non-intervention and sovereignty...are basically two sides of the same coin.” But the same actors who considered themselves to be “sovereign” interpreted and used it differently in actual practice. Vincent shows that in European legal theory and practice, non-intervention allowed intervention for the sake of maintaining the balance of power.²⁴ But it became a much more unexceptional norm within the UN charter. Jackson contrasts the traditional game of “positive sovereignty” associated with the balance of power system in Europe with the game of “negative sovereignty” in the Third World defined mainly in terms of demands for self-determination and assertions of a “right to development.”²⁵ There have also been inter-regional differences over non-intervention within the Third World. Latin America developed a strong attachment to the non-intervention norm in the late 19th and early 20th century as a way of coping with American hegemony, but did not consider this to be an obstacle to a military alliance with the US.²⁶ Hence, it developed a collective defence mechanism involving the US, even though power disparities between the Latin American states and the US were huge.²⁷ In contrast, many Asian states, led by India under Nehru, saw collective defence pacts as a threat to their sovereignty. The emphasis on non-intervention led to legalistic regional

²³ Christopher Clapham, “Sovereignty and the Third World State”, in Jackson, ed., *Sovereignty at the Millennium*, p. 101.

²⁴ “Intervention in the interests of the balance of power was sometimes included in treatises on international law as an act of deriving its legitimacy from the right of self-defence,” and leading legal scholars like Vattel justified intervention to preserve the balance of power or “justice of intervention for the balance of power”. John Vincent, *Nonintervention and International Order* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 290

²⁵ Robert Jackson, *Quasi-States*, Robert H. Jackson and Carl C. Rosberg, "Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and Juridical in Statehood," *World Politics*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (October 1982), pp. 1-24.

²⁶ See: Ann Van Wynen Thomas and A.J. Thomas, Jr., *Non-Intervention: The Law and Its Import in the Americas* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1956).

²⁷ On the Latin American norm of collective defence, see: J. Lloyd Meacham, *The United States and Inter-American Security 1889-1960* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962); J. Lloyd Meacham, *United States-Latin American Relations* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965). On collective defence in the Arab League, see Robert W. Macdonald *The League of Arab States: A Study in the Dynamics of Regional Organization* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965).

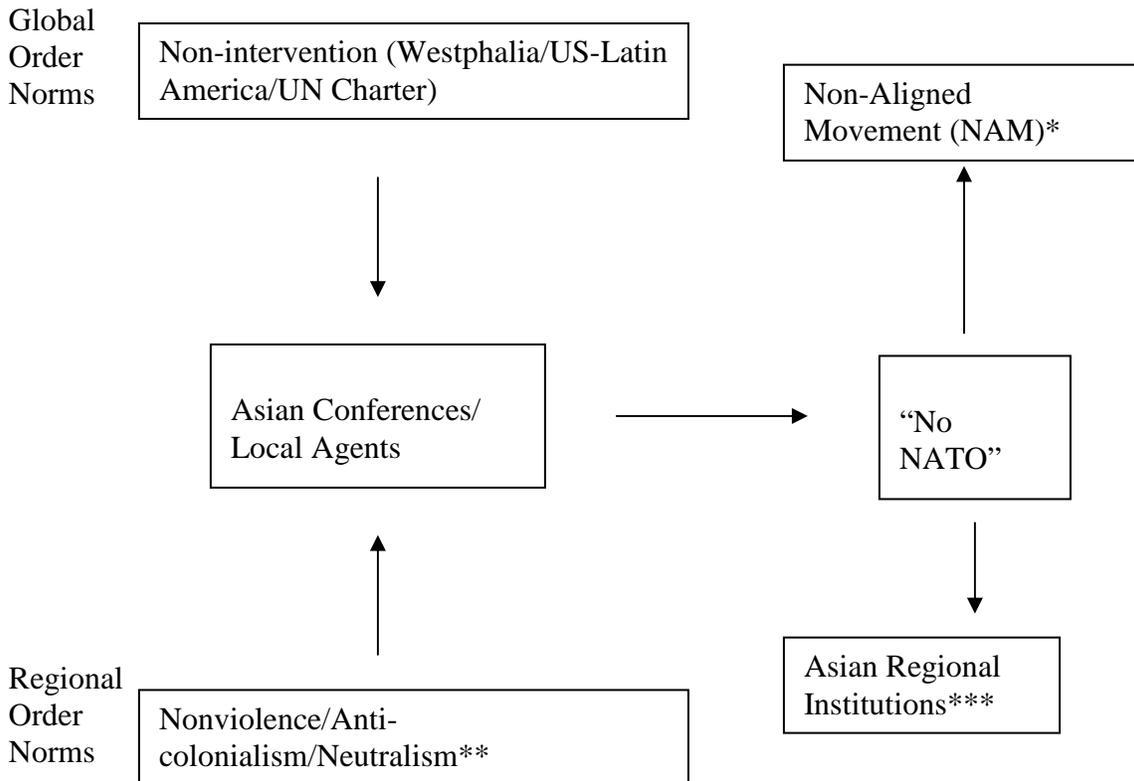
institutions in Latin America binding the USA, while the same principle has produced only informal and consultative forums in Asia.

These variations owe substantially to local and regional interpretations and constructions of non-intervention. Understanding the global diffusion of sovereignty norms therefore requires an investigation into the local conditions, actors and interactions which shaped the manner and extent to which these norms were interpreted and embedded in regional orders.

Such an approach goes beyond the “static” accounts of sovereignty and accords with recent perspectives on sovereignty as a “social construct”, which hold that the meaning of sovereignty is neither preordained nor constant, that the legitimacy of the rules of sovereignty is politically, rather than legally, determined, and that these rules are subject to changing interpretations, shaped by both shifting circumstances and social interactions among states.²⁸ But these accounts need to tell us more about how the processes and mechanisms of “social construction” were actually worked out in different regions of the Third World and how the ideas and beliefs of local actors influenced the reception and conditioning of the European notions of sovereignty and non-intervention and how these local interpretations not only shaped regional orders, but also fed back into and strengthened the global sovereignty regime.

²⁸ Thomas Biersteker and Cynthia Weber, *State Sovereignty as a Social Construct* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). They criticize not only realists such as Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, and Robert Gilpin, but also writers from the English School such as Jackson, Alan James and Francis H. Hinsley, for offering essentially static accounts of sovereignty. The social construction perspective sees sovereignty as being “negotiated out of interactions within intersubjectively identifiable communities”, Biersteker and Weber, “The Social Construction of State Sovereignty” in their *State Sovereignty as a Social Construct*, p. 11.

Figure 2. Diffusion of Sovereignty Norms (Non-Intervention)



* The key norms of NAM include non-intervention and avoidance of “multilateral alliance concluded in the context of Great Power conflicts.”

** Anti-colonialism and neutralism are of course not strictly Asian norms, but during the period covered by this paper, Asia was where the combination of nationalism and neutralism found its most forceful articulation, much more so than in other parts of the world. Non-violence, especially its Gandhian formulation, influenced African nationalist struggles.

*** The core norms of Asian regional institutions such as ASEAN include non-intervention and non involvement in great power organized military pacts.

Figure 2 presents a theoretical framework to illustrate this interplay between global norms of sovereignty and the ideas and agency role of local agents which led to the creation of regional orders and influenced the global sovereignty regime. Postwar regional interactions in Asia interpreted, constructed and in some ways expanded the rules of sovereignty in accordance with local conditions and the beliefs of key local actors (such as Nehru of India). In that process, they shaped the post-war regional order

in Asia (through regional institutions such as ASEAN) and strengthened of the global sovereignty regime (through the Non-Aligned Movement).

Asia remains a neglected arena of investigation in both the traditional and recent constructivist works, on sovereignty norms.²⁹ The early post-war Asian conferences and their normative impact have received almost no attention in the theoretical literature on international relations.³⁰ Yet, this was a crucial region at a crucial period in the evolution of the sovereign states-system. Post-war Asia was where and when two of the largest non-European nations of the world, India and Indonesia, became independent and together with China, the world's most populous country, began to grapple with Westphalian sovereignty. In translating the idea of sovereignty into foreign policy postures and instruments, they were not passive actors but active contenders, interpreters and extenders. A norm against regional collective defence in Asia was an important by-product of such contentions and constructions.

²⁹ See for example: Jackson, *Quasi-States*; Biersteker and Weber, *State Sovereignty as a Social Construct*; Stephen Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty*; Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); F.H. Hinsley, *Sovereignty*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Alan James, *Sovereign Statehood: The Basis of International Society* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986); Nicholas Onuf, "Sovereignty: Outline of a Conceptual History", *Alternatives*, Vol. 16(1991), pp.425-46. Gene M. Lyons and Michael Mastanduno, eds., *Beyond Westphalia: State Sovereignty and International Intervention* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995). Although Jackson's concept of negative sovereignty has an explicitly Third World focus, it strikingly neglects the post-war Asian interactions, especially Bandung, in laying the foundation of negative sovereignty both with respect to non-intervention and the economic demands of the Third World.

³⁰ The standard academic work on the Bandung Conference is Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference*. Among other authors present in Bandung in April 1955 are: Richard Wright, *The Color Curtain: A Report of the Bandung Conference*, (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1956); Homer A. Jack, *Bandung: An On-the-Spot Description of the Asian-African Conference* (A Towards Freedom Pamphlet, undated); and A Appadorai, *The Bandung Conference* (New Delhi: The Indian Council of World Affairs, 1955). See also Guy J. Pauker, *The Bandung Conference* (Center for International Studies, MIT, 1955). Two aspects of this literature are noteworthy. First, they have been written by either by area specialists (such as Kahin, Pauker or Appadorai) or by journalists, such as Wright. Second, all these assessment appeared in the immediate aftermath of the conference. A later work by a journalist is George Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966). But there is no study of the Conference by an international relations scholar employing a theoretical perspective.

In the sections that follow, I use a process tracing approach to discuss the evolution and maintenance of the norm against collective defence in Asia. To avoid tautology, I keep the articulation of this norm during the Bandung and pre-Bandung period separate from that during the post-Bandung period. During the first stage, I show two independent sources of the norm, the first in Nehru's visionary ideas and beliefs (including his rejection of power politics, and his involvement in India's non-violent freedom struggle), which were articulated prior to the emergence of the Cold War alliances, and the second in the emerging international norm of non-intervention. At the same time, I demonstrate an interactive process through which the prior Nehruvian ideas helped to localize and strengthen the idea of non-intervention in the Asian context. For the second phase, after 1955, the Bandung conference constituted an independent and prior basis of the normative consensus against collective defence in ASEAN (established in 1967) and other regional initiatives.

Moral Sovereignty and Collective Defence

Nehru's Ideas

Jawaharlal Nehru was the undisputed key figure behind early post-war Asian regionalism. He played a central role in five post-war pan-Asian regional conferences: the Asian Relations Conference, New Delhi, 1947, and the Conference on Indonesia, New Delhi, 1949 (both which he organized); as well as the Conference of Southeast Asian Prime Ministers, Colombo, 1954; the Conference of Southeast Asian Prime Ministers, Bogor, 1954; and the Asian-African Conference, Bandung, 1955.³¹ His consent was critical to Indonesian ability to organize the Bandung Conference.

³¹ A total of 29 countries participated in the Bandung Conference held between 18 and 24 April, 1955. They included the five "Colombo Powers": Burma, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), India, Indonesia, and Pakistan, as

An important statement of Nehru's approach to international relations can be found in *The Discovery of India*, written in prison in 1944. There, under the heading of "Realism and Geopolitics: World Conquest or World Association?" Nehru forcefully rejected regional security systems under great power "orbits", as proposed by Walter Lippman, characterizing them as "a continuation of power politics on a vaster scale...it is difficult to see how he [Lippman] can see world peace or co-operation emerging out of it."³² Apart from rejecting power politics, it also signaled his desire and hope for greater international cooperation, not in the form of military alliances that would reflect power politics, but of a "commonwealth of states" or a "world association." Two years later, in a speech delivered on September 7, 1946, he offered a further elaboration of his normative beliefs:

We propose, as far as possible, to keep away from the power politics of groups, aligned against one another, which have led in the past to world wars and which may again lead to disaster of an even vaster scale. We believe that peace and freedom are indivisible and that denial of freedom anywhere must endanger freedom elsewhere and lead to conflict and war. We are particularly interested in the emancipation of colonial and dependent territories and peoples and in the recognition in theory and practice of equal opportunities for all peoples...We seek no domination over others and we claim no privileged position over other peoples...The world, in spite of its rivalries and hatreds and inner conflicts, moves inevitably towards closer cooperation and the building up of a world of commonwealth. It is for this one world free India will work, a world in which there is free co-operation of free peoples and no class or group exploits another."³³

These words defined a framework of "moral sovereignty" proposed by Nehru.

While "the emancipation of colonial and dependent territories and peoples" was its key

well as Afghanistan, Cambodia, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, the Gold Coast (Ghana), Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Nepal, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, the Vietnam Democratic Republic, South Vietnam (later reunified with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam) and Yemen (Republic of Yemen).

³² Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, 23rd Impression (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003). p.539.

element, the foreign policy of a sovereign nation would also involve abstaining from “the power politics of groups, aligned against one another” and from exercising “domination over others”. Based on this framework, Nehru’s early efforts at international cooperation focused on India’s neighborhood. A key aim of his championing of Asian unity was equality: the “Asian countries needed to find a way of relating as equals to the richer powers of the western world.”³⁴ Nehru would also assure his Asian neighbors that they “should not fear any intervention or dominance by India, whether in the political or in the economic sphere.”³⁵ His advocacy of “non-involvement”, (later non-alignment) has been described as essentially a political “means of minimizing, if not totally excluding, political and military intervention by the great powers in regional affairs.”³⁶ And at the centre of this approach was his opposition to the pressures exerted by the superpowers on the newly independent countries to join their respective military alliances.

Against the backdrop his prior beliefs on international order, it is hardly surprising that Nehru would oppose a US-led collective defence system in Southeast Asia when the idea gathered momentum in 1954. Nehru believed that the proliferation of such regional pacts would reduce the “area of peace” and encourage great power interference and intervention in the internal affairs of the new states. Acceptance of offers of “protection” by the superpowers could hardly be distinguished from “a condition of colonialism or dependency.”³⁷ His chief (but controversial) foreign policy lieutenant, V.K. Krishna Menon, likened collective defence pacts to “a roving commission to protect

³³ Cited in V.S. Mani, “An Indian Perspective on the Evolution of International Law,” *Asian Yearbook of International Law*, 2000, vol.9 (Netherlands: Brill, 2004), p. 66.

³⁴ Judith Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 246.

³⁵ Interview with B. Shiva Rao, transcript in *India’s Freedom Movement: Some Notable Figures* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972), pp. 139-40.

³⁶ Mohammed Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State-Making, Regional Order and the International System* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner, 1995), p. 104.

people who did not want to be protected, affecting the sovereignty of the nations of the area.”³⁸ Nehru’s opposition to collective defence pacts also invoked the principles of representation and participation. “When decisions of vital significance are made for an area excluding the views of the vital part of that very area,” he argued, “then there is something wrong.”³⁹ Hence the “whole [SEATO] approach was wrong from the point of view of any Asian country.”⁴⁰

There can be alternative *realpolitik* explanations of Nehru’s resistance to collective defence. He saw in SEATO and CENTO, especially with Pakistan’s involvement in both, a threat to India’s security. These alliances brought the Cold War to India’s doorstep. Moreover, some Indian scholars have argued that his rejection of SEATO reflected India’s own aspiration for regional dominance.⁴¹ But such self-interested behavior need not be incompatible with normative approaches to international relations.⁴² More important, they do not invalidate the normative basis of Nehru’s opposition to defence pacts within great power orbit, which, as noted, was evident *before* the creation of Pakistan and *before* the Cold War alliances came into existence. Hence, the *realpolitik* underpinnings of Nehru’s foreign policy approach could be overstated.⁴³

³⁷ Cecil Crabb, *The Elephants and the Grass: A Study of Non-Alignment* (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 67.

³⁸ Cited in Sisir Gupta, *India and Regional Integration in Asia* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964), p. 59.

³⁹ *Speeches of Jawaharlal Nehru, 1953-57* (New Delhi, Government of India, 1957), p. 20.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 60.

⁴¹ Bharat Karnad, *Nuclear Weapons and Indian Security: The Realist Foundations of Strategy* (Delhi: Macmillan, 2002), p. 80.

⁴² As Finnemore and Sikkink write: “frequently heard arguments about whether behavior is norm-based or interest-based miss the point that norm conformity can often be self-interested, depending on how one specifies interests and the nature of the norm.” Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, “Norm Dynamics and Political Change”, *International Organization*, vol.52, no.4 (Autumn 1998), p. 913.

⁴³ For example, Jaswant Singh has criticized Nehru’s “idealistic romanticism”. Jaswant Singh, *Defending India* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 34. K. Subrahmanyam argues Nehru was influenced by Gandhian non-violence during the freedom struggle, and was thus not attuned to defence preparedness. “Evolution of India’s Defence Policy 1947-64”, in *A History of the Congress Party* (New Delhi: All India Congress Committee and Vikas Publishing House, 1990), cited in Singh 1999, p.41. And drawing upon Nehru’s own

Moreover, Nehru's belief that despite ongoing international conflicts a cooperative international order leading to a "world of commonwealth" was dawning was clearly not a *realpolitik* view of international relations. His rejection of Cold War collective defence pacts was not simply a response to India's changing strategic circumstances; it had a basis in his prior moral beliefs. The Cold War pacts conflicted with Nehru's vision of international relations, which rejected power politics, denounced colonialism, advocated non-exclusionary international and regional cooperation, and demanded equality and justice for the newly independent states. As a leading biographer of Nehru puts it, collective defence pacts were to him a reminder of India's "long experience with colonial rule" and represented "an indirect return of Western power to an area from which it had recently retreated."⁴⁴

While Nehru's opposition to collective defence invoked the principles of sovereignty, particularly the equality of states and non-intervention, it would be wrong to view it as a simple borrowing of Westphalian doctrines. Though a lawyer, Nehru did not think about international affairs in legalistic terms (there was no Nehru Doctrine comparable to the Calvo or Drago Doctrines in Latin America). His writings do not suggest the influence of Western legal scholars like Grotius or Vattel who had developed the norms of sovereignty. Indeed, Nehru rejected the notion that international law was basically a Western idea, insisting that there was an indigenous Indian tradition of

words that India would provide "leadership [to] a large part of Asia'...without joining in, 'the old game of power politics on a gigantic scale,' or having anything to do with... 'realism and practical politics,'" Bharat Karnad concludes that the Nehruvian vision "eschewed all the means of traditional statecraft and international relations, like a strong military, primary and subsidiary alliances, buffer states, security *cordons sanitaire*, secret understandings and defence pacts, and still hoped to lead." Bharat Karnad, "India's weak Geopolitics and What to Do About It," in Bharat Karnad, ed. *Future Imperiled: India's Security in the 1990s and Beyond* (New Delhi: Viking, 1994), p.21.

⁴⁴ Michael Breecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography*, pp. 584, 555.

international law.⁴⁵ His moral beliefs about India's foreign policy and international order, instead of simply reflecting Westphalian and European legal doctrines, were shaped by other experiences, which, as noted, included his involvement in India's nationalist struggle and the Gandhian doctrines of non-violence.⁴⁶ It is these prior beliefs, especially anti-colonialism, which helped to define his attitude towards non-intervention, thereby strengthening and extending an emerging international norm and laying the basis of a norm against collective defence in Asia.⁴⁷ In particular, the political ideas of actors like Nehru infused and strengthened the legal norms of state sovereignty prevailing at the international level.

The Emerging Norm of Non-Intervention

In early post-war Asia, non-intervention could be best described as an emerging international norm because although not novel, it had not become salient in international relations of states outside of Europe and Latin America (mainly because much of the rest of the world was still under colonial rule). Comparing the agenda, the proceedings and outcome of the 1947 and 1955 Asian Conferences, one finds that while in 1947 (and in the 1949 Conference on Indonesia), non-intervention was not a key issue and domestic affairs of states were a fair game for discussion, it came to dominate the agenda of the 1955 Bandung Conference which avoided any discussion of domestic politics of the participating states.

⁴⁵ Mani, "An Indian Perspective on the Evolution of International Law," p. 66.

⁴⁶ As Karnad points out, "Nehru admitted three main influences on his foreign policy thinking. Derived from his experiences during the freedom struggle and his study of history, these were anti-imperialism, anti-racism and, specially, the Gandhian emphasis on truth and morality as arbiters of individual and collective behaviour." Karnad, "India's Weak Geopolitics", p. 32. Hence, Karnad concludes: "Little surprise that he reacted viscerally to geopoliticians." K Subrahmanyam points to the influence of Gandhian non-violence on Nehru's world view and approach to defence. "Evolution of India's Defence Policy 1947-64".

The agenda of the 1947 Conference covered eight issues: National Movements for Freedom, Racial Problems, Inter-Asian Migration, Transition from Colonial to National Economy, Agricultural Reconstruction and Industrial Development, Labor Problems and Social Services, Cultural Problems, and Status of Women and Women's Movements.⁴⁸ The conference decided on a set of principles over political matters, including an agreement not to provide any assistance for the continuance of "foreign domination" in any part of Asia, and the provision of assistance to national movements wherever possible. A third point of agreement was that "people belonging to one country and living in another should identify themselves with the latter."⁴⁹ It extracted assurances from countries such as India, China, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Burma that their existing or proposed constitutions would not contain any provision for discrimination on racial grounds. The principle of equality between all citizens and irrespective of race and creed "should be the rule in all countries." This notion of equality was divided into four components: (i) complete legal equality of all citizens; (ii) complete religious freedom; (iii) no public social disqualification of any racial group; and (iv) equality before law of persons of foreign origin who had settled in the country."⁵⁰

What is striking about these principles is that they were essentially concerned with the domestic jurisdiction of states. The 1947 Conference was technically "non-official" because it was organized by the non-governmental Indian Council on World Affairs. But this should not be over-emphasized; the chairman of the conference was

⁴⁷ This is consistent with the notion of "grafting" and "localization", which hold that the impact of emerging norms is facilitated by the existence of a prior receptive norm. See Acharya, "How Ideas Spread".

⁴⁸ A. Appadorai, "The Asian Relations Conference in Perspective", *International Studies*, vol.18., no.3 (July-September 1979).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

Nehru, already the prime minister-designate of India. The fact is that in 1947, non-intervention was not the focus of the political agenda of Asian and African states. The participants in the ARC, united by a common opposition to colonialism and concerned mainly with self-determination and racial equality, could find it acceptable to debate and set common rules for their domestic affairs. That this would be unthinkable in a few years time attests to my argument that the norms of sovereignty such as non-intervention evolved through post-war Asian interactions, in response to local ideas about how to manage the escalating superpower rivalry and maintain regional order.

The 1947 ARC excluded defence cooperation from its agenda. An Asian defence system was originally envisaged by Nehru in 1946.⁵¹ However, by the 1947 ARC, Nehru had stopped pursuing this idea, mainly out of concern that any Asian defence system would draw in outside powers (“the security of Asia had more than an Asian incidence”) and rekindle big power rivalry in Asia.⁵² This concern foreshadowed and formed the basis of Nehru’s opposition to SEATO, displayed in 1954-55, as well as a more general reluctance in Asia to engage in any form for collective defence, including those limited to Asian states because of the realization that an indigenous collective defence system would become entangled with great power interests and encroachment.

Faced with an escalating crisis in Indo-China which they saw as a consequence of outside power involvement, the Prime Ministers of five southern Asian countries—India, Pakistan, Burma, Indonesia and Ceylon—organized themselves into a group known as the Colombo Powers and held their first meeting in April 1954 in Colombo. In proposing

⁵¹ B. Shiva Rao’s interview with Nehru, transcript found in the files on the Asian Relations Conference, Indian Council on World Affairs, New Delhi, Personal reading, 28 January 2003.

the terms of a settlement in Indo-China, the drafting committee of the Colombo Conference, prodded by India and Burma, suggested “a solemn agreement of non-intervention” by the USA, USSR, UK, and China “to refrain from giving aid to the combatants or intervening in Indo-China with troops or war material” as a specific clause in a draft joint communiqué to be issued by the Colombo Powers.⁵³ Pakistan, while not being “opposed to the principle of non-intervention,” objected to the inclusion of the language (presumably because that would have delegitimized US assistance to South Vietnam at a time when Pakistan had decided to join a collective defence pact with the US). In the end, softer language was found which urged the outside powers, China, USA, USSR and UK, to agree on “steps necessary to prevent the recurrence or resumption of hostilities” so that “the success of...direct negotiations [as opposed to the prospects for a ceasefire] will be greatly helped.”⁵⁴

It was at this Colombo meeting that the idea of an “Asia-Africa Conference” was proposed by Indonesia to be held under the sponsorship of the Colombo Powers. The final preparations for the Conference were made in a second meeting of the Colombo Powers held in Bogor, Indonesia in December 1954. The objectives of the Asian-African gathering would be to consider of the “problems affecting national sovereignty and racialism and colonialism;” “to explore and advance” the “mutual and common interests” of Asian and African nations; and “establish and further friendliness and neighborly relations.” The period leading to the Bandung conference was also a time when “[T]he

⁵² *Asian Relations: Proceedings of the Asian Relations Conference* (New Delhi: Asian Relations Organization, 1948), p.4; George H. Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), pp.43, 48, 49.

⁵³ *Southeast Asian Prime Ministers' Conference: Minutes of Meetings and Documents of the Conference*, Colombo, April 1954 (Hereafter cited as *The Colombo Conference Minutes*).

⁵⁴ *The Colombo Conference Minutes*.

word and the idea of intervention was everywhere, especially in Southeast Asia.”⁵⁵ The principle of non-intervention was advanced in three key decisions of the Colombo Powers at Bogor. The first was their position that “acceptance of the invitation by any one country would in no way involve or imply any change in the status of that country or its relationship with other countries.” Secondly, they recognized the “principle that the form of government and the way of life of any one country should in no way be subject to interference by any other.”⁵⁶ Third, Nehru successfully opposed the idea, mooted by Indonesia, to issue invitations to representatives of independence movements in dependent countries, because “that would mean an interference in internal affairs, while the Colombo countries had advocated the principle of non-interference.”⁵⁷

India also viewed great power-organized collective defence pacts as a new form of intervention and hence a violation of state sovereignty. Krishna Menon told the British High Commissioner in Delhi on April 14, 1954, that “collective defence under United States auspices would mean renewed intervention by the West in the East which would in principle be repugnant to all decent Asian opinion.”⁵⁸ At the Bogor conference, Nehru attacked SEATO for introducing “quite a new conception” in international relations, because unlike NATO, “members of this organization are not only responsible for their own defence but also for that of areas they may designate outside of it if they so agree, this would mean creating a new form of spheres of influence.” Nehru contrasted it with the Geneva Agreement on Indo-China, which he endorsed “because of its clause that no

⁵⁵ Abdulghani, *Bandung Spirit*, p. 49.

⁵⁶ “Joint Communique by the Prime Ministers of Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia and Pakistan”, in *Conference of the Prime Ministers of the Five Colombo Countries, Bogor December 1954, Minutes of Meetings and Documents of the Conference*, (Hereafter Cited as *The Bogor Conference Minutes*).

⁵⁷ *The Bogor Conference Minutes*, First Session, p. 6.

⁵⁸ Inward Telegram, The UK High Commissioner in Delhi to Commonwealth Relations Office, 14 April 1954, FO 371-112053, File F1071/229.

outside interference will be allowed in Indo-China.”⁵⁹ Responding to the British overtures to take a more sympathetic view of the proposed pact, Indian officials described SEATO as “a roving commission to protect people who did not want to be protected, affecting the sovereignty of the nations of the area.”⁶⁰

This growing emphasis on non-intervention would combine with Nehru’s ideas about international order to set the tone and agenda of the Bandung Conference, and to create a normative injunction against participation in collective defence pacts in Asia that would prove resilient.

The Bandung Compromise

The Secretary-General of the Bandung Conference, Roselan Abdulghani, saw the purpose of the Conference not only “to continue the struggle toward a full materialization of national independence”⁶¹ but also “the formulation and establishment of certain norms for the conduct of present-day international relations and the instruments for the practical application of these norms.”⁶² If the Asian Conferences of 1947 and 1949 were mainly concerned with colonialism, the Bandung Conference’s goal was to bring about an “agreement on general principles” of conduct in international affairs.⁶³ (This in itself illustrates the point made earlier that the achievement of sovereign statehood did not automatically translate into creation of rules of conduct of international relations within regional systems.) Participants in the Bandung Conference would regard

⁵⁹ *The Bogor Conference Minutes*, 2nd Session, p. 6.

⁶⁰ Cited in Sisir Gupta, *India and Regional Integration in Asia*, p. 59.

⁶¹ Abdulghani, *Bandung Spirit*, 1964, p. 72.

⁶² *ibid*, p. 103.

⁶³ *The Report of the Arab League on the Bandung Conference* (Cairo: The League of the Arab States, 1955), p. 23.

the Declaration on World Peace as a “most important resolution” because it defined “the principles regulating their relations with each other and the world at large.”⁶⁴

A review of the debates of the closed sessions of the all-important Political Committee shows that self-determination issues, such as in Africa, Palestine and West Irian, attracted less passion and preoccupied the leaders to a much less extent than intramural debates about non-intervention and non-involvement (in regional pacts).⁶⁵

At Bandung, Nehru was especially concerned with intervention. Figure 3 illustrates how he drew the linkage between intervention and European style rivalries (“intervention = interference = Europe’s conflicts and rivalries”). Consistent with his world view, shaped by the European experience, that regional pacts under great powers would be “a continuation of power politics on a vaster scale,” and Krishna Menon’s proposition, cited earlier, that “collective defence under United States auspices would mean renewed intervention by the West in the East;” it is not difficult to conclude that Nehru viewed Cold War pacts as a threat to the sovereignty of Asian and African countries. Indeed, at Bandung, Nehru bitterly condemned NATO as “one of the most powerful protectors of colonialism.”⁶⁶ He was showing his anger over pressures from some European members of NATO on India to leave Portugal alone in Goa.

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p. 151.

⁶⁵ This made Arab and African representatives less than satisfied with Bandung, and might have contributed to their lack of enthusiasm for a permanent Asian-African regional organization.

⁶⁶ *Bandung Political Committee Proceedings*.

Figure 3. Nehru's Reflections on Intervention at Bandung

22/4/55 → / afternoon

Present position - living on the verge of war

Developments leading to formation of 2 mighty Powers. Other countries
 clear that over letters there cannot lead to ~~any~~ armed at
 or solve any problem -

Atomic age - culmination of industrial revolution.
 While Asian countries still trying to enter industrial
 age - others in atomic age - gap increases.

= Aggression Cold war armed peace

Intervention = interference =

Europe's conflicts & rivalries
 are there only 2 ideologies? Imperialism
Gandhian!

= History spans 10 years - 2 months long ..
 cold war - war preparations ..
 Atomic weapons.
 (USA - China
 France
 Germany -

No limited war now either in cold
 or in use of atomic weapons

JOTTINGS AT THE ASIAN-AFRICAN CONFERENCE, BANDUNG,
 22 APRIL 1955

Source: Nehru Memorial Trust and Library, New Delhi

Advocates of the regional pacts at Bandung countered Nehru's argument that collective defence was necessary against the threat of communist meddling. Romulo pointed out that the communists were routinely violating their own professed doctrine of non-intervention. For the pro-pact group, the key challenge to the sovereignty of the new states was communist subversion and infiltration. They defended SEATO as the first pact to cover such threats. They also argued that the pact could not violate their sovereignty, since the consent of the party concerned was required before the alliance's mutual

assistance provisions could be activated. Nehru's position on pacts not unexpectedly invited Pakistan's ire; its Prime Minister, Mohammed Ali, took Nehru's comment about the "camp followers" "degrading" and "humiliating" themselves as an affront to its own sovereignty. As noted in the opening paragraph, Pakistan defended its membership in regional pacts as an act of choice by "an independent sovereign state."

The Bandung Conference resolved the debate over military pacts by offering ten principles in its final communiqué. A sub-clause of Principle 6 (6.a) allowed collective defence, but another sub-clause to this principle (6.b) urged the "abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defence to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers."

This formulation, the so-called "Bandung injunction", broadened the meaning of non-intervention, beyond its European and Latin American formulations (to be discussed in the concluding section) by urging newly independent states to cope with superpower interventionism through abstention from the Cold War collective defence pacts. Guy Pauker describes the "injunction" against the "use of arrangements of collective defence to serve the particularistic interests of any of the big powers" as the "most significant aspect" of the conference.⁶⁷ The injunction would further discourage Asian participation in collective defence arrangements under great power umbrella and had much to do with the delegitimation and ultimate demise of SEATO. In the next section, I compare this explanation with the dominant alternative view, held by realists, of the failure of SEATO as an alliance strategy in Southeast Asia.

⁶⁷ Pauker, *The Bandung Conference*, p. 18.

The Fate of SEATO: Alternative Explanation

The main alternative explanation of the failure and demise of SEATO blames it on “the half-hearted commitment of the U.S. administration to the alliance.”⁶⁸ But this explanation has major flaws.

To be sure, unlike NATO, SEATO had no permanent military command, no automatic US commitment (the later was subject to its “constitutional processes”), and no guarantee of action, only of consultations. Unlike the NATO formula of “attack on one, attack on all,” the US adopted the Monroe Doctrine formula, applied to the OAS, for SEATO, under which the parties merely recognize that an armed attack in the treaty area “would endanger its own peace and safety.”

But to take this as the main explanation for SEATO’s failure would be flawed. SEATO was not the only US alliance in the Pacific to have a Monroe Doctrine-like commitment. America’s other and far more successful alliances in the Pacific (Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Philippines, and the trilateral Australia-New Zealand-US: ANZUS) were all based on the Monroe Doctrine Formula.⁶⁹ Neither was weak institutionalization an exclusive feature of SEATO. ANZUS, a far more successful

⁶⁸ Leszek Buszynski, *SEATO: The Failure of an Alliance Strategy* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1983), p. 221. See also George Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968), p. 121. It is important to note that the realist alternative explanation focus on the degree of US commitment, rather than lack of a common threat to SEATO members, because communism was viewed as a danger by all the members of SEATO (as well as by the Colombo Powers). Nor is it the nature of the threat *per se* (subversion as opposed to outright invasion). Consensus over these issues would have been arrived at when SEATO was formed, with agreement that the alliance was necessary in view of the threat at hand, and that the kind of mutual commitments provided under the Treaty would suffice address the threat at hand.

⁶⁹ Cited in Robert Osgood, *Alliances and American Foreign Policy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968), p. 81. See pages 77-82 for an elaboration of the similarities in security commitments among the US Pacific alliances with Japan, South Korea, Philippines, Thailand and ANZUS and SEATO.

alliance than SEATO, did not even have SEATO's small secretariat. And like SEATO, it "made no effort to establish integrated forces under central command."⁷⁰

The fact that the US saw the most likely communist threat in Southeast Asia to be subversion rather than outright invasion, (as in Europe), would not by itself explain a weaker or "half-hearted" US commitment to SEATO.⁷¹ To see the threat differently than in Europe did not mean it was not viewed to be serious enough. For one thing, the Eisenhower administration did not think the communist threat in Southeast Asia was only a political or ideological challenge. It was also a military one. Before Dien Bien Phu, the US had taken very seriously the prospect of Chinese intervention in the conflict and developed contingency plans for "collective action".⁷² Later, this would include the possible use of nuclear weapons. Britain too had "contemplated" operations that could be undertaken "in the event of a communist invasion [of Malaya] from Siam."⁷³ While "no massive Chinese invasion [of Southeast Asia] was expected at this time [July 1954]," the US did foresee the possibility of "Viet Minh type warfare". The fact that SEATO was

⁷⁰ Osgood, *Alliances and American Foreign Policy*, p. 81.

⁷¹ It is important to take note that the US had not made up its mind about the nature of its commitment to SEATO and its organizational structure before negotiations started on the final structure of the regional collective defence system in the summer of 1954. In 1953, while explaining the Domino Theory, Dulles had used the language, "all for one, one for all" as the formula for a collective defence system in Southeast Asia: "It is because that situation [possibility of a domino effect-'as each state goes, the position of the others become more vulnerable'] existed in Southeast Asia that we have indicated our readiness, if the states in the region wanted it, to join in a collective security pact which will mean all for one, one for all". "In answer to a question about the 'domino' theory", 12 May 1954, Dulles Papers, the Library of Congress. This shows that the US had not settled the nature of its commitment, and that "if the states in the region wanted it", was an important pre-condition. And as late as 23 July 1954, the administration had been considering three possible types of organizational structure for collective defence, including "an elaborate structure comparable to NATO's", as well as a simple standing council or a council which could meet periodically when called together. "Memorandum on the Substance of Discussions at a Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting", *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Vol. XII, Part I, p. 654. Hence, the final US decision on SEATO's nature was influenced by ongoing political developments, especially its assessments of the attitude of India and other Colombo Powers.

⁷² Buszynski, *SEATO*, pp. 2-3; *The Pentagon Papers*, Vol. 1, p. 380. George C. Herring and Richard Immerman, 'Eisenhower, Dulles, and Dienbienphu: 'The Day We Didn't Go to War' Revisited', *Journal of American History* (September 1984).

designed to address mainly these types of military threats might explain why it would opt for “the use of a mobile, striking force in the area rather than massive land forces,” and forgo a NATO-like joint command structure.⁷⁴ But this did not imply the US did not view the communist threat seriously enough.

Indeed, as the principal architect of SEATO, Dulles certainly did not view the US commitment to the alliance to be “half-hearted.” At the Manila Conference in September 1954, he forcefully derided as an “illusion” the perception “that the NATO formula was somewhat stronger” than the Monroe Doctrine formula that the US was proposing for SEATO. He claimed that the Monroe Doctrine formula could be “as effective as that we used in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization”. There was no sense of “automatic action” in the NATO phrase of “an attack upon one is an attack upon all.” To illustrate this point, he dramatically posed the question: “Would the United States be obligated to react to an attack on Copenhagen in the same way as an attack upon the city of New York?...The answer...is no.” The main reason why the US opted for the Monroe Doctrine formula was because Congress had interpreted the NATO formula to mean that any attack outside the US would require Congressional sanction. Hence it would be “unwise to adopt any formula which would reopen that debate with consequences which no one can predict.”⁷⁵ Dulles himself had assured his Asian allies that the provision of SEATO regarding each member having act in accordance with its constitutional processes “gives all the freedom of action and power to act that is contained in NATO.”⁷⁶

⁷³ “The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (Churchill) to President Eisenhower”, 21 June 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Volume XII, Part I, p. 570.

⁷⁴ Cited in Ralph Braibanti, “The Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty”, *Pacific Affairs*, vol.30 (December 1957), p. 338.

⁷⁵ “Verbatim Proceedings of the Third Plenary Session, Manila Conference”, 7 September 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Vol. XII, Part I, p. 878-879.

⁷⁶ Cited in Braibanti, “The Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty”, p. 329.

This leads to my explanation of SEATO's weakness and failure: this has more to do with its lack of legitimacy than teeth. And the question of alliance legitimacy rests to a large extent on representation and participation.⁷⁷

The major flaw of the alternative explanation is that it underplays the extent to which both Britain and the US (especially sections within the Eisenhower administration) had sought legitimacy for SEATO through greater Asian representation and participation. Before the Geneva Conference on Indo-China in 1954, British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden had communicated to Dulles his wish that they "should avoid taking any action which might lead the Governments represented at Colombo to come out publicly against our security proposals."⁷⁸ The British strongly advised that "strong efforts to secure the

⁷⁷ Keohane draws attention to the importance of analyzing the "legitimacy of hegemonic regimes," which could apply to hegemonic alliances. Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 39. Legitimacy can be normative and sociological (participation and representation) John Ikenberry and Charles Kupchan argue that in a hegemonic configuration, legitimacy of power instruments depends on the "common acceptance of a consensual normative order that binds ruler and ruled." G. John Ikenberry and Charles A. Kupchan, "Socialization and Hegemonic Power" *International Organization*, Vol.44, No.3 (Summer 1990), p. 289. In the case of multilateral alliances sponsored by a hegemonic power but built without the foundation of shared values and identity, legitimacy could well depend on representation and participation. Abram Chayes and Antonia Chayes point out that legitimacy is something more than formal consent; it depends on "the degree of international consensus" and "participation". Chayes and Chayes, *The New Sovereignty: Compliance with International Regulatory Agreements* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 41, 128. On the normative and sociological legitimacy of multilateral institutions, see: Robert O. Keohane, "The Contingent Legitimacy of Multilateralism," Paper prepared for the conference on "Multilateralism Under Challenge? Power, International Order and Structural Change", organized by Social Science Research Council and United Nations University, Washington, D.C., 29-30 November, 2004. "Although wide representation may not be conducive to efficacy, multilateral alliances need them to maintain themselves when the threat is not clear cut, when addressing the threat has domestic costs (such as allowing foreign bases) or after the initial threat disappeared. A contemporary example of the latter is the rationale for NATO enlargement, which is driven by a search for new legitimacy, after the original threat has disappeared and the new threats are not clear cut.

⁷⁸ Anthony Eden, *Full Circle: The Memoirs of Sir Anthony Eden* (London: Cassell and Company, 1960), p. 99. Indications that the British attitude towards collective defence was influenced by the attitude of Colombo Powers can be found in the following memo from Eden to Australian Foreign Minister Casey: "Only India and Pakistan, as I am sure you will agree, have the resources and the martial tradition to make such an alliance militarily viable, but it will take time and patience to bring them along. This is primarily because of their suspicions of the United States, and I fear any attempt now to get them, or other major Asian countries, to enter a military alliance inspired and dominated by the United States, would be futile...Immediate agreements with Siam and the Philippines only would merely alienate more important Asian opinion without any significant addition to Western military strength." Eden to Casey via Foreign Office, 22 May 1954, D 1074/45/G, FO 371/111863, TNA, PRO (Public Records Office).

participation of the Colombo Powers in the collective security arrangement or at least their acquiescence in its formation should be made prior to the negotiation of the treaty.”⁷⁹ On the Colombo Powers’ participation, Eden was reported to have told Dulles during their meeting in London that “without their understanding and support, no permanent South-east Asia defence organization could be fully effective.”⁸⁰ Eden’s absence at the Conference where the Manila Pact was signed in September 1954, was officially explained on the grounds of the situation caused by the French rejection of the European Defence Community, but there remained feelings that “Sir Anthony was not keen to attend owing to the [negative] attitude of India and Ceylon” towards the Treaty.⁸¹ The lukewarm British support for SEATO, owing to deference to the normative opposition of Nehru and disillusionment with SEATO’s lack of Asian representation, was thus a factor behind SEATO’s weakness.⁸²

US officials also recognized the importance of Asian representation and participation as a key requirement for the success of SEATO, as a close reading of the official documents about SEATO’s formation show.⁸³ During a top-secret planning

⁷⁹ “Report of the Joint U.S.-U.K. Study Group on Southeast Asia”, July 17, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, vol. XVI, p. 1415.

⁸⁰ Francis Low, *Struggle for Asia* (London: Frederick Muller, 1955), p. 213.

⁸¹ *ibid.* p. 217.

⁸² Nehru’s influence on British approach to SEATO was fully recognized by Dulles, who described Eden’s insistence on calling off the prospective meeting of 10 Southeast Asian countries to discuss collective defence as “largely due to pressure from Nehru”. Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower, Augusta, GA”, 19 May 1954. Dulles Papers, Library of Congress. Referring to “conditions on which the United States might intervene in Indochina”, Dulles noted that the question of US intervention in Indo-China is “subject to UK veto, which in turn was in Asian matters largely subject to Indian veto” “Memorandum of Luncheon Conversation with the President”, 11 May 1954. Dulles Papers, Library of Congress.

⁸³ During the Truman administration, a State Department Policy Planning paper issued in March 1949 urged that if Asia was to develop a regional association, the US “should not give the impression of attempting to thwart such a move...In order to minimize suggestions of American imperialist intervention, we should encourage the Indians, Filipinos and other Asian states to take the public lead in political matters.” Cited in Chintamani Mahapatra, *American Role in the Origins and Growth of ASEAN* (New Delhi: ABC Publishing House, 1990), p. 21. Similarly, during the Eisenhower administration, a memorandum written by Regional Planning Adviser in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, Charles Ogburn,

meeting on July 24, 1954, Secretary of Defence Wilson “asked about India and added his view that without the Colombo Powers we wouldn’t have much in Southeast Asia”. At the same meeting, Mr Cutler from the White House “asked why we couldn’t begin with the economic treaty first, thereby attracting those Asian nations who would not sign a military agreement and giving the whole project an Asian flavor from the start.”⁸⁴ The State Department’s Regional Planning Adviser similarly urged in a memo dated 23 July 23, 1954, that the administration “should give real consideration to the British position – that is, that we should go slowly in forming such an organization [SEATO] in order to give ourselves time to persuade Burma, Pakistan, Ceylon, Indonesia and India to join in or, at least, to look with favor upon it.” By securing the involvement of such nations, he added, the US “should have accomplished something of outstanding value and significance and have imposed a formidable obstacle to further communist expansion,” where as an alliance of Thailand and the Philippines as the only participating Asian nations, would have “chiefly the effect of giving us the illusion of ‘doing something’.”⁸⁵ Even Dulles, himself no fan of the Colombo Powers, had on 1 May 1954 recognized the importance of “seeking the largest possible gathering of countries in the area, including the so-called Colombo countries.”⁸⁶ And evidence that he had seen Indian support for SEATO as an important requirement for its success could be found in the following official State Department summary of his remarks: “If the British succeed in bringing in

to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs John Allison on 21 January 1953 warned that “it is difficult to believe that any practical gains we shall make through teaming up with the other Western powers in Asia, whether for the defence of Asia or for any other purpose, will offset the resentment we shall arouse among the Asians themselves.” Cited in Capie, *Power, Identity and Multilateralism*, p. 93.

⁸⁴ “Minutes of a Meeting on Southeast Asia”, 24 July 1954, FRUS, 1952-54, Vol. XII, Part I, p.667.

⁸⁵ “Memorandum by the Regional Planning Adviser in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs (Ogburn) to the Acting Assistant Secretary of States for Far Eastern Affairs (Drumright), 23 July 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, Vol. XII, Part I, p. 664.

India and Pakistan [into the proposed Southeast Asia collective defence organization], it would constitute a triumph for British diplomacy. It would also be a triumph for us, even if we couldn't claim it to be."⁸⁷

But a triumph it was not to be, for either Dulles or Eden. In April 1954, the British High Commissioner in Delhi was informed by a senior Indian Foreign Ministry official that "the idea of a North Atlantic Treaty Organization in South East Asia appalled him [Nehru]."⁸⁸ This shows that notwithstanding the differences in mandate and organization, the proposed pact was seen by Nehru as an "Asian NATO". Nehru's reply to Eden's messages in July seeking Indian understanding and support for the proposed alliance is revealing. Nehru rejected this request that he saw not as a "collective peace system" under the UN Charter, but as a "military alliance", which fell outside of the UN Charter's provision regarding collective security and which would result in a "counter-military alliance." Later, Nehru would explain the Bandung Conference's recognition of the right of collective self-defence as applying only to regional security arrangements consistent with the UN charter of regional "collective peace systems" - an inclusive multilateralism - which SEATO in his view clearly was not. Second, it went against India's "well-considered policies on international relations." Third, referring to Eden's point about the "role of Asian Powers in the defence of South-East Asia," Nehru pointed out that: "the majority of Asian countries and the overwhelming majority of Asian people's will not be participants in the organization" and that "[s]ome...would even be strongly opposed to it,

⁸⁶ This is how the British read Dulles' position. "Parliamentary Question: Controversies Regarding S.E. Asia Security Arrangements," Memo dated 12 May 1954. D1074/11 Foreign Office (FO 371 111862).

⁸⁷ "Regional Grouping in Southeast Asia", attached to "Memorandum of Discussion at the 198th Meeting of the National Security Council", 20 May 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Vol. XII, Part I, p. 497.

⁸⁸ Inward Telegram, From the UK High Commissioner in Delhi to Commonwealth Relations Office, 14 April 1954, FO 371-112053, File F1071/229.

thus rendering South-East Asia a potentially explosive theatre of the Cold War.” Fourth, argued Nehru, an alliance by some parties to the Geneva Agreement to the exclusion of others “in the wake of and so soon after the settlement itself,” would undermine the peace process and create tensions and hence would be “contrary to the terms of the Indo-China settlement.” Finally, Nehru presented the five principles of peaceful co-existence, enunciated by India and China and accepted by Burma, Indonesia, as “a constructive alternative” to the proposed alliance, which, if accepted by other countries of the region, would bring about “greater measures of security and freedom from fear and aggression.”⁸⁹

Given this attitude, would a stronger US commitment to SEATO have made it more viable? The answer is most certainly no, especially if one takes greater Asian representation as a key factor. Given Nehru’s opposition to an Asian NATO, a stronger US commitment to SEATO might have the opposite effect. The rejection of the pact by four (India, Ceylon, Indonesia and Burma) of the five members of the Colombo Powers group was thus an important factor behind SEATO’s failure. It made SEATO appear irrelevant, especially when these states were encountering problems of communist subversion at home (hence, they could not be said to be less threatened by communism than Thailand and the Philippines), as well as dangerous and “un-Asian”.

The Bandung Conference accentuated perceptions of SEATO’s limited regional representation. “[A]ny hope that might have existed that additional states could be attracted to SEATO,” a British Foreign Office assessment of the conference noted, had

⁸⁹ “Message to Anthony Eden”, 1 August 1954. In *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 26 (New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Trust), pp. 419-423.

“now vanished.”⁹⁰ In the Philippines, it strengthened domestic elements which advocated an Asian identity for the country. After listening to Sukarno’s opening speech as Bandung, Emanuel Palaez, a Philippine Senator who was a member of its delegation, felt a “sense of pride” that the speaker was a “fellow Asian...a voice of Asia, to which we Filipinos belong.”⁹¹ The “un-Asianness” of SEATO also affected Thai and Filipino participation in the alliance. Earlier, while accepting SEATO membership, they also “resented not being taken into the confidence of their Western partners” - US, UK, France, Australia and New Zealand - especially when the latter began discussions on a regional collective defence pact in 1954.⁹² After Bandung, they expected and demanded aid from the Western members of SEATO “as a compensation for the liability incurred through [their] association with non-Asian, alien forces.”⁹³ This echoes warnings issued by US officials as noted earlier that a SEATO without India would be perceived as a white man’s alliance.

Later, in analyzing the reasons for its collapse, a former Secretary-General of SEATO would stress its failure “to gather new members” and the “ironical” fact that “it was Thailand and the Philippines whose security SEATO was principally conceived to ensure, who asked...for its gradual phasing out...” Echoing Nehru’s point about unequal alliances, he acknowledged: “When membership is disparate and composed of great and

⁹⁰ “The Afro-Asian Conference”, Foreign Office Research Department, 5 May 1955, 2231/368, FO 371-116986.

⁹¹ “The Asian-African Conference”, Address by Senator Emanuel Paelez to the Rotary Club of Manila, undated, 2231/379, 11 August 1955, FO 371-116986.

⁹² Modelski, “The Asian States’ Participation in SEATO,” in Modelski, ed. *SEATO: Six Studies* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Publication Centre, 1962), pp. 155-6.

⁹³ *Ibid*, pp. 155-6.

small nations, the latter having to rely heavily on the former, the organization is bound to be at the mercy of the whip and whim of the larger nations.”⁹⁴

The Long-Term Absence of Collective Defence in Asian Regionalism

The norm against regional collective defence shaped Asian regionalism in the post-Bandung period. Indeed, what was originally an injunction against “the use of arrangements of collective defence to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers,” expanded into a more general norm against regional collective defence, even when not sponsored by the great powers because of the fear that such defence arrangements, especially if involving pro-Western nations, might be seen as a “SEATO through the backdoor.” And it continued to influence the nature and purpose of subsequent Asian regional organizations (Figure 4).

In 1961, the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) was formed by Malaysia, Thailand, and Philippines (the latter two SEATO members). It was noted in its founding declaration that ASA was “in no way connected with any outside power bloc and was directed against no other country,” a clear reference to the demonstrated illegitimacy of SEATO. ASA was thus intended to be “an embryonic alternative rather than a substitute for SEATO.” ASA foundered over the non-participation of Indonesia. In 1967, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations was formed with Indonesian membership, thereby making Southeast Asian regionalism much more representative. ASEAN’s founders would strenuously try “not to lend credence to charges that [ASEAN] was a substitute for the ill-fated South-East Asia Treaty Organization in the making,” but

⁹⁴ Konthi Suphamongkon, “From SEATO to ASEAN”, undated, pp. 32-35.

instead would keep its initial focus to “economic, social, cultural, technical, scientific and administrative fields.”⁹⁵

In important ways, ASEAN helped to institutionalize the core principles of Bandung. Its Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) Declaration of 27 November 1971, strongly pushed by Indonesia, affirmed “the continuing validity of the ‘Declaration on the Promotion of World Peace and Cooperation’ of the Bandung Conference of 1955, which among others, enunciates the principles by which states may co-exist peacefully.” The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, adopted at the first ever summit of ASEAN member held in Bali in 1976, acknowledged that ASEAN’s goals would be “consistent with” the “Ten Principles adopted by the Asian-African Conference in Bandung.”

During negotiations leading to the formation of ASEAN, Indonesia sought to incorporate the Bandung language that would have committed members against pacts that served “the particular interests” of great powers.⁹⁶ While this specific language was eventually dropped, neither did ASEAN endorse or develop collective defence. Instead, its policies reflected and broadened the norm against collective defence. In 1974, then Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik rejected intra-ASEAN defence cooperation on the ground that military “[p]acts are of no value and don’t really add strength to a region.”⁹⁷ Carlos Romulo would now agree with this view, “We did not phase out SEATO in order to set up another one.”⁹⁸ In a similar vein, the Thai foreign minister declared in 1977 that military alliances were “obsolete” and stressed that ASEAN had

⁹⁵ Michael Leifer, *ASEAN and the Security of South-East Asia* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 28.

⁹⁶ Arnfinn Jorgensen-Dahl, *Regional Organization and Order in Southeast Asia* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982).

⁹⁷ *Straits Times*, 22 August 1974.

"nothing to do with military cooperation."⁹⁹ Ali Moertopo, a key adviser to President Suharto of Indonesia who had played an important role in the formation of ASEAN, rejected military pacts, using reasons – such as the danger they posed to the “sovereignty” of Asian nations and the risk that they would provoke “intervention by outside forces” – which echoed Nehru’s concerns:

...Excessive dependence of a country on the might of a foreign power, resulting in the existence of foreign military bases on its soil or its membership in a military pact, may precisely pose a threat to its sovereignty, its national integrity, its peace and security...And as the experience of Vietnam has shown, efforts to fight internal subversion by inviting external intervention will fail.¹⁰⁰

At the 1976 Bali Summit, in its Declaration of ASEAN Concord, ASEAN would only approve of “continuation of cooperation on a non-ASEAN basis between the member states,” which in essence meant an agreement to keep defence cooperation among ASEAN members at the bilateral level.¹⁰¹ This refusal to organize itself into a military pact, or to develop any form of military cooperation on a multilateral basis, would persist through subsequent decades.

A possible alternative explanation of why ASEAN rejected collective defence could be the absence of a commonly-perceived threat. But ASEAN did face a serious and acknowledged common threat in the 1970s in form of communist subversion (combining both internal and external sources) and was urged on by some members to develop defence cooperation as a response, especially in the wake of the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in December 1978. The crisis prompted Singapore’s Prime Minister Lee Kuan

⁹⁸ *Straits Times*, 22 December 1975.

⁹⁹ *Straits Times*, 6 July 1977.

¹⁰⁰ Lt. General Ali Moertopo, “Superpower Interests in Southeast Asia,” in K. Subrahmanyam, ed., *Self-Reliance and National Resilience* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1975), p. 50.

¹⁰¹ The text of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia and the Declaration of ASEAN Concord can be found at the website of the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta: www.aseansec.org.id.

Yew to propose that ASEAN conduct multilateral military exercises to guard against a possible Vietnamese incursion into Thailand, but the proposal was turned down by Indonesia as well as by Thailand itself, who did not want to change the non-military character of ASEAN. Indonesia rejected the Singapore proposal on the ground that ASEAN exercises would provoke meaning Vietnam and be “similar to ASEAN opening a new front.”¹⁰² ASEAN continued to reject multilateral defence cooperation even after the Vietnamese withdrawal of Cambodia in 1989 and the end of the ASEAN-Vietnam divide. Then, ASEAN faced the prospect for a precipitate reduction in the US military presence in Asia. This was seen by some ASEAN elites as necessitating the creation of an ASEAN “defence community.”¹⁰³ But the norm against collective defence would hold. The then President of the Philippines, General Fidel Ramos, would still warn that any move to create an ASEAN defence pact: “could provoke an arms race, intensify ideology-based polarisation and conflicts within South-east Asia, encourage the big powers to initiate pre-emptive counteraction and prevent ASEAN from pursuing with undiluted vigour and freedom of action its vision of full regional stability and economic self-sufficiency.”¹⁰⁴ And more recently, an Indonesian proposal for soft defence cooperation under an “ASEAN Security Community” has stalled.¹⁰⁵

ASEAN also continued to reject collective defence involving non-Southeast Asian actors. The only exception to this was the Five Power Defence Arrangements, created in the wake of the British withdrawal from the region and comprising Singapore,

¹⁰² *New Straits Times*, 17 September 1982.

¹⁰³ Amitav Acharya, "Association of Southeast Asian Nations: Security Community or Defence Community?", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (Summer 1991), pp. 159-178

¹⁰⁴ *The Sunday Times (Singapore)*, 26 November 1989.

¹⁰⁵ Adrian Kuah, “ASEAN Security Community: Struggling with Details”, *IDSS Commentaries*, 15 June 2004.

Malaysia, UK, Australia and New Zealand. But as the author of the most important work on FPDA writes, the FPDA has remained “an essentially loose political consultative framework that is far from being a collective defence system.”¹⁰⁶ Despite conducting military exercises, its contribution to the defence needs of its ASEAN members, Singapore and Malaysia, are rudimentary. The ASEAN Regional Forum, created in 1994 as Asia’s only multilateral security organization, has never seriously considered the NATO model of collective defence. In the words of a senior US official, the ARF is “not a bloc forming against the common threat” but rather a case of “potential antagonists talking to each other trying to clear up any misperceptions, give greater transparency...[and] some sense of predictability”.¹⁰⁷ The norm against regional defence cooperation is also evident in the failure of recent American initiatives for a Pacific “Security Community” (which, despite its nomenclature, was aimed at legitimizing an expansive multilateral defence relationship in the region) as well as a more recent proposal for a “Regional Maritime Security Initiative.”¹⁰⁸ Even terrorism, a threat affecting many Asian countries, has been addressed mainly through bilateral security cooperation. Multilateral cooperation has been limited to intelligence-sharing and capacity building activities. Similarly, despite the fact that several countries in the region see the rise of China as a potential common threat, there is no serious advocacy of an Asian NATO. Rather, the US is falling back on its existing bilateral alliances to deal with this challenge. Despite suggestions by some

¹⁰⁶ Chin Kin Wah, “Singapore’s Perspective on Asia-Pacific Security” in See Seng Tan and Amitav Acharya, eds., *Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation: National Interests and Regional Order* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), p. 175.

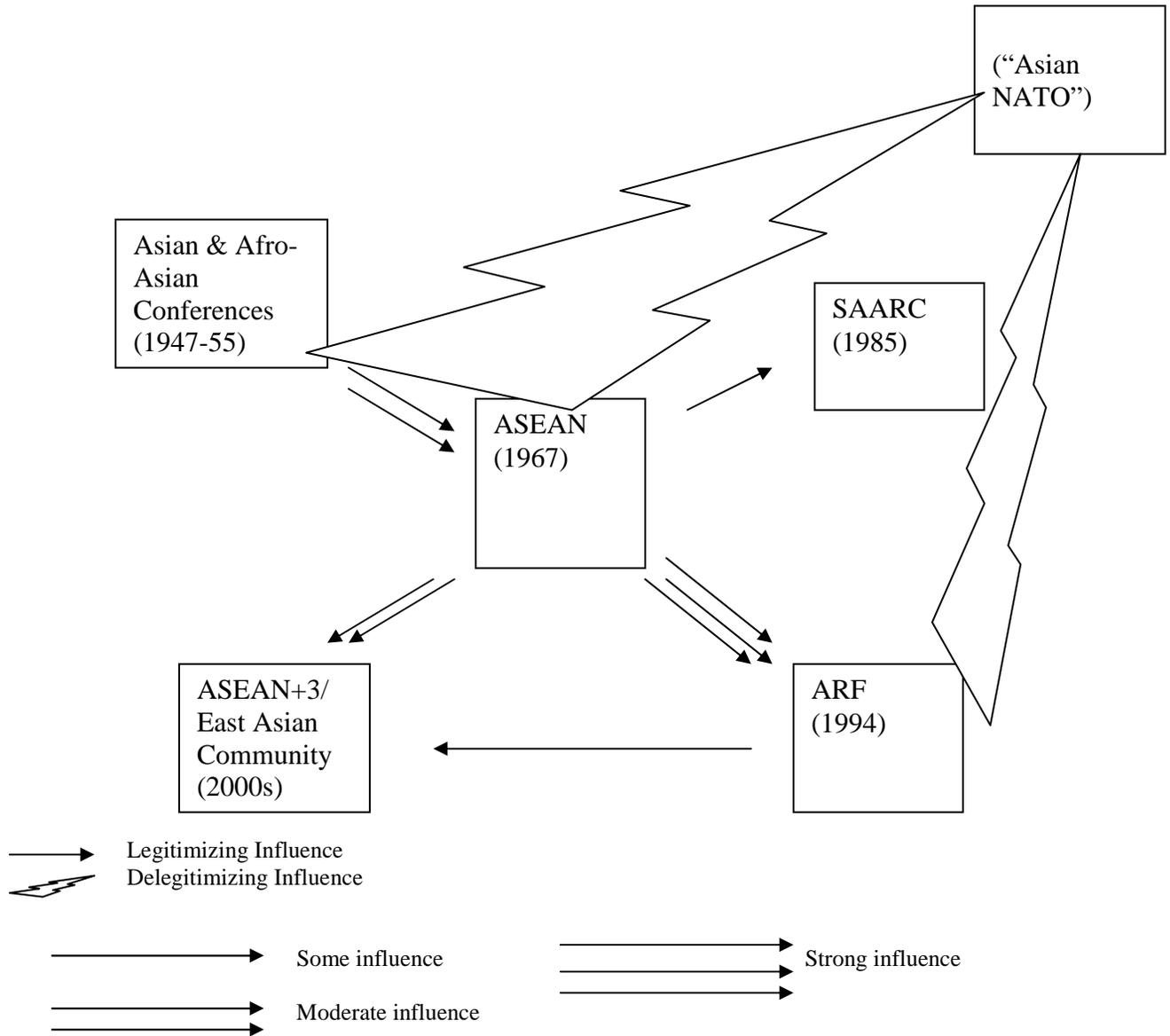
¹⁰⁷ Interview, *The Straits Times*, 30 July 1993, p. 34

¹⁰⁸ Dennis C. Blair, “Collective Responsibilities for Security in the Asia-Pacific Region.” Text of Lecture Organized by the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies. Singapore. 22 May 1999; Blair, “Security Communities Are the Way Ahead for Asia.” *International Herald Tribune* 21 April 2000; Blair, “Security Communities The Way Ahead for Asia.” *Asia-Pacific Defense Forum (Special Supplement)* Vol. 2, No. 1 (2000).

writers that altered strategic conditions such as reduced US-Asian and intra-Asian power disparities and the rise of China might create the possibility of a “Nato-like Asian security framework,” it can be safely predicted that no such “NATO in Asia” will be forthcoming.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Press-Banathan’s rationalist argument, echoing that of Crone, suggests that the reduction of power disparities could lead to greater prospects for the creation of an Asian security arrangement by making it more useful to the US. Press-Banathan, *Organizing the World*, p. 208. See also: Press-Banathan, *Security Studies*, (Winter 2001); Derek Chollet, “Time for an Asian NATO?” *Foreign Policy* (Spring 2003); Sunanda K. Datta-Ray, “Signs Look Promising for Nato-like Asian Security Framework,” *The Straits Times*, 22 April 2004.

Figure 4.
Norm Diffusion and Institutional Emulation in Asian Regionalism



Note: Apart from the rejection of collective defence, institutional emulation in Asian regionalism includes diffusion of process norms, such as organizational minimalism, exclusion of bilateral disputes from the multilateral agenda, preference for consensus over majority voting, and avoidance of legalistic mechanisms. The ASEAN process norms are remarkably similar to Bandung’s, which were shaped by Indonesia, and ASEAN in turn has influenced the process norms of SAARC, ARF, and the ASEAN+3 framework. The “+3” part of ASEAN+3 represents a diffusion of ASEAN model to Northeast Asia.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ For details see: Amitav Acharya, “Regional Institutions and Asian Security Order: Norms, Power, and Prospects for Peaceful Change”, In Muthiah Alagappa, ed., *Asian Security Order: Instrumental and Normative Features* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 210-240; and Acharya, “The Evolution of Norms: Contestation, Subsidiarity, and Regional Institution-Building in the Third World”,

Conclusion and Implications

Why is there no NATO in Asia? Available rationalist and constructivist accounts focusing on American power and perceptions have failed to offer a convincing explanation of this puzzle. Realists have emphasized US-Asian power differentials, while constructivists have stressed American policymakers' perceptions of collective identity vis-à-vis Asians. This paper has offered an alternative explanation in which normative resistance from within Asia to regional collective defence assumes a central place. This resistance was initially played out in Asian regional interactions culminating in the 1955 Bandung Conference, which addressed the issue of self-determination and superpower intervention. These interactions, while not creating a regional organization, created a durable normative framework which undermined the prospects for regional collective defence through subsequent decades.

The normative delegitimation of collective defence ensured that American policymakers would accept bilateralism as the most practical approach (and as a second-best solution) to security cooperation in Asia. Asia continues to reject collective defence – both at regional and subregional levels - even though power and interest conditions affecting regional security cooperation, such as the distribution of power and degree of economic interdependence, have changed substantially. For example, power disparities between the US and Asian countries are less striking today than they were in the 1950s.

The degree of economic interdependence is greater. But the prospect for a NATO in Asia remains as elusive as before, so much so that no one is even seriously advocating it.¹¹¹

The main reason for this, as this paper has argued, was the normative delegitimation of collective defence in post-war Asia.

The paper also calls for rethinking existing explanations of the diffusion of sovereignty norms in international relations theory. The view that Third World sovereignty is a straightforward and wholesale adoption of Westphalian principles is inadequate. While the newly independent countries were keen to assume the identity of “sovereign” states, translating and operationalizing ideas about self-determination, equality and non-intervention into specific principles of conduct in international affairs proved to be a complicated and controversial enterprise. What constituted the appropriate behavioral norms of sovereignty—which norms should take priority among them, the meaning of equality and non-interference, and the question of what sort of relationships with other nations upheld or undermined sovereignty—had to be debated and constructed in accordance with the preferences and beliefs of local actors. Instead of being viewed as a case of passive inheritance of Westphalian principles such as non-intervention by newly-independent states, it is more useful, as Figure 2 suggests, to view the diffusion of sovereignty norms as a case of active local construction and extension of those global principles in accordance with, and with the infusion of, local beliefs and practices, which would result in strengthening the global sovereignty regime (such as NAM) while laying the basis of order-building regional institutions (such as ASEAN).

¹¹¹ Hence my disagreement with Press-Barnathan’s more optimistic view of the prospects for an Asian security organization. Press-Barnathan, “The United States and Regional Security Cooperation in Asia and Europe,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Winter 2000/2001), pp. 49-97.

The paper has shown that the process through which the Asian norm against collective defence not only provided a durable foundation of Asian multilateralism, it also helped broaden and strengthen the non-intervention norm in the global context. To be sure, there was prior development of this norm in global and regional contexts, such as in Latin America and at the founding of the UN, but Asia's was a distinctive and significant contribution.

In the drafting of the UN Charter, non-intervention had a less prominent place than other core norms of sovereignty, such as territorial integrity and the doctrine of sovereign equality of states, partly out of concern among the key players of the 1945 San Francisco Conference (where the non-Western representation was small and mostly from Latin America) that too much emphasis on non-intervention would prejudice the authority of the Security Council to carry out its enforcement functions under Chapter VII.¹¹² It was through Bandung and the NAM that the norm was considerably strengthened as a rule of sovereignty in the Third World. The traditional meaning of non-intervention and the scope of challenge that could undermine it (which now included membership in superpower military alliances) were broadened. The classical European exception to non-intervention (intervention justified in the name of maintaining the balance of power) had no place in the Third World sovereignty regime.

The earlier Latin American construction of non-intervention reflected the political aspirations of settler societies whose legal and intellectual underpinnings had considerable association with Western political traditions and legal ideas. It was part of a regional bargaining exercise in which America's southern neighbors got it to accept non-

¹¹² See Documents of the United Nations Conference on International Organization, Commission I, General Provisions, Vol. VI (New York: United Nations Information Organizations, 1945).

intervention in exchange for their acceptance of US security protection. This would “multilateralize” the Monroe Doctrine, whose original goal was to deter European recolonization of South America. The Asian construction of non-intervention was distinctive in the sense of being geared to a bipolar international structure. It did not allow for collective defence pacts with either superpower. And the Asian construction of non-intervention at multilateral gatherings like Bandung predated the African “negative sovereignty” regime by a decade and influenced it, not the least because several African states participated in the meetings in Asia.¹¹³

Around the same time that the decolonized states in Asia embraced a particularly restrictive interpretation of sovereignty and non-intervention, their former colonial masters in Europe began to move away from Westphalian sovereignty towards a greater degree of solidarism and supranationalism. Hence, a gap opened up in the practices around sovereignty between the former colonial powers (the original site of sovereignty) and the recently decolonized states. This faultline continued to shape not just the pattern of North-South relations in the post-war period, especially with the rise of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which served to diffuse the norm of non-intervention and abstention from superpower-led collective military alliances in the global South just as Asian regional institutions helped to institutionalize the norm at the regional level.¹¹⁴ It

¹¹³ On the normative link between Bandung and African regionalist concepts, see: Colin Legum, *Bandung, Cairo and Accra* (London: The Africa Bureau, 1958). The Conference of Independent African States (CIAS), convened by Kwame Nkrumah in 1958, explicitly invoked Bandung principles, including its rejection of Cold War pacts. Kwame Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1961), pp. 151-52, 219. Bala Mohammed, *Africa and Nonalignment* (Kano, Nigeria: Triumph Publishing Co., 1978), pp. 21, 54-55, 184.

¹¹⁴ Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment*; and A.W. Singham and Shirley Hune, *Non-Alignment in an Age of Alignments* (London: Zed Books, 1986). Before the first summit of NAM in Belgrade in 1961, the Preparatory Meeting of Foreign Ministers held in Cairo in June 1961 issued criteria that restricted invitations to states which were not members of “a multilateral alliance concluded in the context of Great

also laid a normative foundation that has profoundly shaped post-war regional institution-building in Asia.¹¹⁵

Power conflicts.” Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament*, p. 104. It is noteworthy that Africa also did not develop collective defence with great powers.

¹¹⁵ “Naked pursuit of Westphalian sovereignty,” write Chung-in Moon and Chaesung Chun, “epitomize[s] the essence of Asian security today.” Moon and Chun, “Sovereignty: Dominance of the Westphalian Concept and Implications for Regional Security,” in Alagappa, ed., *Asian Security Order*, p. 107.