

Creating SEATO: understanding the limited success of Eisenhower's NSC in Southeast Asia

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

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## Abstract

“Creating SEATO” uses primary sources primarily from the Dwight Eisenhower Presidential Library to investigate an overlooked aspect of the Eisenhower administration’s “New Look” grand-strategy foreign policy of how the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) affected the National Security Council’s (NSC) ability to achieve its objective for the nations of Southeast Asia during Eisenhower’s presidency. The New Look, SEATO, and the Eisenhower administration’s foreign relations with the nations of Southeast Asia were inextricably linked. The NSC’s objective for Southeast Asia was to have pro-West nations with stable and free governments. The New Look was multifaceted. Its primary component was deterring the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) from militarily invading Western Europe by increasing the US’ nuclear capabilities significantly and threatening massive retaliation. This would contain communism long term and avoid war at a reasonable cost. Its secondary components were to use collective security to share costs and responsibilities with allies, and economic development and propaganda would attract nations to cooperate with the West. This dissertation’s main thesis in a sentence is: Eisenhower’s NSC had limited success achieving its objective for the nations of Southeast Asia because SEATO reflected the New Look, and the New Look was not a good strategy for the region. To elaborate more on the dissertation’s main thesis, the New Look’s nuclear and Eurocentric focus presented three major contradictions when it was applied to Southeast Asia. The contradictions were: 1) the most likely regional communist threat was from insurgencies, 2) US allies were halfhearted about regional collective security, and 3) popular support for anti-Westernism and neutrality pervaded the region. Although the NSC had success in its primary component, it had limited success achieving its objective for the nations of Southeast Asia where it used SEATO to implement different components of the New Look. A significant reason for the lack of success was because the NSC tried to apply the New Look universally through SEATO even though Southeast Asia had a different set of challenges than Europe, which the previously explained contradictions for the New Look in the region did not adequately address. Therefore, the NSC’s regional objective was unrealistic, but it implemented the New Look through SEATO anyway because the New Look was a global strategy that mitigated overall risk. In addition, the NSC was focused on preventing the spread of communism in Southeast Asia because the domino theory held that if one nation fell to communism, then soon, they all would. By taking *a* new look at *the* New Look, “Creating SEATO” makes historiographical contributions to scholarship about the New Look, SEATO, and the Eisenhower administration’s foreign relations with the nations of Southeast Asia. It adds how an important reason why the NSC struggled to achieve its objective with the nations of Southeast Asia was because of major contradictions in the New Look when it was applied to Southeast Asia through SEATO.

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## Introduction

In 2021, a C-SPAN ranking of American presidents, with many prominent academic historians participating, ranked Dwight Eisenhower as the fifth best, and his rank according to that poll has climbed through the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In 2020, an elaborate national memorial in Washington DC was dedicated to Eisenhower during a time when various social movements were minimizing traditional power structures that glorified old, white, heterosexual, wealthy, elite, males, which President Eisenhower was. Moreover, many recent popular histories have praised his presidency, especially his New Look grand-strategy foreign policy, and support the position that during Eisenhower's two terms, from 1953 to 1961, even though there were some problems, overall, there was peace and prosperity for most Americans, which made it a success. Focusing on his foreign policy, an armistice effectively ended the inherited Korean War, Eisenhower averted a potentially catastrophic nuclear World War III, and the United States (US) did not begin any new military conflicts or get heavily involved in Vietnam. This dissertation calls for a rethinking of that growing conventional wisdom by taking *a* new look at *the* New Look through analyzing how the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) affected the ability of Eisenhower's National Security Council (NSC) to achieve its objective to have pro-West nations with stable and free governments in Southeast Asia, as well as Pakistan, which is included because it was a member of SEATO, and East Pakistan (today's Bangladesh) bordered Southeast Asia. SEATO was a collective-security organization for the greater Southeast Asia region from 1955 to 1977 that included Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, the United Kingdom (UK), and US until Eisenhower's presidency ended.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For primary source citations, four consecutive capital letters abbreviate the collection listed in the bibliography. Secondary sources are abbreviated in the notes with the author's surname and the title of the work without a subtitle.

The New Look's primary component was deterring the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) from militarily invading Western Europe by increasing the US' nuclear capabilities significantly and threatening massive retaliation. This would contain communism long term and avoid war at a reasonable cost. Its secondary components were to use collective security to share costs and responsibilities with allies, and economic development and propaganda would attract nations to cooperate with the West. However, problems occurred when the NSC tried to apply the New Look in Southeast Asia. This dissertation's main thesis in a sentence is: Eisenhower's NSC had limited success achieving its objective for the nations of Southeast Asia because SEATO reflected the New Look, and the New Look was not a good strategy for the region. To elaborate more on the dissertation's main thesis, the New Look's nuclear and Eurocentric focus presented three major contradictions when it was applied to Southeast Asia. The contradictions were: 1) the most likely regional communist threat was from insurgencies, 2) US allies were halfhearted about regional collective security, and 3) popular support for anti-Westernism and neutrality pervaded the region. Although the NSC had success in its primary component, it had limited success achieving its objective for the nations of Southeast Asia where it used SEATO to implement different components of the New Look. A significant reason for the lack of success was because the NSC tried to apply the New Look universally through SEATO even though Southeast Asia had a different set of challenges than Europe, which the previously explained contradictions for the New Look in the region did not adequately address. Therefore, the NSC's regional objective was unrealistic, but it implemented

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When it was unclear what the author's surname was, I defaulted to the final name listed. If no page number is cited, I am referring to the work as a whole or I used an e-book that did not have page numbers. Full secondary-source citations are in the bibliography. CSPN; Hitchcock, *The Age of Eisenhower*; Thomas, *Ike's Bluff*; Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace*; Galambos, *Eisenhower*; Eisenhower, *How Ike Led*. Some references to Southeast Asia throughout this dissertation include Pakistan. Repeatedly noting that addition became a distraction.

the New Look through SEATO anyway because the New Look was a global strategy that mitigated overall risk. In addition, the NSC was focused on preventing the spread of communism in Southeast Asia because the domino theory held that if one nation fell to communism, then soon, they all would.

This dissertation uses a considerable range and number of primary sources that are detailed in the bibliography. Methodologically, it primarily views them through SEATO's role in the Eisenhower administration's quest to achieve the NSC's objective for the nations of Southeast Asia. I chose to put the NSC at the center of my dissertation because it was the policy making body in the Eisenhower administration where key decisions about topics relevant to my dissertation were made, and I had good access to NSC primary sources. The narrative focuses on how the NSC perceived events during Eisenhower's presidency. Its decisions are evaluated by that standard, although other sources reflecting complementary perspectives of the results "on the ground" are incorporated. The most frequently used primary sources are documents found during extensive archival research at the Eisenhower Presidential Library. The ones that provided the greatest insights were the plethora of NSC-related documents. The administration of President Harry Truman created the NSC in 1947 as an advisory group for the president to consult with on national-security-related issues. As the US increasingly viewed the USSR as a diplomatic and military threat in the budding Cold War, the State Department needed to work closer with the US' military and intelligence services. The NSC included the president, vice president, secretaries of the major security-related departments of the executive branch, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) director, national security advisor, and specialists on numerous topics. Thus, senior leaders of the different departments and agencies coordinated with the White House to produce policy papers, and progress reports on those policies, about various subjects

relating to US national security that clearly articulated its objectives, priorities, thought process, rationale, and strategy, as well as how it evaluated the results. Moreover, principal members of the NSC typically met every week to discuss the most pressing national-security issues, and there are detailed minutes from every meeting. The NSC met 366 times during Eisenhower's presidency, and Eisenhower presided over 90 percent of the meetings. During its last meeting, he described the experience as "gratifying" and remarked how "views were frankly and openly expressed."<sup>2</sup> Since the NSC established its objective in the Eisenhower administration's first year for the nations of Southeast Asia to be pro-West and have stable and free governments, and it maintained that objective throughout its eight years with very minor changes, NSC sources are ideal to assess how it perceived events relating to its objective.

Besides NSC documents, there were other collections at the Eisenhower Presidential Library from sources that were related to the NSC that were valuable and frequently used. Daily Intelligence Abstracts gave overview summaries of developments from the perspective of the US intelligence community about various nations and topics. The Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) coordinated many US government departments and agencies related to national security, and it left countless detailed reports. There were also collections of personal papers. Some were from prominent names like Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, but there were also lesser-known figures that contributed significantly. In terms of primary sources from outside the Eisenhower Presidential Library, I used published collections of documents. The most useful was Foreign Relations of the United States. Second place went to United States – Vietnam Relations, 1945 – 1967 (commonly known as the Pentagon Papers). Both had thousands of pages of relevant material that were not available at the Eisenhower Presidential Library. SEATO also

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<sup>2</sup> 474<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Jan. 12, 1961, 24, Box 13, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 474<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

published some documents that added insights and can still be accessed through libraries. A useful website was The Vietnam Center & Sam Johnson Vietnam Archive through Texas Tech University that had some documents related to SEATO during Eisenhower's presidency.

Although this dissertation's thesis and methodology concentrate on the NSC's perspective, the dissertation does take a relatively broad approach about how the NSC achieved its objective with eleven nations in the greater Southeast Asia region. Thus, it complements and situates itself in the existing scholarship by adding its unique thesis and methodology to works relating to the New Look, SEATO, and the Eisenhower administration's relations with the nations of Southeast Asia. There was lots of very useful scholarship about the eleven nations this study focuses on and the four SEATO members besides the US that were not in Asia, as well as other nations that exerted influence on Southeast Asia during Eisenhower's presidency. Three such actors were India, the People's Republic of China (PRC), and the USSR. In addition, this dissertation incorporates scholarship on topics such as SEATO, the New Look, deterrence, economic development, propaganda, collective security, counterinsurgency, US foreign relations, the Cold War, Southeast Asia, decolonization, and other relevant topics.

This dissertation's methodology and thesis allow significant historiographical contributions to four debates. The first one is evaluating the New Look. The historiography of Eisenhower's presidency, and the New Look, has gone through cycles. Before declassification of the administration's internal documents, the common perception of Eisenhower as a president was that he was a detached grandfatherly verbal bumbler who golfed while his subordinates competently ran the nation. Eisenhower's two-volume set of presidential memoirs, published in 1963 and 1965, respectively, were a key contributor to the first draft of history that tried to reshape that common perception. As declassification began, by the early 1980s, revisionist works

by authors like Robert Divine and Stephen Ambrose portrayed how deeply engaged Eisenhower was in the decision-making process. Viewing the New Look holistically and from a Eurocentric perspective, they praised his restraint in foreign policy and ability to manage crises that could have escalated to nuclear holocaust. However, by the late 1980s, post-revisionists, typically in articles that focused on an aspect of the New Look, took a closer examination and exposed problems that the New Look caused. H.W. Brands argues that the incredible arms buildup made the US more vulnerable. Meanwhile, Robert McMahon highlights the negative consequences from the administration meddling in the developing world. Stephen Rabe mirrored McMahon's theme in his book about Latin America, and a later book by Salim Yaqub focused on the Middle East. Rabe and Yaqub's regional studies argue that the Eisenhower administration had troubled relations with the nations of a region in the developing world where the US had a collective-security agreement. Nevertheless, beginning in the mid-1990s, the New Look's reputation made a comeback. A coauthored book by Robert Bowie and Richard Immerman, as well as monographs by Saki Dockrill, Campbell Craig, and Valerie Adams, once again using a more holistic and Eurocentric perspective, largely lauded the New Look for avoiding war in a complex and dangerous time. This remains the dominant academic interpretation and has shaped popular perceptions. This dissertation not only builds on the post-revisionists' critical assessments of aspects of the New Look, but it also presents a new interpretation that the frustrations the NSC encountered in Southeast Asia was rooted in the New Look's nuclear and Eurocentric focus that presented contradictions when the New Look was applied to Southeast Asia through SEATO.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change, 1953-1956*; Eisenhower, *Waging Peace, 1956-1961*; for a historiography of Eisenhower's foreign policy, see Rabe, "Eisenhower Revisionism;" Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War*; Ambrose, *Eisenhower, Vol. II*; Brands, "The Age of Vulnerability;" McMahon, "Eisenhower and Third World Nationalism;" Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*; Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America*; Bowie, *Waging Peace*; Dockrill, *Eisenhower's New-Look National Security Policy, 1953-61*; Craig, *Destroying the Village*; Adams, *Eisenhower's Fine Group of Fellows*.

The second historiographical debate is evaluating SEATO. Much of the limited scholarship on SEATO is from political scientists studying alliances and uses Asia-Pacific-Australasia perspectives and sources. In fact, a lot of it comes from international relations graduate students in master's theses and Ph.D. dissertations who examined SEATO as a case study while it was active until 1977. Apart from that, most of the work has been limited to a few chapters in edited collections or articles. The only books by political scientists are an edited collection by George Modelski in 1962 and one monograph by Leszek Buszynski from 1983. Likewise, there have just been three books by historians. The 1980s produced two brief treatments of relations between SEATO and individual nations, which were New Zealand and India, by Mark Pearson and A. Lakshmana Chetty, respectively. The existing scholarship typically argues that SEATO was a failure because it never undertook military action to oppose communist insurgencies in Indochina, which made it a "paper tiger." Conversely, the most recent book is Damien Fenton's 2012 full-length military history of SEATO until 1965 when the US escalated its military involvement in Vietnam significantly. In revisionist fashion, Fenton argues that SEATO was a success because it deterred external aggression and enabled its members to avoid having communists take over their governments. This dissertation adds a new interpretation by viewing SEATO from the perspective of Eisenhower's NSC and arguing that SEATO had limited success because it reflected contradictions in the New Look when the New Look was applied to Southeast Asia through SEATO. This dissertation also dedicates significantly more coverage to largely ignored facets of SEATO, such as nonmilitary aspects like economic development and propaganda programs, its influence on nations unaffiliated with SEATO pursuing neutrality, and domestic factors in the US. Consequently, this dissertation reveals that SEATO was more than a military alliance that focused on defending Indochina from

communism. Instead, SEATO should be viewed as a multifaceted political project that the US undertook, and led, and it reflected the various aspects of the New Look.<sup>4</sup>

The third historiographical debate is evaluating the Eisenhower administration's relations with the nations of Southeast Asia. Almost all the scholarship on that topic is bilateral studies that often extend chronologically outside Eisenhower's presidency and conclude that there were limits to the US' success. Prime examples include Laos by Seth Jacobs, Cambodia by William Rust, Indonesia by Andrew Roadnight, Burma (the future Myanmar) by Matthew Foley, Malaya (the future Malaysia) by Pamela Sodhy, and Singapore by S.R. Long. Those works generally argue that the US' actions led to instability and had a negative effect on those nations. On the other hand, for Thailand and the Philippines, works by Daniel Fineman and Nick Cullather, respectively, argue that those Asian SEATO members used the US' staunch anticommunist outlook to manipulate Americans to their advantage. Moreover, US foreign relations historians who have done bilateral studies, or examined the US' entire history, like George Herring, or Southeast Asia as a region after World War II, like Robert McMahon, or early Cold War relations with Vietnam, like Fredrik Logevall, have underappreciated, if not almost completely missed, SEATO's importance. Similarly, recent scholarship by Wen-Qing Ngoei and Ang Cheng Guan argues that US policy toward Southeast Asia was largely successful because it established an "arch of containment" around Indochina and the PRC, which gave the rest of the region the time it needed to resist communist takeovers. This dissertation adds a new interpretation to scholarship about US relations with the nations of Southeast Asia by exposing how historians have overlooked how the New Look applied through SEATO was a significant factor that limited the success Eisenhower's NSC had in achieving its regional objective. Hence, by synthesizing

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<sup>4</sup> Modelski, *SEATO*; Buszynski, *SEATO*; Pearson, *Paper Tiger*; Chetty, *India and SEATO*; Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*.

trends in bilateral studies and linking them to the contradictions in the New Look when it was applied to Southeast Asia through SEATO, this dissertation largely agrees with the theses of scholars of the US' bilateral relations in the region, but it unveils a systemic explanation for what occurred.<sup>5</sup>

The fourth historiographical debate is evaluating the Eisenhower administration's role in the US' involvement in Vietnam. The conventional wisdom, as advanced by Fredrik Logevall, Michael Hunt, and Larry Berman, is that Lyndon Johnson deserves most of the responsibility for "choosing war" since the US' massive escalation happened during his presidency. Conversely, David Anderson, James Arnold, and Kathryn Statler have argued that Eisenhower's decisions left future administrations with little choice but to stay engaged and escalate. Moreover, a recent wave of revisionists, led by Mark Moyar, defend the US' involvement in Vietnam. They argue that opposing communism was a noble cause, and the US could have won militarily if it had committed more resources. An edited collection appeared in response to Moyar and challenged that contention. In addition, Vietnam specialists, like John Prados, have pushed back and concluded there never was a viable military solution. Similarly, Michael Shafer defends the "stalemate thesis" that holds that successive US administrations knew staying engaged was futile, and their main objective was to not allow the government of South Vietnam to fall until they left office. This challenges the "quagmire thesis," advanced by David Halberstam, that holds that administrations believed that a limited and incremental commitment would eventually achieve victory. This dissertation generally supports historians that have emphasized

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<sup>5</sup> Jacobs, *The Universe Unraveling*; Rust, *Eisenhower and Cambodia*; Roadnight, *United States Policy towards Indonesia in the Truman and Eisenhower Years*; Foley, *The Cold War and National Assertion in Southeast Asia*; Sodhy, *The US-Malaysian Nexus*; Long, *Safe for Decolonization*; Fineman, *A Special Relationship*; Cullather, *Illusions of Influence*; Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*; McMahon, *The Limits of Empire*; Logevall, *Embers of War*; Ngoei, *Arc of Containment*; Ang, *Southeast Asia's Cold War*.

Eisenhower's responsibility, contended the war was unwinnable, and advanced the stalemate thesis. However, it adds a new interpretation that underscores SEATO's role in destabilizing all of Indochina, which has largely been overlooked and was a contributing factor for the insurgency in South Vietnam.<sup>6</sup>

This dissertation is organized thematically into six chapters that add to the previously mentioned historiographical debates in a specific way. Chapter one details how, and why, SEATO was created at the Manila Conference, where in response to a crisis in Indochina, compromises between halfhearted allies established a shaky foundation for SEATO. Chapters two through four focus on SEATO's Asian members, which were Thailand, the Philippines, and Pakistan, and how SEATO affected the NSC's ability to implement different components of the New Look in Southeast Asia and achieve its regional objective. More specifically, chapter two explores how deterrence through the threat of massive retaliation with nuclear weapons was a suspect strategy for the limited-war scenarios SEATO was likely to face, especially because the other members might not be able, or even willing, to contribute effective ground forces. Chapter three investigates how SEATO's economic development programs did not meet the expectations of SEATO's Asian members, but the NSC supported authoritarian or corrupt regimes that became entrenched in those nations. Chapter four examines how SEATO's propaganda campaign did not forge the regional anticommunist identity the NSC hoped for, nor did it overcome the strong disunity between SEATO's members. Chapter five studies how regional collective security was undermined because neutrality was popular in the noncommunist nations

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<sup>6</sup> For the conventional wisdom being that the critical decisions about Vietnam were made after Eisenhower's presidency and an overview of the stalemate and quagmire theses, see Statler, *Replacing France*, 277, 288; Logevall, *Choosing War*; Hunt, *Lyndon Johnson's War*; Berman, *Lyndon Johnson's War*; Anderson, *Trapped by Success*; Arnold, *The First Domino*; Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken*; Wiest, *Triumph Revisited*; Prados, *Vietnam*; Shafer, *Deadly Paradigms*, 278; Halberstam, *The Making of a Quagmire*.

in Southeast Asia that were unaffiliated with SEATO, which were Indonesia, Burma, Malaya, and Singapore. Chapter six ties the threads from the previous chapters together and concentrates on Indochina, which comprised North Vietnam and SEATO's protocol states of South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. There, SEATO faced its greatest crisis during Eisenhower's presidency, a civil war in Laos where neutralists and communists took up arms against a US-backed authoritarian regime. However, SEATO was unwilling to intervene militarily because it was so divided, and it lost a lot of credibility.

This topic warrants a dissertation because it allows significant historiographical contributions to debate about the New Look, SEATO, and US relations with the nations of Southeast Asia. Its main scholarly contribution is revealing that an important reason why the NSC struggled to achieve its objective with the nations of Southeast Asia was because of major contradictions in the New Look when it was applied to Southeast Asia through SEATO. Moreover, the events depicted hereafter influenced an inflection point in world history where the forces of the Cold War, decolonization, and nationalism collided and profoundly shaped the region's development. Southeast Asia was an intersection where the ideologies of neutralism and communism offered enticing alternatives to the Western model for people going through the process of decolonization. This three-way ideological contest triggered intense emotion because attractive Western ideals of prosperity, democracy, and individual rights were tainted by generations of imperialism. Southeast Asians had bitter ideological and physical conflicts over which paths their nations would follow, and larger outside forces that were often unwanted attempted to influence the outcome. This dissertation unveils that when a primary outside force, the US during Eisenhower's presidency, which was the leader in creating SEATO to help it

achieve the NSC's regional objective, tried to influence events, its efforts met resistance from non-Americans that had their own objectives and agency.

## 1. The Manila Conference: Compromises Between Halfhearted Allies Establishing a Shaky Foundation for SEATO

This chapter chronologically covers the Eisenhower administration's early years, from January 1953 through April 1955, as it transformed its New Look grand strategy from ideas to policies and implemented that strategy in Southeast Asia. This chapter argues that the NSC prioritized using the threat of massive retaliation with nuclear weapons to deter the USSR from militarily invading Western Europe, which would reduce the likelihood of general war. Nevertheless, the NSC realized in its first year that this nuclear and Eurocentric focus presented contradictions that would cause the NSC to struggle to achieve its objective for Southeast Asia to have pro-West nations with free and stable governments. There were at least three major contradictions: massive retaliation was ill-equipped to deal with the most likely regional communist threat of insurgencies, the US' potential allies were halfhearted about undertaking collective security in the region, and many Southeast Asians wanted neutrality and were alienated by the West after it had colonized practically the entire region. In 1954, a crisis occurred when the Vietminh insurgency in Indochina had military success, most notably at Dien Bien Phu, and the New Look did not have the appropriate tools to adequately deal with the situation. After communist gains at the Geneva Conference, the NSC responded by actively pursuing the creation of SEATO. This happened at the Manila Conference. However, only two nations from Southeast Asia joined, and only one of those was on the mainland. Moreover, the nations that joined SEATO besides the US had different objectives than the NSC for the region. Thus, without much regional buy in, and allies that were halfhearted about working with the US to achieve the NSC's objective for the nations in the region, SEATO was established on a shaky foundation. Finally, there was a backlash in the greater region against SEATO because it violated

the spirit of neutrality established by the accords from the Geneva Conference. This manifested at the Bandung Conference.

### *The New Look and Southeast Asia*

Despite the US' demobilization after World War II, what happened during World War II necessitated a rethinking of US national-security policy. The memory of being unprepared at Pearl Harbor, combined with technological advances in mechanized warfare, strategic bombers, jet engines, ballistic missiles, and atomic weapons, meant being unprepared could leave American interests vulnerable. Then, when relations between the wartime allies, the US and USSR, deteriorated after the defeat of their common enemies, the dawning Cold War presented new adversaries. Thus, the crux of the security context for the nascent Cold War was the growing tensions between the US and USSR and their ideologies, which were democratic-capitalism and communism, respectively. Both sides firmly believed that this ideological struggle was existential "for the soul of mankind," which became more threatening as they developed nuclear weapons and their capabilities to use them. US policymakers began to believe more in the argument that there was a monolithic international communism controlled by Moscow in the late 1940s, which caused them to see Soviet machinations behind several postwar developments. The USSR made rapid postwar gains by backing communist regimes behind a metaphorical iron curtain to form the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe. The USSR's Red Army, which was already in Eastern Europe after World War II, stayed there as an occupying force and supervised elections that enshrined the Soviet-approved communist-party candidates. The US countered by leading the "free world" in a Western bloc. In Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

was formed in 1949 and was the West's military alliance to defend Western Europe and deter the Soviet bloc. Although the USSR had less influence in China, some Americans perceived it as heavily influencing the Chinese Civil War, which resulted in the PRC bringing communism to the world's most populous nation and extending the Soviet bloc into Asia by signing a defense pact with the USSR.<sup>7</sup>

These developments fueled another Red Scare in the US. During this Second Red Scare, to distinguish it from the first one after World War I, many Americans became alarmed by communist sympathizers in the US who were either Soviet agents or inspired by international communism. There were instances where this was true, but not to the extent US Senator Joseph McCarthy alleged when he whipped up hysteria. Republicans blamed the Democrats, especially President Harry Truman, for "losing" China and the China Lobby interest group was determined to restore the Nationalists, or the Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan under Jiang Jieshi, to power on the mainland. The China Lobby had significant influence in the US on issues related to China until the 1970s. It included both private political activists and members of Congress, and it was funded in part by elites in the ROC. US foreign policy had two competing schools of thought in the early Cold War. Paul Nitze advocated for a more hawkish, militarized, and global approach to oppose the Soviet bloc, while George Kennan promoted a more dovish form of containment that was less militaristic and focused on defending vital areas like Western Europe and Japan. Because of the perceived communist threat, globalists pushed for a more active American foreign policy. Meanwhile, the defense industry lobbied for more military spending, and an interservice rivalry in the military emerged as each branch of the armed forces looked to

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<sup>7</sup> Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, Chapter 14; Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, Chapters 2-4; Leffler, *The Specter of Communism*, Chapters 2-4; Zubok, *A Failed Empire*; Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*; Craig, *The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War*; Zubok, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*. Sometimes "atomic" and "nuclear" are used interchangeably.

increase its budget. With the perceived threat, the Korean War, and domestic political forces, in 1950, Nitze's hawkish views won out. The Truman administration adopted NSC-68 that called for militarizing US foreign policy by increasing defense budgets and military capabilities, as well as arming US allies, to prepare to counter communists around the world.<sup>8</sup>

The specter of the appeasement of Germany before World War II in Europe also undermined the US' previously restrained foreign policy, and the US took the initiative to lead a United Nations (UN) military coalition in Korea to stop the communist North's invasion of the noncommunist South right after the adoption of NSC-68. From the US' perspective, this invasion appeared as international communism on the offensive, once again, even though Americans were not aware at the time that the USSR had only given its tacit consent to the invasion but was not the prime mover. At the beginning of the Korean War, there was concern that it was a feint preceding a Soviet-bloc attack on Western Europe. US military intervention in Korea demonstrated to the US' European allies that it was a stalwart ally, and the US also reinforced its defense commitment in Europe. At the beginning of the Korean War, there was domestic support for intervention. However, when the 1952 presidential campaign began, the Korean War had devolved into an unpopular resource-draining stalemate where the US had to keep the war limited to not risk sparking World War III. The Truman administration's reliance on conventional forces could not produce a victory or deter largescale PRC military intervention. Eisenhower, the Republican candidate, and military hero from World War II in Europe, became

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<sup>8</sup> Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, Chapter 14; Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, Chapters 2-4; Leffler, *The Specter of Communism*, Chapters 2-4; Thompson, "The Geopolitical Vision;" Craig, *America's Cold War*; House, *A Military History of the Cold War, 1944-1962*, Conclusion; Thompson, *The Hawk and the Dove*; Blackwell, "'The China Lobby.'"

president in an electoral landslide after running on a platform that included containing communism, going to Korea, and reducing US involvement there.<sup>9</sup>

With all that context in mind, President Eisenhower's New Look foreign policy, the focus of the NSC, was designed to pull back from the Truman administration's activist path that led to a battlefield stalemate in Korea and ballooning defense budgets. Most clearly articulated in basic national security policy NSC 162/2 from October 1953, which was a more developed version of NSC 153/1 from June, the NSC divided nations into three categories. First, there were ones that posed communist threats. The NSC framed communism as a monolithic Soviet bloc that was directed from Moscow and bent on world conquest. This posed an existential threat to American institutions like democracy, capitalism, and a faith-based heritage, which comprised the cornerstone of the "free world." The primary concern was the military threat to Western Europe from the USSR's huge army. However, the NSC had to contain the Soviet bloc long term, without overly draining American resources, to prevent economic stagnation that could cause another economic depression or the formation of a garrison state that could jeopardize civil liberties. The NSC's solution was to increase the threat of undertaking massive retaliation with nuclear weapons, in combination with more aggressive rhetoric, to deter and contain the Soviet bloc. Second, there were Western-bloc allies that supported the US' ideology, which the US needed to share costs and responsibilities in collective security. Allies would contribute resources like conventional forces and overseas bases. Third, there were uncommitted nations, which the US would entice to join the "free world" with military and economic aid so they could enjoy the West's freedom, stability, and prosperity. Propaganda through informational operations

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<sup>9</sup> Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, Chapter 14; Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, Chapter 4; Leffler, *The Specter of Communism*, Chapter 4; House, *A Military History of the Cold War, 1944-1962*, Conclusion; Brands, *Cold Warriors*.

and psychological warfare would sway popular opinion abroad, and covert operations were available to clandestinely influence events in the US' favor when overt methods stalled.<sup>10</sup>

Although the New Look was a sensible grand strategy to deter the USSR from militarily invading Western Europe, Southeast Asia had unique cultures, geography, and history. Politically, Southeast Asia comprised Indochina, Thailand, Burma, and Malaya on the continent, as well as the Philippine and Indonesian archipelagos. Migration over millennia, in conjunction with natural barriers like mountains, rivers, and islands, created pockets of ethnic and cultural diversity, even within nations. Therefore, most people's identity had traditionally been at the local level and focused on village or tribal issues, not macro-level geopolitics. Geographically, Southeast Asia was isolated like a peninsula by two behemoth ancient civilizations, which were China and India, that exerted their influence on the region over the centuries. On the equator, the tropical climate and rich natural resources allowed relatively easy village-level subsistence. Thus, it never consolidated into an empire that could withstand unwanted outside interference. Europeans colonized everywhere except Thailand by the end of the nineteenth century. Then, during World War II, Japan overran, and conflict devastated, much of the region. The weakened European powers returned to reclaim their colonies after Japan's surrender and encountered indigenous nationalist independence movements, the PRC promoting communism, and India, which became independent in 1947, encouraging neutrality in the Cold War.<sup>11</sup> Hence, Southeast

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<sup>10</sup> NSC 162/2, Oct. 30, 1953, NSC 162/2 – Basic Nat. Security Policy (2), Box 6, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, NSC 162/2); NSC 153/1, Jun. 10, 1953, NSC 153/1 – Basic National Security Policy, Box 5, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA; Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, Chapters 2-5; McClenahan, *Eisenhower and the Cold War Economy*; Dockrill, *Eisenhower's New-Look National Security Policy, 1953-61*; Tudda, *The Truth is Our Weapon*, 126; Sestanovich, *Maximalist*.

<sup>11</sup> Levine, *The United States and the Struggle for Southeast Asia, 1945-1975*, 1; for general background on Southeast Asia, see Tarling, *Southeast Asia*, Part 1; Osborne, *Southeast Asia*.

Asia formed a sub-system of small states that were particularly susceptible to the influence of more powerful states from outside the region.<sup>12</sup>

The Southeast-Asia policy Eisenhower's NSC developed, NSC 177 from December 1953, reflected that three-way tug-of-war between the Western powers, communists, and neutralists trying to influence the region's future. NSC 177's objective was: "To prevent the countries of Southeast Asia from passing into the communist orbit; to persuade them that their best interests lie in greater cooperation and stronger affiliations with the rest of the free world; and to assist them to develop toward stable, free governments with the will and ability to resist communism from within and without and to contribute to the strengthening of the free world." The NSC's vision of a stable and free government in the "free world" was one that had functioning democratic, and capitalist, institutions and aligned with the West on Cold War issues. Conversely, neutralists thought that to achieve stable and free governments, newly independent nations should not take sides in the Cold War, and communists believed a nation needed an unchallenged leftist government that did not cooperate with the West.<sup>13</sup>

Although the NSC's primary focus was clearly defending Western Europe militarily from the USSR because that posed the most serious threat to US interests, Southeast Asia was still important because it was the area that the NSC thought was most likely to face communist threats. In September 1953, the CIA identified Southeast Asia as the primary target for communist expansion.<sup>14</sup> NSC 177 analogized Southeast Asia to a row of dominos. According to this "domino theory," if communists gained control of any nation, it would tip the first domino over, and the communists would conquer the entire region before overrunning India and the

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<sup>12</sup> Modelski, "SEATO," 3.

<sup>13</sup> NSC 177, Dec. 30, 1953, 8, NSC 177 – Southeast Asia, Box 8, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, NSC 177).

<sup>14</sup> CIA Briefing for the Vice President, Sep. 28, 1953, 7, Vice President, Material for the (2), Box 19, Executive Secretary's Subject File, ENSC (hereafter, CIA VP).

Middle East. This would threaten US allies in the Pacific offshore island chain, which spanned from the Aleutian Islands in Alaska southward through Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, New Zealand, and Australia. This scenario would endanger the security of Europe by restricting global trade. Hence, the defense of Southeast Asia was not independent from the defense of Western Europe, but a vital component in a worldwide struggle against communism. Furthermore, Southeast Asia was the principal global source of natural rubber and tin, as well as a producer of other strategically important commodities like petroleum. Its rice exports were critical to feed Asia.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, the NSC's premise that access to those raw materials was vital to the West was suspect because the Allies won World War II without them, and now they were less reliant with synthetics, alternative sources, and stockpiles.<sup>16</sup> Finally, Asia was by far the most populous continent, and the only nations in the world with more than Southeast Asia's combined 170 million people<sup>17</sup> were China and India.<sup>18</sup> A sign of the region's importance was that Southeast Asia received more US aid than staunch Asian allies like Japan, South Korea, and the ROC, and that margin was scheduled to increase.<sup>19</sup> Although this compares a region to specific countries, it does give a standard of comparison for how the NSC ranked its relative value.

Just as the NSC interpreted Soviet actions as being part of a global plan to spread communism, it saw the PRC as the regional threat looming over Southeast Asia. NSC 177 declared, "The danger of an overt military attack against Southeast Asia is inherent in the

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<sup>15</sup> NSC 177, 2-3; for the geography of the island chain, see NSC 148, Apr. 6, 1953, 3, NSC 148 – Far East, Box 4, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, NSC 148).

<sup>16</sup> SEATO: The Manila Treaty and Western Policy in Southeast Asia, 1956, 3, CHHO (hereafter, Chatham House SEATO).

<sup>17</sup> CIA VP, 7.

<sup>18</sup> GEOB.

<sup>19</sup> NSC 148, 7.

existence of a hostile and aggressive Communist China.”<sup>20</sup> During World War II, Japan received some local support when it claimed to liberate Southeast Asia from European colonialism.<sup>21</sup> The US feared the PRC would duplicate that strategy.<sup>22</sup> NSC 166/1, the policy on the PRC from November 1953, explained that the PRC was sensitive to hostile military coalitions in the region, and its preeminent security interest was its border with Southeast Asia. It would go to considerable lengths to prevent Western military forces there.<sup>23</sup> What made this threat even more real was the PRC sent hundreds of thousands of “volunteers” to fight in Korea just three years prior when UN troops approached the PRC’s border and did not heed warnings to stop. The PRC “volunteers” continued fighting until the armistice in 1953.<sup>24</sup> There were also ten million overseas ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia that could assist the PRC with subversion,<sup>25</sup> and the CIA identified Southeast Asia as the area most vulnerable to communist subversion because of its inexperienced leaders and uneducated population.<sup>26</sup>

In the Eisenhower administration’s first year, the NSC identified how the New Look presented major contradictions when it was applied in Southeast Asia to the three groups of nations the NSC identified, which were nations with communist threats, US allies, and uncommitted nations. In terms of the first group, the communist threat primarily came from insurgencies in France’s colony of Indochina, but the New Look focused on using the threat of massive retaliation with nuclear weapons to deter external aggression. French Indochina included Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, which were known as the “Associated States.” France, even with

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<sup>20</sup> NSC 177, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Dulffer, “The Impact of World War II on Decolonization,” 25-26.

<sup>22</sup> Brazinsky, *Winning the Third World*, 1-3; Chen, *Mao’s China and the Cold War*, 6-7.

<sup>23</sup> NSC 166/1, Nov. 6, 1953, 20, NSC 166/1 – Communist China, Box 7, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA.

<sup>24</sup> Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, 32-33.

<sup>25</sup> Personal Daily Notes, Stevenson World Trip, Sep. 1953, 52-53, Stevenson, Adlai (3), Box 32, Name, EDDE (hereafter, Stevenson Trip).

<sup>26</sup> CIA VP, 4, 7.

significant American aid, was unable to defeat the insurgencies. Indochina bordered the PRC and was considered the first domino by the NSC. To prevent the domino theory from materializing, the US wanted to stop communist insurgencies from seizing power in Indochina. It also wanted to maintain good relations with France because the US needed France as an ally in European defense. Hence, the US increased its support for the French military effort in Indochina substantially even though it realized the prospect of defeating the Vietminh insurgency was remote. Unless the Indochinese believed in forthcoming independence, Eisenhower acknowledged, “nothing could possibly save Indochina, and that continued United States assistance would amount to pouring our money down a rathole.” The fundamental problem was that the Vietminh were popular with the people in Vietnam because they were largely seen as Vietnamese nationalists fighting for independence from the French imperialists that had indigenous puppet rulers and American support. Yet, from the US’ perspective, the Vietminh’s leader, Ho Chi Minh, had a procommunist background, and his efforts appeared to be a communist revolution that could knock over the first domino. This threat was exacerbated because there was also a smaller communist insurgency, the Pathet Lao, across the border from Vietnam in Laos. Consequently, the NSC was perplexed about how to achieve its regional objective in Indochina. An NSC paper stated, “If the warfare must be localized in Indo-China, cannot there be imaginatively conceived a type of action which is *not* planned for decisive, old-style victory, with large U.S. forces committed against an immaterial enemy; but rather a warfare planned with slender forces to raise continuing, maximum unsettlement for the Communists?” Still, since the New Look did not present a better option, and the NSC was unwilling to make concessions to communists, it doubled down on backing the French militarily in Indochina.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> For the first quote, see 143<sup>rd</sup> NSC Meeting, 6, May 6, 1953, Box 4, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 143<sup>rd</sup> NSC Meeting); for the second quote, see NSC 177 and Special Annex, Jan. 6, 1954, 4, NSC 177 – Southeast Asia, Box 8, Policy

The second major contradiction the New Look presented was that with its focus on controlling expenses, the NSC needed allies to collaborate with, but its likely partners were halfhearted about undertaking collective security in Southeast Asia. Despite the US' generosity in providing aid and security to the "free world" after World War II, its aggressive anticommunist posture had dropped the US' international prestige. This was especially true after the Soviets began a "peace offensive" at the beginning of Eisenhower's presidency after Soviet leader Joseph Stalin died. Western nations with colonial interests in Southeast Asia like the UK and France hesitated to embrace regional collective defense with the US. They feared the US, with its staunch anticommunism, would begin a war in Asia over a peripheral matter that would escalate and destroy their homelands or threaten their control of their colonies. Particularly troubling was the US' policy to isolate and contain the PRC because many of America's allies saw the PRC as a lucrative market for exports. In Southeast Asia, Thailand and the Philippines had the best relations with the US, and Pakistan bordered the region and was also on good terms with the US. To varying degrees, those nations had pro-West leaders, minimal threats from communism, insignificant insurgencies, some form of democracy, capitalist economies, and regimes that welcomed US aid. They could provide bases and troops for military efforts, as well

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Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, NSC 177 and Special Annex). NSC 177; NSC 124/2 Progress Report, Aug. 5, 1953, NSC 124/2 – Southeast Asia (1), Box 3, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, NSC 124/2 Progress Report); NSC 177 and Special Annex; Pruett to Edman, Indo-China, Aug. 5, 1953, State, Department of (10), Box 67, Subject, Confidential, EDER; Stevenson Trip; 141<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Apr. 28, 1953, Box 4, NSC, EDDE; 143<sup>rd</sup> NSC Meeting; 177<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Dec. 24, 1953, Box 5, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 177<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting); 179<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Jan. 8, 1954, Box 5, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 179<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting). For secondary works about Vietnam, see Logevall, *Embers of War*, especially 311-12, 339; Arnold, *The First Domino*, especially 113; Goscha, "Choosing between the Two Vietnams," especially 231; Lawrence, *Assuming the Burden*; Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*; Fall, *Street Without Joy*; Quinn-Judge, *The Third Force in the Vietnam War*; Quinn-Judge, "Through a Glass Darkly;" Miller, *Misalliance*; Bradley, *Vietnam at War*; Goscha, *Vietnam*; Duiker, *Sacred War*. For secondary works about Laos, see Stevenson, *The End of Nowhere*, especially 9, 11-13; Stuart-Fox, *A History of Laos*. For secondary works about Cambodia, see Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, especially 67; Clymer, *Troubled Relations*; Corfield, *The History of Cambodia*; Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*. For secondary works about Indochina more generally, see Goscha, *Going Indochinese*; Tertrais, "France and the Associated States of Indochina, 1945-1955;" Lockhart, "Monarchy and Decolonization in Indochina."

as receive and be positively influenced by US propaganda. Still, there were complications. Thailand and the Philippines appeared as US puppets to many Asians, which could cause them to distance themselves. In addition, they wanted US aid, but planned cuts to aid strained relations, and US propaganda budgets in those nations were also declining. Moreover, there was reason to question how effective their troops would be, and US bases in the Philippines were becoming a contentious political issue. The NSC wanted to create a collective security organization for Southeast Asia, but no nations were interested in joining during Eisenhower's first year. Pakistan had less strategic importance, faced a minimal threat from the Soviet bloc, saw neutral India as its archrival. Furthermore, its instability and lack of development would require large amount of American aid to overcome.<sup>28</sup>

The third major contradiction the New Look presented was that the NSC wanted to convince nations to become US allies, and especially those that were uncommitted or neutral, but US policies tended to alienate them. The root problem was that many uncommitted nations exhibited anti-Westernism after being colonies. With the West's association with imperialism, neutrality and socialism emerged as attractive alternatives, and the developing world was largely

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<sup>28</sup> NSC 162/2; NSC 177; NSC 124/2 Progress Report; PSB D-23, Psychological Strategy for Thai Peoples of Southeast Asia, Jul. 2, 1953, NSC 124/2 – Southeast Asia (2), Box 3, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA; NSC 5413/1, Apr. 5, 1954, NSC 5413/1 – Policy toward Philippines (2), Box 10, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, NSC 5413/1); NSC 84/2 Progress Report, Jul. 16, 1953, NSC 84/2 – Policy Toward the Philippines, Box 1, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA; NSC 5409, United States Policy Toward South Asia, Feb. 19, 1954, in FRUS, 1952-54, V. 11 (hereafter, NSC 5409); 157<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Jul. 30, 1953, Box 4, NSC, EDDE; 164<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Oct. 1, 1953, Box 4, NSC, EDDE; Nixon's Report on his Trip to Asia, Jan. 8, 1954, OCB 091.4 Far East (File #1) (2), Box 69, OCB Central File, ENSC (hereafter, Nixon Trip); Stevenson Trip. For secondary works about events in Europe, see Leebaert, *Grand Improvisation*, especially, 411-12, 432; Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944-1958*, especially, 201-03; Larres, *The Cold War after Stalin's Death*, especially, x; Osgood, "The Perils of Coexistence," especially, 34-35; Mastny, "The Elusive Détente," especially, 3; Combs, "A Missed Chance for Peace?," especially, 49, 63-64; Gardner, "Poisoned Apples," especially, 73, 89-90; Brooks, "When the Cold War Did Not End," especially, 8-10, 12, 16n; Smyser, *From Yalta to Berlin*. For secondary works about Thailand, see Baker, *A History of Thailand*; Phillips, *Thailand in the Cold War*. For secondary works about the Philippines, see Brands, *Bound to Empire*; Shalom, *The United States and the Philippines*, especially, 89-95; Capozzola, *Bound by War*; Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, especially, 254-56; Fuller, *Forcing the Pace*, especially, x, 331. For secondary works about Pakistan, see Kux, *The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000*; Jain, *US-Pak Relations 1947-1983*, especially, 145; Tahir-Kheli, *The United States and Pakistan*; Datta, *Why Alliances Endure*, especially, 64-65.

unaware of how bad conditions were inside the Soviet bloc because it comprised closed societies. In newly independent nations, the desire for autonomy often trumped offers of increased security and economic aid if that meant remaining dependent on the West. The US was allied with many European colonial powers, but it also advocated for self-determination. With this inconsistency, the US tried to remain neutral on colonial issues but doing so offended both the colonizers and colonized. The blatant anticommunist propaganda the US used was not a message that resonated, and Americans had trouble not exhibiting paternalism, racism, and Orientalism despite understanding their detrimental effects on relations. Indonesia, Burma, and Malaya blamed the US for their economic woes from declining commodity prices. Newly independent Indonesia and Burma pursued independent foreign policies, and to show balance, they increased relations with the Soviet bloc. Domestic politics limited their ability to take the economic and military aid they needed to stabilize ethnic and ideological tensions unleashed after independence. Indonesia had numerous rebel groups and allowed communists in its governing coalition, and the US' support for ROC troops that took refuge in Burma after the PRC seized power hindered the effort of Burma's socialist government to defeat competing leftwing rebels. Malaya and the affiliated British colony of Singapore presented a unique situation in the region. Most Malaysians saw their British colonizers as improving conditions and stabilizing ethnic tensions between Malays and Chinese, which comprised about 45% of the population. Since Malaysians believed they would get independence and remain supported by the British Commonwealth after defeating the ethnic-Chinese communist insurgents, they did not need the US, which also wanted to distance itself from colonialism. Overall, the US' aggressive anticommunist policies, Western heritage, militarism, and close relations with European colonial

powers greatly alienated Indonesia and Burma. Malaya had almost no bonds to the US, and it could follow a similar path after its forthcoming independence.<sup>29</sup>

As the Eisenhower administration entered its second year and implemented the New Look, those three major contradictions became more evident. The immediate challenge the NSC faced in Southeast Asia was the Vietminh insurgency. Even with increased US support, the French could not defeat it, which eroded France's ability to attain diplomatic objectives. When the USSR and Western powers agreed to meet at the Geneva Conference in April 1954 and try to settle Indochina diplomatically, the Soviet bloc increased its support for the Vietminh, who escalated their offensive operations to gain negotiating leverage. France's outpost at Dien Bien Phu came under siege, and a crisis ensued. The US tried to organize "united action." Eisenhower considered US military intervention, even with ground forces, but Congress would not authorize it unless the US had a coalition with European and Southeast Asian nations, and the US could not muster enough support from its allies. Conversely, the communists were united, and their

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<sup>29</sup> NSC 162/2; NSC 177; NSC 124/2 Progress Report; NSC 171/1, Nov. 20, 1953, NSC 171/1 – Policy on Indonesia, Box 8, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, NSC 171/1); NSC 124/2 Progress Report Indonesia Supplement, Aug. 27, 1953, NSC 124/2 – Southeast Asia (1), Box 3, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA; Nixon Trip; Stevenson Trip; CIA VP; Taylor Memo, Jun. 9, 1953, PSB 091. Indo-China (1), Box 12, PSB Central Files, ENSC; 177<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting; 179<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting; Sarawak: Political and Economic Background, 1957, CHHO; Malaya and Singapore, 1956, CHHO. For secondary works about Indonesia, see Roadnight, *United States Policy towards Indonesia in the Truman and Eisenhower Years*, especially, 114, 118; Vickers, *A History of Modern Indonesia*. For secondary works about Burma, see Foley, *The Cold War and National Assertion in Southeast Asia*, especially, 9-10, 104; Topich, *The History of Myanmar*; Clymer, "The United States and the Guomindang (KMT) Forces in Burma, 1949-1954," especially, 44. For secondary works about Malaya, see Sodhy, *The US-Malaysian Nexus*, especially, 97; Ngoei, *Arc of Containment*, especially, 53; Hooker, *A Short History of Malaysia*; Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare*; Kheng, "The Communist Insurgency in Malaysia, 1948-1989," especially, 48-49. For secondary works about decolonization and Southeast Asia, see Frey, *The Transformation of Southeast Asia*, especially, ix-xiv; Tarling, *Nationalism in Southeast Asia*; Anderson, "The Devil Is in the Details," especially, 272; Bradley, "Franklin D. Roosevelt, Trusteeship, and U.S. Exceptionalism," especially, 197; Pruessen, "John Foster Dulles and Decolonization in Southeast Asia," especially, 226; McMahon, "The United States and Southeast Asia in an Era of Decolonization, 1945-1965," especially, 213; Kratoska, "Dimensions of Decolonization," especially, 3; Ramakrishna, "Making Malaya Safe for Decolonization," especially, 161; Lau, "'Nationalism' in the Decolonization of Singapore," especially, 180; Tarling, "British Attitudes and Policies on Nationalism and Regionalism," especially, 127; Frey, "The Indonesian Revolution and the Fall of the Dutch Empire," especially, 83; Lindblad, "The Economic Impact of Decolonization in Southeast Asia," especially, 49; Barnett, *Paternalism Beyond Borders*, especially, 316; Said, *Orientalism*, 7.

eventual military success at Dien Bien Phu gave them a better negotiating position. The resulting accords from the Geneva Conference intended to neutralize Indochina and remove outside influence. They also sanctioned temporary communist control of Vietnam north of the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel and two provinces in Laos that bordered that part of Vietnam and the PRC.

Parliamentary elections were planned for Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia by 1956 to reunite divided nations under representative governments the people freely chose. Vietnam was expressly prohibited from joining military alliances, and Laos and Cambodia had less severe restrictions. Since communists would almost certainly win a majority of the seats in Vietnam, neither the US nor the government in southern Vietnam signed the accords. The US also refused to sign because the PRC participated in the Geneva Conference, and the US did not recognize it as a legitimate government. To prevent further communist gains and avoid the obstacles the US encountered during this crisis in Indochina, the NSC's need to create a regional collective-security pact for Southeast Asia became more pressing even though it was clearly inconsistent with the neutral spirit of the Geneva Accords.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> NSC Meetings 178-83, 185-87, 189-90, 192-202, 204-07, Dec. 1953-Jul. 1954, Box 5, NSC, EDDE (any of these meetings recited hereafter will be designated by the number of the meeting and "NSC Meeting"); Final Declaration of Geneva Conference, Jul. 21, 1954, B23-B24, in USVR, 5A1B (hereafter, Final Declaration of Geneva Conference). For secondary works about Dien Bien Phu, see Logevall, *Embers of War*, especially, 463, 466, 477, 676; Arnold, *The First Domino*, especially, 165; Prados, *The Sky Would Fall*, especially, 199-200; Spector, *Advice and Support*, especially, 214; Parks, *France's Fourth Republic and the Definitive Decisions of 1954*, especially, 56; Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place*, especially, 87-91; Nordell, *The Undetected Enemy*, especially, 18-20; Morgan, *Valley of Death*; Windrow, *The Last Valley*, especially, 366-72; Shrader, *A War of Logistics*; Kaplan, *Dien Bien Phu and the Crisis of Franco-American Relations, 1954-1955*; Marks, "The Real Hawk at Dienbienphu;" especially, 302-03; Herring, "A Good Stout Effort;" Gaddis, *The Long Peace*, especially, 142; Herring, "Eisenhower, Dulles, and Dien Bien Phu," especially, 86; Porter, *Perils of Dominance*, especially, 74; Billings-Yun, *Decision Against War*, especially, xii; Tuunainen, *The Role of Presidential Advisory Systems in US Foreign Policy-Making*, especially, 455; Duiker, *U.S. Containment Policy and the Conflict in Indochina*, especially, 172; Rotter, "Chronicle of a War Foretold;" Umetsu, "Australia's Response to the Indochina Crisis of 1954 amidst the Anglo-American Confrontation," especially, 416. For secondary works about the Geneva Conference, see Cable, *The Geneva Conference of 1954 on Indochina*; Immerman, "The United States and the Geneva Conference of 1954," especially, 64; Ruane, "Anthony Eden, British Diplomacy and the Origins of the Geneva Conference of 1954," especially, 166; Asselin, "The Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the 1954 Geneva Conference," especially, 183; Zhai, "China and the Geneva Conference of 1954;" Becker, *When the War Was Over*, especially, 77; Asselin, *Hanoi's Road to the Vietnam War, 1954-1965*; Nguyen, *Hanoi's War*, especially, 17.

## *Creating SEATO at the Manila Conference*

Despite Southeast Asia presenting major contradictions why a strong and united anticommunist regional collective-security pact backed by the Americans deterring external aggression would be challenging to create and have limited effectiveness even if it was implemented, the NSC agreed in its meeting after the Geneva Accords that it would pursue exactly that because it was consistent with the New Look grand strategy.<sup>31</sup> Eisenhower used the analogy to explain his reasoning that without a pact for Southeast Asia, the US had a weak poker hand, and it risked being called.<sup>32</sup> Historian Daniel Fineman argues that the US could not have pursued a pact without Thai support. However, a regional pact for Southeast Asia was a focus of the NSC from its outset, and collective security was critical for the New Look to be effective. Hence, it seems likely that the US would have at least tried to pursue one even if Thailand was not interested. After all, in the Eisenhower administration's first year, it explored forming a pact for Southeast Asia when it did not have Thai support.<sup>33</sup>

Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had several concerns to address as the US pursued a collective-security pact for Southeast Asia after the Geneva Conference. First, the communists had won an advanced salient in North Vietnam and Laos. Dulles supposed that if the communists gained one more inch the dominos would start falling. Second, the US' reputation in Asia had suffered because of the Geneva Conference. The US lost face after it dedicated lots of resources to supporting the French military effort in Indochina, and that effort had failed to subdue the

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<sup>31</sup> 207<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Jul. 22, 1954, 16, Box 5, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 207<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>32</sup> Hagerty Diary, Jul. 26, 1954, Hagerty Diary Jul. 1954, Box 1, Diary Entries, EJCH (hereafter, Hagerty Diary Jul. 54).

<sup>33</sup> Fineman, *A Special Relationship*, 198.

Vietminh insurgency. Third, the communists had momentum, and Dulles expected that they would attempt to capitalize on their recent gains and increase anti-American propaganda throughout the region. Thus, to Dulles, it was imperative that the US took control of the region quickly to not lose more prestige and prevent further losses to communist subversion or overt aggression. According to Dulles, “The whole theory of collective security [is that] as the nations come together, then the ‘domino theory,’ so-called, ceases to apply.” Consequently, Dulles urged forming a regional security arrangement to Eisenhower and the NSC. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) turned against the concept of collective security in Southeast Asia because the Geneva Accords put serious restrictions on France and South Vietnam. From JCS Chairman Arthur Radford’s perspective, he wanted the US to have the freedom to strike the PRC without getting bogged down by defending “little countries.” Collective security would only increase expectations throughout the region that the US would protect “little countries.” Nevertheless, Eisenhower was a proponent of collective security, and Dulles’ arguments won out at an NSC meeting.<sup>34</sup> The next step was assembling a coalition that would participate in collective security in Southeast Asia and help fulfill the NSC’s objective.

In looking at potential Western members, communist gains in Indochina heightened their threat alert. Scholar George Modelski argues that France planned to withdraw, but evidence from the SEATO Record reveals that the French wanted to maintain their interests in Indochina, and the British had a colony in neighboring Malaya that was fighting its own communist insurgency against ethnic Chinese.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Australia and New Zealand became more open to a comprehensive arrangement to establish a forward defense against communism as the threat

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<sup>34</sup> Franklin, “The Hollow Pact,” 126-29.

<sup>35</sup> SEATO Record, 1954-1977, 1977, 7-8, SEATO (hereafter, SEATO Record); Modelski, “The Asian States’ Participation in SEATO,” 143.

became more real.<sup>36</sup> A pact for Southeast Asia would consolidate existing defense arrangements with those four Western nations.<sup>37</sup> The UK and France were in NATO. They already had troops in the region because of their colonies, which would immediately give the pact teeth.<sup>38</sup> Australia and New Zealand had joined ANZUS, a 1951 treaty committing the US to defend them if they would support the World War II peace treaty with Japan. The British and French were excluded from ANZUS because the US did not want to make mainland Southeast Asia defense commitments to their colonies,<sup>39</sup> and their inclusion would have looked like a white-imperial conspiracy.<sup>40</sup> There were plans to organize the pact in August 1954 and then have a conference in September in the Philippines to finalize the treaty.<sup>41</sup>

According to this plan, a collective security pact for Southeast Asia would be organized and agreed to by many members less than two months after the signing of the Geneva Accords, which demonstrated what a pressing issue it became for the NSC at that time. It also illuminates how the Geneva Accords altered the perspectives of other potential members. Many of them had balked at forming a regional pact just a few months before during the Indochina crisis.

Yet, the US and its European allies did not have a united vision for Southeast Asia. The US had not wanted partition in Vietnam, but it conceded after Britain and France agreed to support a regional pact.<sup>42</sup> The British saw the Geneva Conference as a victory because it prevented war. The British thought the neutral spirit of the accords, which they were leading members in brokering, would stabilize the area and make it easier for them to maintain control in

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<sup>36</sup> SEATO Record, 7.

<sup>37</sup> Hagerty Diary Jul. 54, Jul. 21.

<sup>38</sup> SEATO Record, 7, 9.

<sup>39</sup> Chatham House SEATO, 8-9.

<sup>40</sup> Brands, "From ANZUS to SEATO," 261.

<sup>41</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 191, Jul. 30, 1954, OCB 350.05 (File #1) (6), Box 110, OCB Central File, ENSC (hereafter, Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 191).

<sup>42</sup> Hagerty Diary Jul. 54, Jul. 15.

Malaya. Comparatively, the US thought it was a setback that required a strong response because it sanctioned territorial gains for communists. Juxtaposing those positions show how differently the US and UK viewed Southeast Asia.<sup>43</sup> By August 1954, Dulles noted that the British were losing interest in a regional pact, even though it was very important to the Americans.<sup>44</sup>

There were additional reasons why the British and French would agree to join a regional collective-security pact even though they were not as enthusiastic as the Americans about it. The UK sought US investment in regional economic development and France feared being left out.<sup>45</sup> There was also a connection with happenings elsewhere. The British had lost prestige because Egypt's leader Gamal Abdel Nasser was asserting independence, which diminished British influence in Egypt. Thus, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the UK government wanted to take initiative elsewhere to reassert their empire's clout. In addition, Churchill sought to wedge the UK into the ANZUS relationship in between the US, Australia, and New Zealand. There also seemed to be support from other Western British Commonwealth members like Australia and New Zealand for a collective-security pact for Southeast Asia.<sup>46</sup>

In terms of potential Asian members, the part of Southeast Asia that had the most communist influence and was most vulnerable to communist expansion was Indochina. Yet, the Geneva Accords stipulated restrictions on Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia joining military alliances. This made forming an effective anticommunist collective-security pact in the region quite challenging. However, Dulles said South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia could have second-class membership in a pact and be included in economic matters.<sup>47</sup> The most likely Asian

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<sup>43</sup> Combs, "The Path Not Taken," 33.

<sup>44</sup> Dulles to Merchant, Aug. 3, 1954, Telephone Memos Jul. 1, 1954 – Aug. 31, 1954 (2), Box 2, Telephone Conversations, EJFD.

<sup>45</sup> Fineman, *A Special Relationship*, 195.

<sup>46</sup> Leebaert, *Grand Improvisation*, 432.

<sup>47</sup> Dulles to MacArthur, Jul. 21, 1954, Telephone Memos Jul. 1, 1954 – Aug. 31, 1954 (4), Box 2, Telephone Conversations, EJFD.

members to join were Thailand, the Philippines, and Pakistan. They already had relatively good relations with the US and wanted more American aid, which a collective-security pact could enable. In fact, Thailand and the Philippines had begun expressing interest in joining a regional pact during the Indochina crisis, and Pakistan had displayed some interest before that to counter the looming threat it perceived from India. To attract other Asian members, Dulles emphasized in an NSC meeting that “We don’t want satellites; we want allies or equal partners.” He did not specify what equal partners meant in this context, but the reference to “satellites” could have reflected that he did not want the relationship to be seen internationally how the USSR treated nations in Eastern Europe.<sup>48</sup>

An editorial in a newspaper owned by Thailand’s premier expressed how Asian nations might turn to the communists if the West retrenched from Southeast Asia. The CIA thought that position could be a bluff to get a US-security commitment.<sup>49</sup> The Thais had unsuccessfully pursued a bilateral security guarantee from the US since 1950, which demonstrated the US’ desire to keep its ground forces out of mainland Southeast Asia.<sup>50</sup> Without one, the Thais wanted a strong pact with mechanisms to combat subversion.<sup>51</sup> As conditions in Indochina deteriorated, the US invested in Thailand by giving the Thais military aid and constructing airbases there.<sup>52</sup>

The Thai government was interested in joining a collective-security pact for Southeast Asia because it regarded the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV or North Vietnam after the partition) and PRC as hostile and aggressive nations that threatened to impose communism on the entire region, which the Thais said was part of a larger communist conspiracy to conquer the

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<sup>48</sup> 210<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Aug. 12, 1954, 18, Box 5, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 210<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>49</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 154, Jun. 8, 1954, OCB 350.05 (File #1) (5), Box 110, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>50</sup> Fineman, *A Special Relationship*, 196.

<sup>51</sup> SEATO Record, 8.

<sup>52</sup> Special Report on Thailand, Jul. 15, 1954, 1, NSC 5405 – Policy in Mainland SE Asia (2), Box 9, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA.

world. Because Thailand was near those regional threats and internal subversives in Thailand could become agents for those foreign communist powers, the threat seemed real enough that the Thais wanted the military backing of the US through the framework of regional collective security.<sup>53</sup> The Thais thought a multilateral pact that included Asian nations could “counter [domestic] leftist criticism that the United States controlled” Thai leaders and please conservatives who wanted closer security ties with the US.<sup>54</sup>

The Philippines wanted a collective-security treaty that specified equal rights for all peoples, and self-determination for Asians, to ease fears that a pact could become a new form of colonialism. The European colonial powers would obviously resist that because they wanted to preserve control of their global empires. Pakistan, which bordered its rival, neutral India, was very undeveloped. Consequently, to address those issues, the Pakistanis wanted a regional pact that would combat noncommunist aggression and promote economic development. Conversely, the NSC’s overriding concern was communism, and the Western powers were under financial constraints and did not want to distribute lots of aid.<sup>55</sup> The US State Department advised against including Pakistan in the pact because it could alienate the other Colombo Plan powers, which were Indonesia, Burma, India, and Ceylon (the future Sri Lanka). The Colombo Plan was a regional intergovernmental organization that formed in 1951 and focused on development in Asia. Without that added hostility, Pakistan could better influence cooperation between those neutral nations and the West.<sup>56</sup> In May 1954, Pakistan signed a military aid deal with the US.<sup>57</sup> However, by August, Pakistan would only accept US military aid if the Pakistanis also received

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<sup>53</sup> Ritharom, “The Making of the Thai-U.S. Military Alliance and the SEATO Treaty of 1954,” 294-95.

<sup>54</sup> Fineman, *A Special Relationship*, 197.

<sup>55</sup> SEATO Record, 8.

<sup>56</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 187, Jul. 26, 1954, OCB 350.05 (File #1) (6), Box 110, OCB Central File, ENSC (hereafter, Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 187).

<sup>57</sup> SEATO Record, Annex M, 2.

economic aid.<sup>58</sup> This linkage and increased demands demonstrated how the Pakistanis understood that the US needed Asian allies for collective security, and the Pakistanis leveraged the US' desperation for more economic aid, even if it was not directly related to regional security.

While Thailand, the Philippines, and Pakistan seemed likely to join a regional collective-security pact for Southeast Asia, even though their motives and objectives were not always consistent with the NSC's, the US still wanted more Asian membership. Nevertheless, this proved problematic because a Western-led military alliance had parallels to colonialism. Yet, communists controlling territory in northern Indochina after the Geneva Conference created concerns throughout the region because it paralleled how Japan had occupied northern Indochina before it overran the entire region during World War II.<sup>59</sup> To improve perceptions of the US, the NSC planned to use more propaganda.<sup>60</sup> In addition, Dulles thought reluctant nations could still participate in a regional economic group.<sup>61</sup> The British were aware of, and noted, Dulles' new emphasis on economic development as a tool to fight the Cold War in the developing world.<sup>62</sup>

Although Burma promoted neutrality, there were signs that it was open to working with the West. Burma was a pivotal Southeast Asian nation because it bordered Indochina, Thailand, Pakistan, the PRC, and India. Minnesota Republican Congressman Walter Judd, a leader of the China Lobby, told Dulles that if the US would have offered aid when the Colombo Powers came together, then Burma might have become closer with the West. Hence, it was a missed opportunity.<sup>63</sup> Scholar Leszek Buszynski describes Burma as being indifferent toward a regional

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<sup>58</sup> Ohly to Fitzgerald, Aug. 20, 1954, Telephone Conversations Jun. 14 – Sep. 30, 1954 (2), Box 21, EDAF.

<sup>59</sup> Chatham House SEATO, 9-10.

<sup>60</sup> 210<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 19.

<sup>61</sup> 207<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 16.

<sup>62</sup> Warner, "From Geneva to Manila," 158.

<sup>63</sup> Judd to Dulles, Jul. 2, 1954, Telephone Memos Jul. 1, 1954 – Aug. 31, 1954 (5), Box 2, Telephone Conversations, EJFD.

collective-security pact. However, US intelligence reported that Burma wanted increased security after nearby Vietminh military successes.<sup>64</sup> In addition, the UK Foreign Office thought a visit from PRC officials to Burma had been counterproductive for the PRC because Burma was “considering diplomatic recognition of Laos and Cambodia as a means of stemming the Red Chinese advance in Southeast Asia” even though the French still had influence in Laos, and Cambodia, and Burma was strongly anticolonial.<sup>65</sup>

Conversely, Indonesia, as islands with an ocean barrier from mainland Southeast Asia, had natural defenses from a communist invasion. Thus, it had no real incentive to compromise its pro-neutral foreign policy for Western-backed collective security. This troubled the NSC because Indonesia had great strategic value with its lush natural resources and command of narrow sea lanes between the Pacific and Indian Oceans. At 80 million, it was Southeast Asia’s most populous nation by far. Those possible workers and a rising literacy rate created industrial potential.<sup>66</sup> Yet, to show its commitment to independence from the West, Indonesia proposed an all-Asian nonaggression pact, with PRC membership, to oppose the proposed US-led regional collective-security pact.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, US intelligence reported that Indonesia’s ruling Nationalist Party was collaborating more with communists domestically before an election.<sup>68</sup>

In a September 1954 confidential memo to Eisenhower, just a few days before the conference in the Philippine capital Manila to create the treaty for a collective-security pact for Southeast Asia, Dulles responded to criticism that no Asian nations besides Thailand, the Philippines, and Pakistan would participate. Dulles framed the issue that the US did not invite

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<sup>64</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 165, Jun. 23, 1954, OCB 350.05 (File #1) (6), Box 110, OCB Central File, ENSC; Buszynski, *SEATO*, 25.

<sup>65</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 188, Jul. 27, 1954, OCB 350.05 (File #1) (6), Box 110, OCB Central File, ENSC.  
<sup>66</sup> NSC 171/1, 7.

<sup>67</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 185, Jul. 22, 1954, OCB 350.05 (File #1) (6), Box 110, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>68</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 146, May 26, 1954, 2, OCB 350.05 (File #1) (5), Box 110, OCB Central File, ENSC.

Indonesia, Burma, and India to join. It was the British that invited the Colombo Powers. While this is true, it seems that Dulles' response did not address the larger point that nations in the area that sought neutrality had not altered their foreign policies after the Geneva Conference enough to join the regional pact. Who extended the invitation was not as important as their refusal to attend.<sup>69</sup> Still, even if other Asian nations would not join, US intelligence reported that there was hope they would not oppose the pact.<sup>70</sup>

The NSC also anticipated domestic opposition in the US to a regional collective-security pact for Southeast Asia. Any treaty would have to be ratified by two-thirds of the US Senate, so the NSC could only design the pact within the parameters of what it thought the Senate would agree to. The NSC discussed how some Congressmembers thought the Geneva Conference had resolved Indochina, and now they could redirect their attention to more pressing national-security issues.<sup>71</sup> Senator Alex Smith, a Republican from New Jersey, thought US aid should be given on a discretionary basis that was linked to US interests. Representative John Vorys, a Republican from Ohio, wanted aid to be conditional on nations signing a mutual-security agreement with the US. Consequently, even members of Eisenhower's party were not united, nor would they rubberstamp what the president wanted.<sup>72</sup> In fact, when Eisenhower heard that Congress wanted to cut funding for Southeast Asia, he remarked that this was the most important time to defend the region.<sup>73</sup> Eisenhower's remark demonstrated that he did not view the Geneva Accords favorably and wanted more American involvement to change the trajectory of the region where neutrality and communism were gaining strength relative to the West.

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<sup>69</sup> Dulles to Eisenhower, Sep. 1, 1954, 1, White House Correspondence 1954 (1), Box 1, White House Memoranda, EJFD.

<sup>70</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 187.

<sup>71</sup> 207<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 16.

<sup>72</sup> Smith to Dulles, Aug. 4, 1954, Telephone Memos Jul. 1, 1954 – Aug. 31, 1954 (2), Box 2, Telephone Conversations, EJFD.

<sup>73</sup> Hagerty Diary Jul. 54, Jul. 26.

Minutes from an NSC meeting revealed that getting the treaty through the Senate would be Dulles' responsibility. Dulles doubted Congress would permit the president the freedom to intervene unilaterally or allow the actions of other nations to require a US military commitment. Eisenhower noted that the Korean War had been the US' most unpopular conflict since the American Civil War, and there was apprehension that Indochina could evolve similarly with Western nations led by the US fighting communists in Asia. Eisenhower anticipated that even a PRC invasion would not generate popular support for American troops to go to war in Southeast Asia. Communists could become adventuresome, especially in peripheral areas, if they understood that the US' ability to use military force depended on a reluctant Congress. Historian Daniel Fineman states that Dulles expected a pact to equate with Congressional preauthorization to intervene, yet NSC meeting minutes revealed that Dulles contemplated trying to get Congressional preauthorization to defend areas deemed vital to US interests. The NSC wanted Indochina included in the pact, but it did not want to have to commit to send troops there. Eisenhower only wanted to intervene without popular support or Congressional approval if it was time-critical for America's survival. He also wanted flexibility and was leery about the NSC's planning staff forming a policy with an automatic response to various scenarios.<sup>74</sup>

There were differences between the NSC's vision of the structure and scope of a collective-security organization for Southeast Asia and what some nations that were likely to join wanted. While the NSC and US Congress did not want to make a firm military commitment to send US troops to the region, some potential members wanted that from the US. Consequently, the Americans told potential members that their Senate would never agree to a pact in Southeast Asia that had a strong NATO-like structure. Not only was this true, but it also made it seem like

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<sup>74</sup> 210<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 14-16; Fineman, *A Special Relationship*, 197.

Congress was the reason why the US would not make a stronger security commitment to a regional pact.<sup>75</sup> Scholar Astri Suhrke-Goldstein states that the Philippines did not press for an integrated military command,<sup>76</sup> but various primary sources confirm, and other scholars argue more convincingly, that the future Asian members and the Australians did lobby for a strong NATO-like structure.<sup>77</sup>

Scholar George Modelski explains what “the setting up of a SEATO command on the NATO model” would entail. The Asian members “were anxious to secure an ‘automatic commitment’ by the United States.” They “also pressed hard for an earmarking of troops, a ‘strategic reserve’, a SEATO command, or a joint military force.” In “making SEATO look more like NATO, a ‘strong organization’, a SEATO command would have under its control a number of units capable of immediate commitment in the Treaty Area.” Modelski adds, “Thai military and political officers were reported as saying that unless a joint force were created under a supreme military commander based in Bangkok, SEATO would be superfluous.”<sup>78</sup>

While Dulles had advocated for a pact during the crisis in Indochina to have “united action” as an option, and the New Look’s focus was on deterrence, US intelligence added that the pact’s main purpose would be to combat the most prevalent communist threat in the region, subversion, and the pact would strengthen Southeast Asian military and police organizations accordingly.<sup>79</sup> The NSC wanted flexibility to combat subversion so it could assist indirectly or use US troops. Dulles anticipated that the pact would include a countersubversion provision, but nations would only have to consult in response to subversion.<sup>80</sup> He would be precise with the

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<sup>75</sup> Chatham House SEATO, 12.

<sup>76</sup> Suhrke-Goldstein, *SEATO*, 29.

<sup>77</sup> SEATO Record, 8; for the Philippines, see Chatham House SEATO, 12; for Pakistan, see Modelski, “The Asian States’ Participation in SEATO,” 92; for Australia, see Webb, “Australia and SEATO,” 68.

<sup>78</sup> Modelski, “The Asian States’ Participation in SEATO,” 96.

<sup>79</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 191.

<sup>80</sup> 210<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 16.

treaty's language to prevent the US from getting trapped into doing something that it did not want to do. The NSC discussed how Eisenhower would likely have to request Congressional authority before the US undertook even countersubversion efforts,<sup>81</sup> but the US would have combat troops ready to deploy if they were needed to maintain stability in the region.<sup>82</sup>

As the US prepared for the Manila Conference to establish a treaty for a collective-security organization for Southeast Asia, it planned to bring senators from both parties. Bipartisan participation would ease ratification of the treaty.<sup>83</sup> In a memo of a telephone conversation, Dulles explained that the CIA would have the same unspecified role in Manila as it did at the Geneva Conference.<sup>84</sup> Still, the most important participant would be Dulles. Since he was the pact's chief advocate, his absence would undermine the conference and reduce buy-in from the US Senate and other nations. Historian David Anderson contends that Dulles was pleased with how the alliance looked before the Manila Conference. However, a memo summarizing a telephone conversation with Dulles revealed that Dulles contemplated not attending the Manila Conference because he thought the US' allies were more concerned with not provoking communists than stopping them, and they cared less than the US about preventing communist advances in Indochina. Dulles acknowledged that a compromised treaty would restrict the US' freedom of action, and members that had objectives that conflicted with the NSC's regional objective could lead to a compromised treaty.<sup>85</sup> That scenario had occurred when

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<sup>81</sup> 211<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Aug. 18, 1954, 12, Box 6, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 211<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>82</sup> 210<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 16.

<sup>83</sup> State Department Memo, Aug. 23, 1954, Strictly Confidential – M (1), Box 3, General Correspondence and Memoranda, EJFD.

<sup>84</sup> Robertson to Dulles, Aug. 17, 1954, Telephone Memos Jul. 1, 1954 – Aug. 31, 1954 (1), Box 2, Telephone Conversations, EJFD.

<sup>85</sup> Dulles to Merchant, Aug. 30, 1954, 1, Telephone Memos Jul. 1, 1954 – Aug. 31, 1954 (1), Box 2, Telephone Conversations, EJFD (hereafter, Dulles to Merchant Aug. 30); Anderson, *Trapped by Success*, 72.

the US shared command with the British in Southeast Asia during World War II. Now, the UK wanted to restrain the US from attacking the PRC or intervening unilaterally in Indochina.<sup>86</sup>

Dulles was particularly concerned with the French and British being obstructionists to US objectives at the Manila Conference, and he suspected that they had made secret side deals at the Geneva Conference that would weaken the pact. The British wanted to avoid anything that appeared to conflict with the Geneva Accords. There was even resistance to the Associated States in Indochina participating in the Manila Conference as observers and a US military mission to Cambodia.<sup>87</sup> As Dulles suspected, UK and PRC officials had made an agreement about Cambodia's neutrality even though the accords had some ambiguity about Cambodia's right to participate in collective security.<sup>88</sup> A memo to the US embassy in Laos revealed that South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia wanted their territory to be covered by the pact's treaty even if they could not be members, which presents a different perspective than historian Seth Jacobs' account that those nations were not overjoyed by a collective-security organization.<sup>89</sup> The US ambassador to the Philippines recommended telling the Vietnamese and Dutch, who had colonial territory and interests in Southeast Asia, to not formally request to send observers to the Manila Conference, even though they desired it, because it would be embarrassing when they were rejected by the other participants.<sup>90</sup>

Historians Roger Dingman and Gary Hess argue that the US opposed Pakistani membership, and historian Daniel Fineman states that the UK insisted on Pakistani membership. However, Dulles expressing his doubt in a telephone memo if other potential members would

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<sup>86</sup> Ruane, "SEATO, MEDO, and the Baghdad Pact," 173-74.

<sup>87</sup> Dulles to Merchant Aug. 30, 1.

<sup>88</sup> Warner, "From Geneva to Manila," 162.

<sup>89</sup> Smith to the Legation in Laos, Aug. 26, 1954, 802-03, in FRUS, 1952-54, V. 12; Jacobs, *The Universe Unraveling*, 44.

<sup>90</sup> Spruance to State Department, Sep. 2, 1954, 830, in FRUS, 1952-54, V. 12.

accept Pakistan's membership if including Pakistan would antagonize India calls those findings into question. Although Dulles predicted it would "be a mess out there" at the Manila Conference, he explained that if he returned without a treaty, then it would turn the Geneva Conference into a more complete communist victory.<sup>91</sup>

The Manila Conference occurred from September 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> 1954. It was only scheduled for three days because every participant already expressed interest in joining a collective-security pact for Southeast Asia. In addition, drafts of the treaty had previously been circulated so the general framework was already established. Thus, most of the scheduled events at the Manila Conference were ceremonial. The participating nations were Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, the UK, and the US. Ramon Magsaysay, the president from the host nation, gave the opening speech.<sup>92</sup> Then, a representative, mostly the equivalent of the foreign minister, from each nation recited opening remarks. They primarily stressed unity and defending freedom, but each nation added its unique vision. When Dulles spoke, he stated that the conference's purpose was collective security under the authority of the UN charter. Collective security was an inherent right, and the pact did not threaten any nation. He noted the US had no territorial interests in Southeast Asia. However, it had a shared destiny with the region, and everyone was united against the common danger of international communism, which was set on expanding. He wanted a pact that would deter aggression and combat subversion.

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<sup>91</sup> Dulles to Merchant Aug. 30, 1-2; Dingman, "John Foster Dulles and the Creation of the South-East Asia Treaty Organization in 1954," 461; Hess, "The American Search for Stability in Southeast Asia," 283; Fineman, *A Special Relationship*, 197.

<sup>92</sup> Manila Conference of 1954, Manila Conference, Box 1, Series I: Conference and Trip Files, ECWM; for the drafts, see Draft Southeast Asia Collective Security Treaty, Aug. 2, 1954, 686-94, in FRUS, 1952-54, V. 12. SEATO having eight members differs from Hamilton-Merritt, *Tragic Mountains*, 69, who states that it only had six. The difference appears to be a miscount or typo by Hamilton-Merritt.

Dulles hoped a “mantle of protection” could be thrown over Indochina. He also emphasized the importance of economic development and welcomed any other nation that wanted to join.<sup>93</sup>

Despite the harmonious public front, the private negotiating sessions to hammer out the details had genuine debate. One of the most contentious issues was the Asian members wanting economic aspects of the treaty emphasized, which all the Western members opposed because they would have to pay for them.<sup>94</sup> Likewise, a memo from Dulles to the US embassy in Australia explained that the Australians almost did not agree to join because the treaty did not specify that the pact’s purpose was to stop communism. Research by scholar Leicester Webb contradicts the Dulles memo. Webb argues that the Australians wanted “guarantees against aggression from whatever source.” Yet, some of the other nations wanted the pact to cover aggression from every source. An example of noncommunist aggression would be neutral India attacking its neighbor, and rival, Pakistan. After Dulles explained to the Australians that if they demanded a last-minute reservation, then the other participants would want to insert their own reservations, which would undermine the pact, the Australians signed.<sup>95</sup>

At the NSC meeting after the Manila Conference, Dulles revealed the final compromises the participants agreed on to create the Manila Pact, which became the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). He framed SEATO as a Monroe Doctrine for Southeast Asia. The Monroe Doctrine of 1823 was a unilateral declaration by the US that the Americas were a US sphere of influence and warned nations outside the region to not interfere there. Since the intent of the Geneva Accords was to neutralize Indochina, Dulles noted that South Vietnam, Laos, and

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<sup>93</sup> The Signing of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, the Protocol to the Southeast Asia Collective Treaty and the Pacific Charter, 1954, v, 23-43, SETO.

<sup>94</sup> Dulles to State Department, Sep. 6, 1954, 861, in FRUS, 1952-54, V. 12.

<sup>95</sup> Dulles to Embassy in Australia, Sep. 8, 1954, 901, in FRUS, 1952-54, V. 12; Webb, “Australia and SEATO,” 66.

Cambodia were not members, but they were added in a “protocol.”<sup>96</sup> This meant the treaty covered their territory, and they had the rights of members, but no responsibilities. This was not a contentious issue at the Manila Conference, even with the Asian members.<sup>97</sup>

Furthermore, SEATO would not have a NATO-like structure. The main reason was because the US did not want to commit resources, and especially troops, to a standing army and SEATO bases in Southeast Asia. The US’ willingness to make that commitment to defend Europe is strong evidence that the US viewed Europe as a higher priority than Southeast Asia even though communists had just made military gains in Southeast Asia. Instead, SEATO members were only required to consult periodically.<sup>98</sup> Thus, the US’ rhetoric about the importance of Southeast Asia was inconsistent with the reality of SEATO and the priorities of the NSC. Historian Chris Tudda, in his study of the Eisenhower administration’s use of rhetoric, details how one of the ways that deterrence was implemented was through rhetoric. Consequently, the NSC took actions like forming SEATO and talked publicly about the importance of stopping communism in Southeast Asia, but the lack of resources it was willing to commit to defend the region through SEATO suggested that its rhetorical efforts were more for the deterrence value that Tudda recognized than a genuine commitment to Southeast Asian defense through SEATO.<sup>99</sup>

The Filipinos were willing to accept that SEATO would not have a NATO-like structure after the US guaranteed to defend the Philippines under an existing treaty and increase US aid.<sup>100</sup> The idea of a Marshall Plan for Southeast Asia was broached, but the US would not make a very

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<sup>96</sup> 214<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Sep. 12, 1954, 1, Box 6, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 214<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>97</sup> Modelski, “The Asian States’ Participation in SEATO,” 141.

<sup>98</sup> 214<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 1.

<sup>99</sup> Tudda, *The Truth is Our Weapon*.

<sup>100</sup> Chatham House SEATO, 13.

expensive commitment to Southeast Asia. The Eisenhower administration also relied on bilateral aid agreements to exert leverage over other nations. Nonmembers throughout the region were not entitled to aid through SEATO, but Dulles explained that it might be wise to provide it to them. This would make SEATO more of a regional development project. The potential broad scope of SEATO's economic function differs from scholar Leszek Buszynski's finding that SEATO economic development was limited and extended to only Thailand and the Philippines.<sup>101</sup>

In terms of military action, the US signed a separate understanding that through SEATO it would only fight communists because containing communist expansion was the NSC's security focus. All SEATO members would only engage militarily against aggression and subversion at their discretion and according to their nation's constitutional processes. Thus, no member was required to take military action under any circumstance. The US only intervening according to its constitutional processes differs from historian Daniel Fineman and scholar Astrid Suhrke-Goldstein's interpretations. Those scholars describe SEATO as a regional security guarantee. Because no action was required, referring to SEATO as a security guarantee seems like a stronger insinuation than is warranted. The policy implications were that every member, including the US, would only have to intervene militarily if it thought it was in its best interest. Hence, if a security situation arose that was important to the NSC, but not to non-US SEATO members, the NSC could not count on them to contribute ground forces, which was something that it wanted from allies in the New Look.<sup>102</sup>

Historian Nick Cullather argues that Dulles resented the Pacific Charter, which was signed separately at the Manila Conference. However, in an NSC meeting, Dulles described the

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<sup>101</sup> 214<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 2; Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, 2, Manila Conference, Box 1, Series I: Conference and Trip Files, ECWM (hereafter, Manila Treaty); Buszynski, "SEATO," 287.

<sup>102</sup> 214<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 2; Manila Treaty, 2; Fineman, *A Special Relationship*, 197; Suhrke-Goldstein, *SEATO*, 24.

Pacific Charter as the most significant development from the Manila Conference. To please the Asian members, the Pacific Charter specified encouraging the aspirations of colonized peoples. This was also consistent with Eisenhower's desire to inform people in the developing world more broadly that the US supported self-determination. Because Dulles told the NSC in a confidential setting that the Pacific Charter was the most significant development, it is hard to reconcile that with Cullather's contention that Dulles resented it. Conversely, it was the European colonial powers that resisted the Pacific Charter. So did Australia and New Zealand, who preferred having Western colonies around them and wanted to strengthen their ties with the UK by showing support. Australia feared the consequences of the Dutch losing Western New Guinea<sup>103</sup> since Australia administered the eastern half.<sup>104</sup>

The US' Report on the Manila Conference stated, "The Treaty that emerged at Manila is a response to the Geneva Agreements" that made concessions to communists.<sup>105</sup> Dulles understood SEATO was "an imperfect and impermanent stopgap measure," but Dulles believed the US needed to show that it was opposing communism in Asia after the Korean War and Indochina crisis presented uncertainties. SEATO was imperfect for US security because it enabled members to restrain US engagement and influence military planning.<sup>106</sup> Dulles estimated that it would take six months for the US Senate to ratify the treaty and up to ten months before it went into effect after every participant completed the ratification process. Dulles estimated that Pakistan was the most doubtful participant to ratify it. Pakistanis, who had recently achieved independence from the UK in 1947, had the strongest anti-Western feelings of any participant. However, SEATO could start planning and convene if an emergency occurred before it officially

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<sup>103</sup> 214<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 2-3; Cullather, *Illusions of Influence*, 145.

<sup>104</sup> Webb, "Australia and SEATO," 67.

<sup>105</sup> USVR, 4A1, 13.

<sup>106</sup> Dingman, "John Foster Dulles and the Creation of the South-East Asia Treaty Organization in 1954," 476-77.

went into effect.<sup>107</sup> Dulles agreed with Australians who proposed forming a SEATO council before the pact lost momentum.<sup>108</sup>

Nonetheless, before ratification, reasons to question that the pact would be effective surfaced. The most likely scenario where a SEATO member would get involved in an interstate war was if tensions between Pakistan and India escalated again. Yet, Commonwealth members, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and Pakistan, agreed that their Commonwealth agreement to not interfere in disputes between Commonwealth members trumped SEATO, and the US would only get involved against communists. The ANZUS members decided to not end ANZUS after SEATO's creation. This indicated that Australia and New Zealand expressed doubt about SEATO because they wanted to keep their existing security pact with the US.<sup>109</sup>

In analyzing the SEATO treaty, it had the ability to help the NSC achieve its objective for Southeast Asia to have pro-West nations with free and stable governments. SEATO was consistent with the New Look. It relied on collective security backed by American strategic deterrence. It also promoted regional economic development and potentially could disseminate propaganda after it developed into an organization. However, there were also signs that SEATO would face challenges because the conditions in Southeast Asia were not conducive to the New Look. After the reluctance of SEATO members to fight the Vietminh during the crisis in Indochina, and the struggles the French encountered when they engaged, even with US aid, it was dubious if SEATO would have the will, or even the ability, to effectively neutralize a serious insurgency, and that was still the most likely communist threat in the greater region. In addition, a goal of the New Look was to have US allies do ground fighting in peripheral areas, but the

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<sup>107</sup> 214<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 3.

<sup>108</sup> Dulles to Eisenhower, Sep. 24, 1954, 2, White House Correspondence 1954 (1), Box 1, White House Memoranda, EJFD.

<sup>109</sup> Pearson, *Paper Tiger*, 27, 31.

Asian members' prime motivation for joining SEATO seemed to be to get more economic aid. Economic development was already a contentious issue because the Western members did not want to pay for it, and they seemed more concerned with restraining the US militarily to not provoke or escalate conflict. Similarly, the lack of support for SEATO in the greater Southeast Asia region did not bode well for the concept of regional collective security. Indonesia and Burma, which were two key nations in Southeast Asia, did not join, and neutral India and the communist PRC still overshadowed the region and promoted their respective ideologies that would compete with the pro-West SEATO. Therefore, SEATO was built on a shaky foundation because its members were halfhearted about collective security in Southeast Asia, and there was no overriding unifying principle that united the region behind SEATO.

Despite having reasons to doubt how effective SEATO would be, Eisenhower set out to sell SEATO to the American people, who would influence the Senate during the ratification process. Eisenhower's rhetorical strategy since the Indochina crisis had been to use Dulles to advocate for united action.<sup>110</sup> Continuing with this pattern, Dulles gave a speech a week after the Manila Conference on television and radio to rebut anticipated objections to SEATO. He opened by explaining that SEATO's purpose was creating "unity for security and peace in Southeast Asia and the Southwestern Pacific." Dulles did not frame SEATO as being radically new. Instead, he argued that it fulfilled security agreements he helped negotiate with the Philippines and ANZUS members before Eisenhower's presidency, which called for "the development of a more comprehensive system of regional security." United action had been impracticable during the crisis in Indochina, but the outcome of the Geneva Conference brought SEATO's members together as equal partners to defend against armed attack and subversion. SEATO was an

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<sup>110</sup> Olson, "Eisenhower and the Indochina Problem," 108-09.

important evolutionary step in collective security because it dealt with subversion more explicitly than other treaties, and, as Dulles argued in his speech, “subversion and indirect aggression have been principal tools of international communism.”<sup>111</sup>

Dulles continued his speech by explaining that SEATO would never interfere in purely internal affairs in nations in the treaty area. Since the US did not have sovereign territory or colonies in the region, the US was specifically fighting communism to prevent the domino theory from materializing. Any significant expansion of communism would endanger the US and require action. Comparatively, the other members had sovereign territory or colonies in the treaty area, so the pact dealt with all acts of aggression that might disturb the peace of the area. While the treaty recognized the importance of economic development, any US aid for SEATO would be allocated from existing discretionary funds and not necessitate additional government expenditures or new taxes. Similarly, the treaty would not require increased defense spending or the stationing of US troops in Southeast Asia. Finally, Dulles added how the Pacific Charter supported self-determination for people in the developing world.<sup>112</sup>

In October 1954, the month after the Manila Conference, the US embassy in Bangkok recommended expediting Senate ratification of SEATO because communist propaganda in Thailand was undermining support for the treaty. In addition, the embassy’s message stated, “Some leading political figures [in Thailand] have expressed disappointment in the outcome of the Manila negotiations.” Historian Daniel Fineman and scholar George Modelski posit that Thai officials embraced the Manila Pact, but the information about the disappointment from Thai

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<sup>111</sup> The Manila Pact and the Pacific Charter, Sep. 15, 1954, 1-2, John Foster Dulles Speeches 1954, Box 42, EELD (hereafter, Dulles Speech on the Manila Pact and the Pacific Charter).

<sup>112</sup> Dulles Speech on the Manila Pact and the Pacific Charter, 2-4.

leaders from the US embassy in Bangkok indicated that internal Thai politics were more divided and complex than Fineman and Modelski suggest.<sup>113</sup>

Then, in November 1954, Dulles appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to defend SEATO. After he explained the treaty in detail, Republican Chairman Alexander Wiley began the questioning. Historian Seth Jacobs states that no legislator questioned the Manila Pact. However, in the Senate hearings, Wiley expressed some concerns. Wiley wondered if SEATO might develop into a larger commitment, as had happened with NATO. Dulles replied that he was reluctant to refer to the Manila Pact as SEATO. He did not use that title in his written statement or presentation to reduce the probability of that association. Dulles disassociating SEATO with NATO calls into question arguments by scholar Leszek Buszynski and historian Seth Jacobs who contend that SEATO was based on NATO. Dulles then reassured Wiley that the administration had no intention of using US troops in a standing army to defend the region. At the Manila Conference, Dulles made it clear to the other members that the US' contribution would be its mobile striking power by air and sea.<sup>114</sup>

Wiley then inquired if SEATO presented inconsistencies with the UN Charter. Dulles responded that Article 52 of the UN charter pertained to regional organizations, but they needed approval from the Security Council where the Soviets had a veto. Thus, SEATO's authority came under Article 51, which specified that states had the right to collective security. Wiley appeared uneasy that five of the eight members were Western, and the only member in mainland Southeast Asia was Thailand. When asked about the chances of getting the Associated States,

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<sup>113</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 248, Oct. 22, 1954, OCB 350.05 (File #1) (9), Box 110, OCB Central File, ENSC; Fineman, *A Special Relationship*, 197; Modelski, "The Asian States' Participation in SEATO," 88, 120.

<sup>114</sup> The Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, Nov. 11, 1954, 11-17, Hearing Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 83<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, Part 1, USSE (hereafter, SEATO Senate Nov.); Jacobs, *The Universe Unraveling*, 43-44; Buszynski, *SEATO*, 221.

Indonesia, Burma, or India to join, Dulles answered that he wanted them to, but he declined to speculate about the probability. Dulles also affirmed that the Senate would have to re-ratify the treaty before additional members were added.<sup>115</sup> Adding Malaya after its independence was considered an option.<sup>116</sup> The Dutch and Portuguese, who had island colonies in New Guinea and East Timor, respectively, were possibilities too.<sup>117</sup> Wiley wondered if having the Associated States covered by the protocol violated the Geneva Accords. Dulles replied that they were not treaty members, they wanted to be covered by the protocol, and the accords were ambiguous on this matter.<sup>118</sup>

In January 1955, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held public hearings for comments on the US joining SEATO. The harshest criticism came from Hamilton Fish, a member of the American Political Action Committee, which was an anticommunist organization. Fish argued that SEATO would be “the worst and most dangerous type of one-worldism and interventionism ever presented to the Congress.” SEATO “would inevitably drag us [the US] into a jungle war 10,000 miles away.” Fish contended that happenings in Southeast Asia did not threaten US security because the US had no sovereign territory in the region. Moreover, France and Britain were “predatory colonial powers.” SEATO increased the probability of intervention without Congress declaring war, and if war occurred, the US’ allies would not contribute significantly. Fish feared the US becoming the world police independent of any system of checks and balances. He added that Asian nations only joined SEATO to get aid through “dollar

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<sup>115</sup> SEATO Senate Nov., 17-18.

<sup>116</sup> Chetty, *India and SEATO*, 26.

<sup>117</sup> Minutes of US-UK Study Group, Jul. 8, 1954, 611, in FRUS, 1952-54, V. 12.

<sup>118</sup> SEATO Senate Nov., 18-19.

diplomacy,” Indochina was a trap set by the Soviet bloc, and the American people would not support war there.<sup>119</sup>

The public hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had several other critics, and they opposed the US joining SEATO for a variety of reasons. Freda Utley, representing the American China Policy Association, Inc., opposed the treaty because it excluded nations that were more likely to face PRC aggression, such as Japan, South Korea, and the ROC. Agnes Waters, without affiliation, opposed SEATO on general principle because she saw all treaties reducing America’s sovereignty. Republican Senator Arthur Watkins’ submitted statement declared that he would support the treaty if certain ambiguities were clarified and met his approval. He wanted to know: what would the US’ commitment for aid be? Did a nation following its “constitutional processes” when deciding to intervene mean Congressional approval or unilateral executive action for the US? Would combatting subversion include opposing noncommunist uprisings against a dictator? And how would SEATO’s administrative organization operate and be funded? The American Peace Crusade submitted a statement that argued the result of the 1954 midterm election in the US was a mandate for peace and jobs, and the US needed to reduce its defense commitments. Furthermore, SEATO was ostensibly to protect Asia, but there was limited Asian membership. Finally, as this dissertation will explore later, the statement by the American Peace Crusade posited that many Asians believed SEATO would decrease regional security because it was provocative.<sup>120</sup>

Despite this opposition, the Eisenhower administration effectively sold SEATO. The US Senate ratified the Manila Pact 82 to 1. Because it passed in a landslide, the opposition that was

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<sup>119</sup> The Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, Jan. 19, 1955, 42-46, Hearing Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 83<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, Part 2, USSE (hereafter, SEATO Senate Jan.).

<sup>120</sup> SEATO Senate Jan., 56, 59, 62-65.

expressed in the Senate hearings appeared to have been from fringe groups and taking a clear stand to oppose communism was more important to the Senators politically.<sup>121</sup> In February 1955, when ratification occurred in the other nations that signed the Manila Pact, SEATO became official.<sup>122</sup>

Creating SEATO also had significant implications beyond its members. When the Manila Conference challenged the spirit of neutrality established by the Geneva Accords, there was a backlash in the greater Southeast Asia region that culminated at the Bandung Conference in Indonesia in April 1955.<sup>123</sup> There, 29 independent Afro-Asian nations largely sought to end colonialism, promote racial equality and economic development, and avoid the Cold War. Pro-neutral Indonesia and Burma were key to making the conference happen. Pakistan and the nations in Southeast Asia attended it (except for Malaya because it was still a colony). Other key participants were the major Asian powers, India and the PRC. The NSC wanted to prevent, and then undermine, the Bandung Conference because it feared an anti-West forum hurting US interests. Racial equality was also a sensitive issue in the US, and domestic segregation made Americans appear hypocritical when they promoted freedom abroad. The Bandung Conference was largely a unifying force where historically oppressed peoples commiserated together and projected their aspirations. The world press covered it extensively. A unanimous communique stressed cooperation, equality, peace, and future prosperity. The Eisenhower administration conceded that the PRC was the biggest winner at the Bandung Conference because it gained

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<sup>121</sup> USVR, 4A1, 23.

<sup>122</sup> Webb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Prelude to the War in Vietnam, 1954-1959*, 169-70.

<sup>123</sup> Ang, *Southeast Asia's Cold War*, 75-76, 78; Lee, "Between a Moment and an Era," 10, 14; Parker, "Small Victory, Missed Chance," 156; Jones, "A 'Segregated' Asia?," 851; Farrell, "Alphabet Soup and Nuclear War," 84; Buszynski, *SEATO*, 22; Parker, *Hearts, Minds, Voices*, 80; Hess, "Redefining the American Position in Southeast Asia," 144; Ruane, "SEATO, MEDO, and the Baghdad Pact," 178; Warner, "From Geneva to Manila," 163-64; Fifield, *Americans in Southeast Asia*, 241; Boyd, "Communist China and SEATO," 168; Brissenden, "India, Neutralism, and SEATO," 216-17.

legitimacy and damaged the New Look by making the threat of massive retaliation in Asia less socially acceptable and politically feasible. Meanwhile, at times, SEATO's Asian members exhibited the conduct of halfhearted allies. At the conference, they did not always defend the West. Moreover, many of the participants embraced neutrality, which was a setback for the NSC's objective to get the nations of Southeast Asia to cooperate with the "free world."<sup>124</sup>

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To conclude this chapter, the New Look aimed to contain communism, especially the USSR from invading Western Europe, while controlling defense expenditures. To accomplish this, the NSC planned to threaten massive retaliation with nuclear weapons to deter communist threats, unite allies in collective security to share costs and responsibilities, and attract nations to cooperate with the US by using economic development aid and propaganda. The NSC's objective for Southeast Asia was to have pro-West nations with free and stable governments. However, there were contradictions that revealed why the New Look's nuclear and Eurocentric focus would have limited effectiveness in Southeast Asia. The most likely communist threat was from insurgencies in Indochina, which nuclear weapons were an inappropriate tool to use to

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<sup>124</sup> Folder OCB 092.3 [International Affairs – Conferences and Boards] (File #1) (10) [Jan. 1954 – Apr. 1955], Box 85, OCB Central File, ENSC; Folder OF 116-FF Asian-African Conference (Bandung Conference), Box 503, Official, EDER; Folder Afro-Asian Conference, Box 1, Conference and Trip Files, ECWM; OCB Memo, Bandung Conference of Apr., 1955, May 12, 1955, OCB 092.3 (File #2) (2), Box 86, OCB Central File, ENSC; 239<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Mar. 3, 1955, Box 6, NSC, EDDE; 244<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Apr. 7, 1955, Box 6, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 244<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting); Dulles and Malik, Memo of a Conversation, May 5, 1955, 95-97, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21. For secondary works about the Bandung Conference, see Mackie, *Bandung 1955*, especially, Chapter 5; Lee, "Between a Moment and an Era," especially, 3, 10-12, 15; Acharya, "The Normative Relevance of the Bandung Conference for Contemporary Asian and International Order," especially, 5, 8; Ang, "The Bandung Conference and the Cold War International History of Southeast Asia," 32; Parker, "Small Victory, Missed Chance," especially, 168-70; Chen, "Bridging Revolution and Decolonization," especially, 137, 166; Burke, "Afro-Asian Alignment," especially, 29; Jones, "A 'Segregated' Asia?," especially, 851-54, 860, 863, 865, 867-68; Ang, *Southeast Asia's Cold War*, 84-85; Zhai, "China and the Geneva Conference of 1954," 121-22; Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 41, 44-46; Parker, *Hearts, Minds, Voices*, 87; Lorenzini, *Global Development*, 41; Friedman, *Shadow Cold War*, 27; Hess, "The American Search for Stability in Southeast Asia," 286; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 121; Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World*, 89-90; Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 95-97; Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour*, 8; Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 108.

counter. The US' allies with interests in the region, including Thailand, the Philippines, and Pakistan, were halfhearted about using regional collective security to pursue the NSC's regional objective. Instead, they were more concerned with getting additional aid. Meanwhile, Indonesia and Burma were dedicated to a neutral foreign policy. Malaya and Singapore had little need for close relations with the US because they were British colonies, had a path to independence, and were supported by the Commonwealth. The NSC wanted to help prevent a French military defeat by the Vietminh at Dien Bien Phu, but it could not muster an effective response because of the New Look's nuclear focus and the fact that Congress would not let the US intervene without a coalition with Western and Asian allies. After communist gains at the Geneva Conference, the NSC focused on creating SEATO at the Manila Conference, but there was little interest from Southeast Asian nations in joining, and the nations that did join had objectives different than the NSC's. Although SEATO allowed the NSC to implement various components of the New Look in Southeast Asia, such as collective security, deterrence, economic development, and propaganda, the underlying reasons why the New Look would have limited effectiveness in the region remained because of the contradictions. The most likely communist threat would still be from insurgencies, and it was questionable if SEATO would have the will, or ability, to defeat them. In terms of allies in collective security, some of SEATO's Western members wanted to restrain the US militarily to prevent escalation, and SEATO's Asian members' main priority was receiving more aid, which the Western members did not want to pay for. Since SEATO had limited participation from Southeast Asian nations, did not have a unifying principle, and its members had objectives for the region that were not always consistent with the NSC's, the lack of regional buy in and compromises it took to get members to join established a shaky foundation for SEATO. Finally, there was a backlash in the greater region against the creation of

SEATO that culminated at the Bandung Conference. There, uncommitted, Afro-Asian nations in the greater region that were alienated by SEATO largely embraced neutrality and united against the Cold War and Western influence in the developing world.

## 2. Deterrence: How Massive Retaliation and Relying on Allies Became a Suspect Strategy for SEATO's Limited-War Scenarios

This chapter covers the role SEATO played in facilitating the New Look's component of deterrence and how that affected the NSC's ability to achieve its objective for Southeast Asia to have pro-West nations with free and stable governments. This chapter argues that SEATO had ways to help the NSC implement deterrence in Southeast Asia. The New Look was centered on a military strategy where, to control defense spending, the US would deter communist aggression by threatening to use massive retaliation with nuclear weapons, and US allies would be primarily responsible for providing ground forces in collective security, especially in peripheral areas like Southeast Asia. SEATO was a collective-security pact grounded in the UN charter, which gave the US more legitimacy to threaten to use massive retaliation and intervene militarily in the greater region. It also improved potential access to ground troops from other members and regional bases to project American air and naval power. However, there were reasons to question how effective SEATO would be militarily in dealing with the region's security issues. Despite SEATO undertaking military exercises and creating operational plans, its strategy reflected the New Look and was ill-equipped for the conditions in Southeast Asia. SEATO did not have a standing army or bases since the NSC did not want to invest resources in peripheral areas. SEATO members pursued their national interests, and divisions intensified over strategy. There was distrust between the Western and Asian members, and splits occurred on racial lines. The US stockpiling nuclear weapons, as well as arming and training foreign armed forces, proved to be more expensive than anticipated, and many governments viewed it as unnecessarily provocative. Most importantly, the New Look's component of deterrence with nuclear weapons that focused on the USSR and Europe was not an effective strategy to counter subversion, which

was widely recognized as the most likely threat from communists to the region, and it seemed questionable if SEATO would have the will, or ability, to take effective military action in the limited-war scenarios in Southeast Asia that it was likely to encounter. Consequently, the New Look's component of deterrence, implemented through SEATO, was not a good strategy for Southeast Asia.

### *Deterrence and the New Look*

World War II and the Korean War displayed the difficulty of initially stopping an offensive in modern warfare, which was much more mobile because of mechanization. The caveat was the PRC's limited mechanization in Korea, but they did have overwhelming manpower. After the Germans, Japanese, North Koreans, and PRC quickly overran lots of territory in those conflicts, it took their adversaries considerable time, effort, and resources to regroup and halt their momentum. Then, the adversaries' counteroffensives also proved difficult to stop once they were underway. Deterring an enemy attack, by making the probable cost of aggression outweigh the likely benefits, was the solution to prevent an invasion from occurring in the first place.<sup>125</sup>

The final NSC mainland Southeast-Asia policy from 1960 stated that there was a threat of aggression from the PRC and DRV (North Vietnam) because of their hostile policies and substantial military forces. The US and South Vietnam made sure Vietnam's reunification election never happened because they thought communists would have won. Consequently, Vietnam, in essence, divided into two nations, a communist north and a capitalist south that was

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<sup>125</sup> Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 270, 366-67, 384.

backed by the US. Since Southeast Asia could not resist largescale external aggression on its own, the NSC called local will to resist with the US providing a shield by maintaining a striking force with its superior air and naval power the best deterrent. The NSC's position challenges scholar Leszek Buszynski's assertion that deterrence necessitated a NATO-like structure because from the NSC's perspective, the US' superior air and naval power was its main deterrent. Still, despite having a strategy centered on deterrence, the NSC reaffirmed that communists preferred nonmilitary methods to advance communism in Southeast Asia.<sup>126</sup>

The US wanted to use SEATO to set up what scholar John Sullivan called a "Bamboo Curtain" as its forward defense strategy, and the US needed something more substantial than a Pacific Monroe Doctrine to get resolute military action by Asian governments to contribute to containing communists.<sup>127</sup> SEATO's members created the organization because of concerns that communists would violate the Geneva Accords and the "free world" needed a multilateral defense for the region generally and Indochina specifically.<sup>128</sup> In 1955, Dulles declared that the leaders of South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand were "fine men and on our side," and "Southeast Asia would develop into a strong group of anti-Red countries" if it was not attacked.<sup>129</sup> With SEATO's members governing one-eighth of the world's land surface and one-seventh of humanity,<sup>130</sup> they had the potential to muster resources. The Operations Coordinating Board (OCB), which came into existence early in Eisenhower's presidency and coordinated security-related agencies,<sup>131</sup> reported that US plans for regional defense would be done through

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<sup>126</sup> NSC 6012, Jul. 25, 1960, 1, 3, NSC 6012 – US Policy in Mainland Southeast Asia, Box 29, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, NSC 6012); Buszynski, *SEATO*, 221.

<sup>127</sup> Sullivan, "SEATO," 20, 25.

<sup>128</sup> SEATO Record, 68.

<sup>129</sup> Hagerty Diary, Mar. 11, 1955, Hagerty Diary Mar. 1955, Box 1a, Diary Entries, EJCH (hereafter, Hagerty Diary Mar. 11).

<sup>130</sup> Collective Security, 1963, 109, SETO (hereafter, Collective Security).

<sup>131</sup> Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, 25.

SEATO, and publicity about SEATO meetings was intended to deter PRC aggression.<sup>132</sup>

However, there were limitations to what SEATO could do on its own. Eisenhower told the NSC that to begin a war the US still needed a Congressional declaration unless its military or homeland was attacked.<sup>133</sup>

In addition to Congress, another obstacle the Eisenhower administration would face if it wanted to undertake military action was that SEATO required unanimous agreement from its members, and an invitation from the nation under threat, to intervene. The specific conditions for SEATO intervention call into question historian Thak Chaloemtiarana's argument that the US was convinced that it could justify any intervention against communism in Indochina through SEATO. There was also the irony that SEATO's protocol states, which were most vulnerable to communism in the region, were not members and could not participate in SEATO votes to deploy troops to their nations. SEATO's treaty area included the Asian members' territory and everywhere in the Southeast Asia region and Southwestern Pacific up to 21° 30' north latitude,<sup>134</sup> which was just south of Taiwan and Hong Kong.<sup>135</sup>

As Eisenhower began his second term in 1957, he reaffirmed his commitment to the New Look. With all the money being spent on nuclear weapons, he told the NSC, they had to be treated as "completely conventional," and the US "should provide for no other than nuclear-capable forces except for police actions." Eisenhower reasoned, the chances general war would begin if the US dropped an atomic bomb on a bridge over the Yalu River, which separated the PRC and North Korea, was "very remote." JCS Chairman Radford explained that this had always

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<sup>132</sup> Detailed Development of Major Actions, 1955, 1, OCB 091.4 Southeast Asia (File #4) (1), Box 80, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>133</sup> 295<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Aug. 30, 1956, 14, Box 8, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 295<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>134</sup> Manila Treaty, 3-4; Chaloemtiarana, *Thailand*, 157.

<sup>135</sup> Dingman, "John Foster Dulles and the Creation of the South-East Asia Treaty Organization in 1954," 463.

been the JCS' position. Radford could envision no alternative and wanted that clarified in NSC policy. Eisenhower explained that until recently, the US primarily relied on conventional forces.<sup>136</sup>

What allowed the transformation from theory to practice of relying almost exclusively on nuclear weapons was that in the years spanning Eisenhower's presidency, the US' nuclear arsenal jumped from 1,169 to 22,229 weapons.<sup>137</sup> Moreover, the hydrogen fusion process increased the power of these weapons significantly, and by the late 1950s, they could be delivered by submarines and intercontinentally by jets and missiles.<sup>138</sup> *Sputnik* demonstrated Soviet rocket capabilities. In response, primarily to make Americans feel more secure, Eisenhower deployed intermediate-range missiles in Europe before the US had a significant intercontinental capability.<sup>139</sup> The CIA estimated that the USSR would have very limited capabilities to strike the US through 1959. This differs from historians who studied this period like Matthew Jones, who states that US planners expected war with the USSR to lead to a largescale nuclear exchange, and Kenneth Osgood, who argues that the USSR approached strategic parity with the US. Nevertheless, although the CIA was correct in assessing the USSR's limited capabilities to strike the US with nuclear weapons, there could have been a nuclear exchange in Europe, and the USSR's strategic parity could be measured in ways other than the ability to strike US territory with nuclear weapons.<sup>140</sup>

In 1956, the US Strategic Air Command (SAC), which was responsible for the US' strategic nuclear forces, produced a study for its nuclear weapons requirements for general war

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<sup>136</sup> 319<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Apr. 11, 1957, 9-11, Box 8, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 319<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>137</sup> USDE.

<sup>138</sup> Millett, *For the Common Defense*, 476.

<sup>139</sup> Brown, *Eisenhower's Nuclear Calculus in Europe*, 75, 106.

<sup>140</sup> NSC 5422, Jun. 14, 1954, Annex 4, pp. 1-3, NSC 5422/2 – Guidelines Under NSC 162/2 for FY 1956 (3), Box 11, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA; Jones, "Targeting China," 38; Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 355.

in 1959. It planned to obliterate the Soviet bloc and designated 5,975 targets. Although from the neutralist and communist perspective SEATO violated the Geneva Accords, Dulles touted SEATO's legal justification through the UN charter, and bases in member nations could help the US strike its targets in the eastern USSR, PRC, DRV, and North Korea. SAC's plan even targeted Iran,<sup>141</sup> which was a US ally but had significant oil reserves that could be annexed by the USSR if it invaded its neighbor.<sup>142</sup> NSC policy explained that the US was also prepared to use banned chemical, and biological, weapons.<sup>143</sup> The US incorporated the UK's nuclear forces into its war plans for the political value of avoiding the appearance of unilateralism.<sup>144</sup> All of these factors led to the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP), which was finalized in 1961.<sup>145</sup>

The PRC being identified as a serious threat to the region in the NSC's 1953 Southeast Asia policy, NSC 177, differs from historian Gary Hess, who sees this realization taking place after the 1954 Geneva Conference. Yet, before the Geneva Conference, the NSC recognized the PRC's military capabilities combined with its communist ideology as a threat that had to be deterred through the New Look.<sup>146</sup> However, there was evidence that US-PRC relations did become more tense after SEATO's creation. At an October 1954 NSC meeting, just a month after the Manila Conference, the NSC revised its PRC policy and took a harder approach. Changes included pursuing action to reduce the PRC's power, even if it risked beginning a war, and using force in response to PRC-supported subversion.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> SAC Atomic Weapons Requirements Study for 1959, Jun. 15, 1956, 1-3, 156, GWNS.

<sup>142</sup> Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 672-3.

<sup>143</sup> NSC 5906, Jun. 8, 1959, 12, NSC 5906 – Basic National Security Policy (2), Box 27, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, NSC 5906); for banned weapons, see ICRC.

<sup>144</sup> Young, "A Most Special Relationship," 30.

<sup>145</sup> Millett, *For the Common Defense*, 485-86.

<sup>146</sup> NSC 177, 3; Hess, "Redefining the American Position in Southeast Asia," 144.

<sup>147</sup> 216<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Oct. 6, 1954, 11-12, Box 6, NSC, EDDE.

In the First Taiwan Straits Crisis from 1954 to 1955, the PRC started shelling the islands of Quemoy and Matsu that the ROC also claimed and occupied with many thousands of troops just days before the Manila Conference began,<sup>148</sup> and it stopped shelling them right after the Bandung Conference. Although the NSC credited the PRC not opting to try to annex territory militarily to the threat of massive retaliation, the PRC's primary objective was to bring the world's attention to the Taiwan issue during those conferences. The US escalating the crisis exacerbated tensions, stiffened communist resolve, and helped convince Beijing to launch its own nuclear weapons program. Thus, the NSC overvalued deterrence in this instance, and the PRC viewed the Manila Conference as a threat that it wanted to undermine and the Bandung Conference as an opportunity to exploit and influence.<sup>149</sup>

The US exercising its harder approach toward the PRC and undertaking "nuclear diplomacy" during the Taiwan Straits Crisis eroded the faith of US allies in collective security.<sup>150</sup> The UK's less hawkish outlook was a factor that the NSC considered. Eisenhower and JCS Chairman Radford expressed in an NSC meeting that the US would not be restrained from using nuclear weapons if US soldiers were fighting the PRC's army once again, as they had just done in Korea. However, Dulles cautioned, "The British fear atomic war and would not consider the reasons for our action to be justified." After hearing that, Eisenhower admitted that "many Americans wouldn't see much justification either. Why should they fight over someplace like Quemoy [an island the PRC shelled in the Taiwan Straits Crisis] anyway?" Eisenhower then explained that he received mail that asked, "What do we care what happens to those yellow people out there?"<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> 214<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 3.

<sup>149</sup> Chang, "The Absence of War in the U.S.-China Confrontation over Quemoy and Matsu in 1954-1955," 1522-23.

<sup>150</sup> Waite, "Contesting 'the Right of Decision,'" 917.

<sup>151</sup> Leebaert, *Grand Improvisation*, 435-36.

Crises in Asia early in Eisenhower's presidency raised questions about the New Look in Asia. In "just war" theory, the reasons for waging war, and conduct during a conflict, should be morally justifiable and comport with established norms. One of the key components of just war theory is proportionality, which holds that the effect of any action should be proportional to the conduct of the war up to that point. In addition to the Taiwan Straits Crisis, Eisenhower had explored using tactical nuclear weapons in response to the Vietminh's siege of Dien Bien Phu. Those responses could raise questions about how the New Look's reliance on nuclear weapons meshed with the proportionality component of just war theory. In addition, the New Look intended to have non-US forces do ground fighting, but for this to work, it required that US allies would be willing to engage militarily on the ground and be effective if they did. However, many US allies were not eager to send troops to fight in either of those crises, and they illustrated how the New Look did not offer good policy options for scenarios such as an insurgency in Indochina or the PRC exhibiting a minor belligerent act, which were what SEATO was likely to face.<sup>152</sup>

After the contradictions from the New Look being applied to peripheral areas like Southeast Asia became more apparent, the NSC also had to strategize for limited war. The Americans became more interested in conventional forces as they realized the shortcomings of massive retaliation. General war referred to global total war, which involved the USSR, where all available weapons would be used. Comparatively, limited war was any lesser conflict.<sup>153</sup> Historian H.W. Brands argues that in 1958, "Eisenhower conceded that the administration had not thought completely through to the consequences of the New Look." Brands quotes Eisenhower writing, "Our strategic concept did not adequately take account of the possibilities of limited war." Dulles acknowledged the need for more flexibility when he told Eisenhower that

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<sup>152</sup> Brooks, *Just War Theory*; Bazargan, "The Permissibility of Aiding and Abetting Unjust Wars," 13.

<sup>153</sup> Farrell, "Alphabet Soup and Nuclear War," 89, 101.

massive retaliation overemphasized a largescale nuclear attack in the event of any clash anywhere between US and Soviet forces, and he doubted the wisdom of beginning general war over a peripheral interest. Dulles summarized the problem as the US' arsenal was adapted for massive retaliation, therefore, the US was compelled to respond with massive retaliation. Simultaneously, Dulles acknowledged the dilemma of how the US' deterrent would be weakened if it was revealed that the US contemplated anything less than massive retaliation.<sup>154</sup>

Nevertheless, tactical nuclear weapons for limited war were still in the framework of massive retaliation because they could deter an invasion, which became part of a key debate over how they should be implemented. While the main goal of massive retaliation was deterring general war, the NSC also wanted the capability to avoid another Korea-type conventional war that would devolve into a grinding war of attrition. Dulles admitted that the US had no nonnuclear capability in Asia, and that was a weakness. Besides, since the previous use of atomic weapons had exclusively been the US attacking Japan, future use against "Asiatics" by the US would have "very serious political implications." Military planners estimated that without nuclear weapons, a limited war would unfold like Korea did and involve 150,000 US casualties. Dulles favored developing a conventional limited-war capability if it cost a few million dollars, but not billions. He described the US as "muscle bound" in Vietnam if it only had nuclear options and wanted to avoid another situation like Dien Bien Phu where it was politically difficult to use them.<sup>155</sup>

Planning for limited war also raised various issues. By the late 1950s, "little bang [nuclear] weapons" were as powerful as the bomb that produced "sensational results at Hiroshima." Consequently, Dulles expressed in an NSC meeting that "world opinion was not yet

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<sup>154</sup> Brands, "The Age of Vulnerability," 973, 985.

<sup>155</sup> NSC Meeting, Jun. 26, 1958, Material From Gerard C. Smith's Files 1958 (2), Box 1, Gerard C. Smith, EJFD.

ready to accept the general use of nuclear weapons in local conflicts.” Doing so would cause the rest of the world to view the Eisenhower administration like the Nazis.<sup>156</sup> When the NSC discussed how the New Look would avoid limited wars, National Security Advisor Robert Cutler anticipated that the US could be drawn into one by circumstances beyond its control, to which US Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson replied, then the war would not remain small.<sup>157</sup>

Another important context the NSC had to contend with was the changing nature of militaries during the Cold War. After the Korean War, for the first time, the US Army maintained a robust, combat-ready standing force in peacetime that had a significant overseas presence. Yet paradoxically, the advent of atomic weapons also revolutionized military strategy and deemphasized armies. High-ranking US Army officers like Matthew Ridgeway and Maxwell Taylor did not agree with minimizing the Army because the Army was tasked with deterring the Soviet bloc from invading Western Europe, but it also needed to be able to fight a limited war in Europe and the developing world. Taylor unsuccessfully attempted to get Eisenhower to shift to a more flexible response to deal with the changing security environment. The policy implications of concentrating on nuclear weapons for national defense were that if conventional forces atrophied too much, it limited their use as an option, and the US would become even more reliant on nuclear weapons. As already noted, nuclear weapons were increasingly hard to use politically and there was recognition that their use could lead to escalation.<sup>158</sup>

Contemporary academics from the 1950s, such as Robert Osgood, also articulated the need for the Eisenhower administration to focus more on limited war. Osgood argued military power was not a rational instrument of foreign policy if the destructive potentialities of war

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<sup>156</sup> 325<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, May 27, 1957, 14-15, Box 8, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>157</sup> 319<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 6-7.

<sup>158</sup> Tauschweizer, *The Cold War U.S. Army*, Chapters 1-3.

exceed any rational purpose. Emphasizing well-known military strategist Carl von Clausewitz's concepts of political primacy and economy of force, Osgood contended the US needed to create a comprehensive multifaceted national-security strategy instead of a purely military strategy. Eisenhower also leveraged Clausewitz in the New Look by arguing that the price of war would be so high that it would make any political gain for an adversary not worth the potential risk.<sup>159</sup>

### *Implementing Deterrence Through SEATO*

Trying to implement strategic deterrence through SEATO also challenged the NSC on an operational and tactical level. After SEATO's first meeting in February 1955, the OCB declared that SEATO substantially furthered the NSC's objective for Southeast Asia, but this gain was largely psychological.<sup>160</sup> A State Department memo to Dulles explained that SEATO's Asian members believed that SEATO would solve their military problems. After all, they had the US military backing them in a formal alliance.<sup>161</sup> However, the acting director of the CIA noted in a September 1955 letter that US Admiral Felix Stump, Commander in Chief Pacific, was unprepared for collaborating with SEATO, had little confidence in Asian members, and excluded them from military planning. As SEATO members, they could have expected to participate in the organization's military planning. The US and UK ran meetings, and the meetings were a "waste of time" except for scheduling future conferences. The Asian members' morale had deteriorated after a lack of accomplishments and, as what the letter described as, "the highhanded manner in which the U.S. military are running it [SEATO]." If the situation continued, SEATO would be

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<sup>159</sup> Osgood, *Limited War*.

<sup>160</sup> Implementation of NSC 5405 Through the Manila Pact, Mar. 15, 1955, 1, OCB 091. Indo-China (File #3) (9), Box 39, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>161</sup> MacArthur to Dulles, Dec. 2, 1955, 162, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21 (hereafter, MacArthur to Dulles Dec. 1955).

unnecessary because there had been no accomplishments that required SEATO.<sup>162</sup> The different perspectives of SEATO's Western and Asian members about SEATO's military component reflected tension in the alliance by demonstrating that US actions offended SEATO's Asian members and undermined SEATO's unity.

Historian Nick Cullather argues that after the US did not intervene at Dien Bien Phu, the Philippines questioned American resolve.<sup>163</sup> Primary source evidence supports this contention more broadly beyond just the Philippines and Dien Bien Phu. Vice President Richard Nixon compared his 1956 trip abroad to visit US allies that received US aid to a similar trip in 1953. Over those three years, Nixon found that every nation he visited seemed stronger economically, politically, and militarily, which he credited primarily to the administration's policies. Yet, Nixon explained how they still wanted reassurances from the US because they believed the US took its allies for granted and prioritized courting uncommitted nations. Nixon declared, if the US did not convey that it stood with its allies in taking a tough unequivocal line in joint resistance to communism, it would have a "catastrophic effect on the entire U.S. position," particularly in Asia. He added that leaders in allied nations were "obsessed with local rather than international issues." For example, the Filipinos conveyed their perspective to Nixon that the US bases they hosted were less of a part of a global strategy to deter communism and more of a domestic Philippine issue.<sup>164</sup>

There is evidence that the disunity between the US and its allies that Nixon found generally occurred over SEATO's military aspects. While the US and UK sent high-ranking military officers to SEATO meetings, nations like France and Pakistan sent low-ranking officers,

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<sup>162</sup> Cabell to Dulles, Sep. 12, 1955, 126-27, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>163</sup> Cullather, *Illusions of Influence*, 142.

<sup>164</sup> 290<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Jul. 12, 1956, 11, Box 8, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 290<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

which indicated a lesser commitment. One goal that nations besides the US had at military planning meetings was to get the US to reveal its intentions and capabilities in the region.<sup>165</sup> Dulles had pushed for SEATO in response to the US' inability to get enough partners for united action during the siege of Dien Bien Phu, but a 1958 NSC memo specified the need to "find SEATO a job." This comment showed the disconnect between the security situation in Southeast Asia and how SEATO could effectively help the NSC deal with it.<sup>166</sup> Asian members frequently broached creating a more robust NATO-like structure for SEATO. Without SEATO bases and significant troop deployments, they questioned the US' defense commitment to the region through SEATO.<sup>167</sup> The NSC just wanted to telegraph deterrence while reducing defense spending. After all, the siege of Dien Bien Phu was a catalyst for creating SEATO. Yet, it was a domestic insurrection, not an interstate invasion, which a NATO-like structure was not designed to counter.

The US' previous commitments in Asia to the ROC, South Korea, and Japan restricted the US' ability to use more resources in Southeast Asia as well.<sup>168</sup> Those nations were also important to the US because the ROC was threatened during the Taiwan Straits Crisis and supported by the influential China Lobby in the US, South Korea had recently experienced a communist invasion during the Korean conflict, and Japan was the economic engine of Asia. Yet, mounting pressure by SEATO members made US opposition to a permanent "Council and Military Staff organization" untenable. SEATO needed to refute charges that it was a "paper

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<sup>165</sup> Farrell, "Alphabet Soup and Nuclear War," 86, 88.

<sup>166</sup> Check List – Limited War, Jun. 16, 1958, Material From Gerard C. Smith's Files 1958 (2), Box 1, Gerard C. Smith, EJFD.

<sup>167</sup> SEATO Record, 30.

<sup>168</sup> JCS to Defense Secretary, Feb. 11, 1955, 16, NSC 5405 – Policy in Mainland SE Asia (1), Box 9, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA.

tiger,” and Asian members contemplated neutrality because they were “losing faith in SEATO.” By leading the institutional building process, the US could better shape the final product.<sup>169</sup>

SEATO sought to evaluate the effectiveness of its members’ militaries and determine how to improve them through modernization.<sup>170</sup> Bilateral military aid was primarily from the US,<sup>171</sup> which Eisenhower argued “was our most important program in” Asia.<sup>172</sup> The JCS opposed reducing aid to Pakistan because of “SEATO country force goals,”<sup>173</sup> and Pakistan’s increased capabilities were attributed to SEATO.<sup>174</sup> US peacetime military aid was a practice that developed significantly under Truman after the onset of the Cold War, and Eisenhower continued it. The US distributing aid bilaterally put the US in the decision-making role in terms of what different members received. The emphasis within SEATO of the Asian members receiving bilateral aid differed from NATO where members had specific contribution goals. The difference was that the least developed members of NATO were more developed than SEATO’s Asian members and were expected to contribute, not just receive contributions.<sup>175</sup>

However, military aid also presented problems. The standardization of all equipment was desirable but financially impractical, so SEATO had to prioritize standardizing some items like facilities for handling ships and aircraft, as well as refueling.<sup>176</sup> The Australians noted how coordinating to avoid duplicating US aid caused delays.<sup>177</sup> The Philippines requested modern

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<sup>169</sup> Memo for Navy Secretary, Dec. 16, 1955, 1043, in USVR, 5B3C.

<sup>170</sup> Collective Security, 97.

<sup>171</sup> SEATO Record, 38.

<sup>172</sup> 419<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Sep. 17, 1959, 7, Box 11, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 419<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>173</sup> NSC Memo, May 22, 1959, 6, NSC 5701 – US Policy Toward South Asia (1), Box 19, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, NSC Memo May 1959).

<sup>174</sup> SEATO Delegation to State Department, Mar. 12, 1958, 7, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16 (hereafter, SEATO Delegation to State Department Mar. 1958).

<sup>175</sup> Pach, *Arming the Free World*.

<sup>176</sup> SEATO Record, 36.

<sup>177</sup> Australian Department of External Affairs, Apr. 12, 1957, Item 10390240007, TEXT.

equipment because its ground forces were still outfitted with World War II vintage items,<sup>178</sup> and the US embassy thought Philippine President Magsaysay was fabricating reports of renewed communist rebel activity to get more military aid.<sup>179</sup> This adds to historian G. Wyn Rees' work on SEATO. Rees found that SEATO's Asian members exaggerated the threats in the region to maintain the Western members' interest in their security and get more military hardware. Thus, because the Asian members had to deal in subterfuge, it showed that open and frank discussions failed.<sup>180</sup> In addition, SEATO's Asian members were not the exclusive recipients of US military aid in the greater Southeast Asia region. This presented the US with the dilemma of how to maintain good relations with nations throughout the greater region while still incentivizing them to join SEATO, which is an issue that will be explored more in subsequent chapters.

Other problems over aid also emerged. The NSC discussed arming South Vietnam, even with jets, despite Geneva Accord prohibitions on doing that. Interregional rivalries presented problems as well. Cambodia requested jets, but neighboring South Vietnam and Thailand, with whom Cambodia was experiencing fraught relations because it was more open to communism, might protest that the jets would be used against them even though all the nations were SEATO members or protocol states.<sup>181</sup> Discussions in an NSC meeting described the US' promise to give 31 jets to Thailand as a "terrible situation" because it was another example of the US committing piecemeal to a military-aid program before it grasped the whole picture. Eisenhower only wanted to give jets if it was in the US' interest. Yet, Thailand believed that it needed an independent Air Force because SEATO intervention was contingent on every member's willing participation and

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<sup>178</sup> OCB Report on Philippines, Mar. 30, 1960, 4, NSC 5813/1 – Policy Toward the Philippines, Box 25, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, OCB Report on Philippines Mar. 1960).

<sup>179</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 322, Mar. 8, 1955, OCB 350.05 (File #2) (2), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>180</sup> Rees, *Anglo-American Approaches to Alliance Security, 1955-60*, 134.

<sup>181</sup> 452<sup>nd</sup> NSC Meeting, Jul. 21, 1960, 4, 6, Box 12, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 452<sup>nd</sup> NSC Meeting).

constitutional processes. Nonetheless, by the end of the meeting, it was decided that the US would send a few jets to Thailand “for prestige purposes.”<sup>182</sup>

That NSC discussion demonstrated the tension between the US and SEATO’s Asian members and protocol states over the distribution of military aid. Under the New Look, the NSC wanted nations like Thailand to concentrate on supplying ground forces to complement the US’ airpower. Meanwhile, the Thais wanted their own air capabilities that the US would pay for. The US giving a few jets just to placate the Thais, after it promised 31, displayed how the US had to compromise what it wanted to do to maintain Asian allies in collective security. The dilemmas over arming and equipping Asian states affiliated with SEATO exemplified how complicated it was for the US to rely on Asian allies for security in Southeast Asia to execute the New Look through SEATO. There was an asymmetric relationship where SEATO members wanted military aid, but they could not force the US to give it. They could only hope the US would agree to their requests. Further complicating matters was that the US wanted to reduce its expenditures, but the Asian states continually wanted to stockpile more military aid. There was also the issue that US military aid was done bilaterally, not through SEATO, and there was no unified command in SEATO. This showed that that the US did not attempt to build a NATO-like military structure in SEATO because it would have expended resources that the NSC did not think were worth the price.

Another factor that made giving military aid difficult was that the NSC argued that “backward countries” could not support effective militaries. Thus, there were pragmatic reasons for not wanting to give aid. If an Asian SEATO member could not use a jet because there were not adequate hangers, runways, pilots, maintenance capabilities, fueling facilities, etc., then it

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<sup>182</sup> 287<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Jun. 7, 1956, 11-14, Box 7, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 287<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

would serve no practical purpose unless the US was willing to make a much larger investment to supply everything else that was required as a package. This implied that high-tech military aid was largely for show and to improve relations, but the NSC had their doubts that Asian nations affiliated with SEATO would be able to make a valuable military contribution.

Recognizing this problem and wanting to stick with the New Look, Eisenhower expressed in an August 1956 NSC meeting that he favored conveying the US' willingness to use atomic weapons over continuing military aid, which the US was spending more on every year. At the end of the NSC's discussion on this topic, the acting secretary of defense suggested that Dulles use SEATO meetings to persuade Asian members to be less selfish about demanding arms. In response to that suggestion, Eisenhower requested that Dulles' State Department explore that possibility.<sup>183</sup>

Discussions in a 1957 NSC meeting revealed why this was so difficult. Eisenhower explained that choosing to make Pakistan a military ally, and "doing practically nothing... except... military aid, ...was perhaps the worst kind of a plan and decision we could have made..., but we now seemed hopelessly involved in it." Eisenhower then admitted, "our tendency to rush out and seek allies was not very sensible." Yet, cutting aid could have "severe repercussions" to relations and destroy the Middle East defense alliance CENTO, to which Pakistan was also a member. Eisenhower naming CENTO instead of SEATO may have indicated his priorities. Although Pakistan perceived existential threats from its neighbors, Eisenhower thought a skillful negotiator from the US could "induce the Pakistani [*sic*] themselves to suggest changes [a reduction] in... military assistance." Eisenhower framed the issue as Pakistanis needing "education" and "common sense." When the State Department's Walter Robertson

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<sup>183</sup> 295<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 18-19.

urged Eisenhower to request a study for reducing aid programs to the entire SEATO area and confronting those nations about moderating their demands for aid, Eisenhower “did not immediately grasp the import of Secretary Robertson’s suggestion,” but he then agreed.<sup>184</sup> The transcript of that NSC meeting does not reveal why Eisenhower agreed, but it seems that he had his doubts about the utility of the US spending money to arm SEATO’s Asian members.

Despite the complications over military aid, there were reasons for optimism why SEATO could field an effective fighting force if it were needed. For one, there was precedent. Every member except Pakistan had voluntarily sent troops to the Korean conflict to fight communists. Troops from the UK, Australia, and New Zealand, which were stationed in Malaya to combat the communist insurgency there, were used to demonstrate those nations’ SEATO military commitment.<sup>185</sup> Meanwhile, the OCB called for training indigenous militaries in Southeast Asia so they could become integrated with troops from neighboring nations and SEATO members to create a cohesive and effective fighting force.<sup>186</sup> Military personnel from SEATO members and protocol states trained in the West and Southeast Asia. By 1960, 27,947 students from members had completed courses at US military schools.<sup>187</sup> The US even hosted an atomic warfare orientation course<sup>188</sup> and contemplated training South Vietnamese pilots in air and naval support with atomic weapons.<sup>189</sup>

However, there were also reasons why the Asian members might not be able to make much of a military contribution. Although the US had aircraft carriers, Southeast Asia only had

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<sup>184</sup> 308<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Jan. 3, 1957, 9-12, Box 8, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 308<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>185</sup> Pugsley, *From Emergency to Confrontation*, 173.

<sup>186</sup> Regional Solidarity in Southeast Asia, May 3, 1955, 1, OCB 091.4 Southeast Asia (File #3) (3), Box 80, OCB Central File, ENSC (hereafter, Regional Solidarity).

<sup>187</sup> SEATO Record, 38.

<sup>188</sup> SEATO Progress Report, Mar. 10, 1957, 300, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21 (hereafter, SEATO Progress Report Mar. 57).

<sup>189</sup> JCS to Defense Secretary, Sep. 9, 1955, 5, NSC 5405 – Policy in Mainland SE Asia (1), Box 9, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA.

five airfields that could service the large aircraft the US Tactical Air Command used, and the Asian members had more than a little trouble operating jets like the F-86, a modern fighter. An air marshal from the Australian Air Force reported that pilots from SEATO's Asian members could fly F-86 jets all right, but those aircrafts required a "fairly good airfield."<sup>190</sup> Another problem was getting, keeping, and motivating ground forces in the Asian members. In an NSC meeting, Eisenhower expressed how low military pay was a great problem in the "free world."<sup>191</sup> Furthermore, the Philippine press exposed derogatory remarks that a US general had made about Philippine soldiers that caused an uproar from the Philippine military and its veterans.<sup>192</sup> In addition, negotiations for establishing the Pacific Defense College in the Philippines reached an impasse, and the matter was returned to the SEATO Military Advisors.<sup>193</sup>

Overseas bases were important for the US to be able to project military power to deter communists in the greater Southeast Asia region. This was especially true in the Philippines where the US negotiated a 99-year lease for its bases after the Philippines became independent from the US in 1946. Clark Air Force Base hosted the US Thirteenth Air Force, and at least one-third of the US Seventh Fleet called Subic Bay Naval Station home at any given time. Luzon, the large island in the northern Philippines where Manila was, also hosted the US' San Miguel Naval Communications Station. Yet, it is worth noting that the US did not gain these bases because the Philippines joined SEATO, it already had access to them. Moreover, the US' access to military facilities in the Philippines was much more significant than in the other Asian SEATO members, Thailand and Pakistan, throughout Eisenhower's presidency.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> ANZUS Meeting Minutes, Oct. 1, 1958, 53, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16 (hereafter, ANZUS Meeting Oct. 58).

<sup>191</sup> 449<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Jun. 30, 1960, 12, Box 12, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 449<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>192</sup> Intelligence Notes, Jan. 18, 1957, OCB 350.05 (File #4) (4), Box 112, OCB Central File, ENSC (hereafter, Intelligence Notes Jan. 18, 1957).

<sup>193</sup> OCB Report on Philippines Mar. 1960, 4.

<sup>194</sup> Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, 112.

However, despite having access to bases in SEATO's Asian members, by 1957, the US was making contingency plans to use Australia and New Zealand as fallback positions if its Asian allies obstructed its access to bases.<sup>195</sup> Thailand and the Philippines complained about the behavior of US servicemen toward their civilians in incidents off bases. Questions over criminal jurisdiction caused tension.<sup>196</sup> Even after the US granted the legal title of bases to the Philippines, the Philippines believed that agreements about bases were not as advantageous to them as other nations, and the US overemphasized the importance of bases in their relationship.<sup>197</sup> Overseas bases caused the US so much trouble that minutes from a 1957 NSC meeting recorded Eisenhower explaining that "the older he grew, the more he wished the United States could get out of all its bases everywhere in the world except in countries like England." Although Eisenhower said this at the beginning of his second term, and Harold Stassen (the former governor of Minnesota, who was a serious contender for the Republican presidential nomination in 1948), the director of foreign operations administration (that centralized US governmental operations to develop the economic and military strength of nations of the "free world"), explained to him in that NSC meeting that Eisenhower could try to trade an American withdrawal for the Soviets reciprocating, overseas bases remained central to US national-security strategy.<sup>198</sup>

Nuclear missiles were another source of tension when it came to overseas bases. Nuclear missiles represented the future of deterrence because they were much more difficult to stop than bombers, and they served an offensive and defensive purpose. Offensively, missiles could be

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<sup>195</sup> NSC 5713/2, Aug. 23, 1957, 10, NSC 5713/2 – Long-range US policy interests in Australia and New Zealand, Box 21, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA.

<sup>196</sup> Intelligence Notes, Oct. 1, 1956, 2, OCB 350.05 (File #3) (7), Box 111 B, OCB Central File, ENSC; for the Philippines, see OCB Report on Philippines Mar. 1960, 4.

<sup>197</sup> Intelligence Notes, Aug. 23, 1956, 2, OCB 350.05 (File #3) (7), Box 111 B, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>198</sup> 313<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Feb. 21, 1957, 15, Box 8, NSC, EDDE.

used to attack an adversary. Defensively, they were intended to deter an enemy attack. However, the US and USSR had very limited capabilities to use missiles effectively against each other intercontinentally in the 1950s. This created a dilemma where the US needed allies within effective missile range of the Soviet bloc to host US missiles, but that also required those allies assuming the risk of becoming military targets for the Soviet bloc. In addition, US Secretary of Defense Wilson commented how overseas American bases greatly concerned the USSR.<sup>199</sup>

This tension over missiles surfaced between the US and SEATO's Asian members, which made it more difficult for the US to implement the New Look's component of deterrence in the greater Southeast Asia region. The Philippines resisted allowing US missiles on US bases in its territory, and negotiations were planned to determine if the US had to consult with the Philippine government to use its bases during wartime.<sup>200</sup> The Filipinos wanted US bases to defend their nation. They would allow the US to store nuclear weapons in the Philippines for Philippine defense, but they viewed longer-range missiles as a "lightning rod concept" because they invited a Soviet-bloc military strike.<sup>201</sup> Thailand did not want longer-range missiles either.<sup>202</sup> Comparatively, but not surprising, the Eisenhower administration had fewer difficulties maintaining a cohesive alliance with its NATO allies, which will be detailed in chapter five, because the military threat from the USSR was starker in Europe. However, France did leave NATO over disagreements over issues pertaining to nuclear weapons control. Moreover, in Southeast Asia, there were fewer strategic targets in the Soviet bloc that were in range of shorter-

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<sup>199</sup> 319<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 16.

<sup>200</sup> OCB Report on Philippines, Nov. 26, 1958, 7, NSC 5813/1 – Policy Toward the Philippines, Box 25, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, OCB Report on Philippines Nov. 1958).

<sup>201</sup> Far East Chiefs of Mission Meeting, Mar. 1958, 1, Material From Gerard C. Smith's Files 1958 (4), Box 1, Gerard C. Smith, EJFD (hereafter, Observations of Far East Chiefs).

<sup>202</sup> Modelski, "The Asian States' Participation in SEATO," 158.

range missiles, and the US stationing missiles in foreign nations would become less important as the availability of effective intercontinental missiles improved.

SEATO used military exercises to improve coordination between its members and simulate its response to possible scenarios where SEATO would act. Displaying SEATO's ability to respond militarily aided deterrence. US forces visited the region periodically and participated in SEATO military exercises.<sup>203</sup> This, and acts like flying carrier-based aircraft up the Mekong River over Thai territory, which bordered Indochina, demonstrated the US' capabilities to meet its SEATO obligations.<sup>204</sup> For an exercise, the US allowed a Pakistani to command a US Navy destroyer to rebut communist propaganda that the US dominated its Asian allies in SEATO.<sup>205</sup> The NSC noted that Philippine forces improved because of their participation in SEATO exercises, and it estimated that they would be able to make a limited contribution during a SEATO military intervention.<sup>206</sup> After observers from all members witnessed an exercise, there were static displays of the equipment that was used and "a spectacular flying demonstration" that included modern aircraft flown by pilots from Western and Asian members.<sup>207</sup> This evidence extends historian Damien Fenton's contention that SEATO's military exercises served a political purpose by being "media friendly."<sup>208</sup>

The New Look combining the nuclear deterrent and collective security raised issues during SEATO military exercises. Eisenhower explained in a 1957 NSC meeting that he "thought that the United States could provide its allies with small nuclear weapons complete with

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<sup>203</sup> Regional Solidarity, 2.

<sup>204</sup> OCB Agenda Items, Mar. 23, 1955, 5, Southeast Asia (4), Box 7, OCB Secretariat, ENSC.

<sup>205</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 474, Oct. 12, 1955, OCB 350.05 (File #2) (8), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>206</sup> NSC 5813/1, Jun. 4, 1958, 27-28, NSC 5813/1 – Policy Toward the Philippines, Box 25, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, NSC 5813/1).

<sup>207</sup> SEATO Record, Mar. 1961, 16-17, SETO (hereafter, SEATO Record Mar. 1961).

<sup>208</sup> Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, 79.

warheads; whereas the huge hydrogen weapons should be kept under our own control.” Yet, JCS Chairman Radford pointed out that US law at that time prohibited the US from giving nuclear warheads to its allies.<sup>209</sup> Eisenhower offered intermediate range missiles to the UK, but the US still controlled the warheads. This gave the US a veto over their use, but the UK also had their own nuclear warheads. The US sold them some missiles that they could use independently.<sup>210</sup> Nonetheless, the situation was different in Southeast Asia where the threat from the USSR was less pronounced. The OCB encouraged “atomic play” in SEATO exercises to normalize their use. Still, because the other members might question this approach because it appeared provocative, the OCB recommended neither emphasizing nor denying SEATO’s nuclear capabilities publicly until the US and its SEATO allies came to an agreement about this issue in private. The OCB anticipated that the UK would undertake extended deliberations about their use in Southeast Asia. The hesitancy in SEATO over nuclear weapons undermined the effectiveness of New Look-style deterrence, and that was the US’ main power projection platform. Tensions arose as the US wanted to provide a blanket of atomic supremacy bolstered by indigenous conventional forces, but the other SEATO members had different visions for regional collective security.<sup>211</sup>

Despite the controversy over nuclear weapons, in 1960, US Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates announced SEATO exercises had progressed from simple “observer type” to sophisticated maneuvers.<sup>212</sup> From 1956 to 1960, SEATO held sixteen exercises to simulate a wide range of defense scenarios throughout the treaty area.<sup>213</sup> Early ones included amphibious landings, naval

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<sup>209</sup> 319<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 12-13.

<sup>210</sup> Brown, *Eisenhower’s Nuclear Calculus in Europe*, 140; for more on custody arrangements of atomic warheads in the Cold War, see Ellsberg, *The Doomsday Machine*.

<sup>211</sup> Max Bishop, US Policy Towards SEATO Civil Activities, Aug. 16, 1957, 27, South East Asia, Box 6, Subject, OCB, EOSA (hereafter, Bishop Report).

<sup>212</sup> USVR, 4A1, 27.

<sup>213</sup> SEATO Record, Annex J, p. 1.

gunfire to support ground operations, and coordinated air-sea defense training in ships that served as floating classrooms. These ships were docked off Australia before they sailed to Singapore and Manila. Another exercise simulated coordinated air-ground defense in Thailand where the “center of attraction” was the new American “Honest John Rocket,” which was displayed for the first time in Southeast Asia. The Thai prime minister and Philippine president participated in ceremonies surrounding exercises in their nations.<sup>214</sup>

The more sophisticated exercises began in 1958. Exercise Oceanlink simulated keeping sea lanes open in the South China Sea between Singapore and Manila. It used 24 ships from five members in a simulated defense from submarine and air attacks. Aircraft carriers from Australia, the UK, and US participated. Exercise Kitisena was a command post exercise in northern Thailand that the US also participated in. It simulated how SEATO would respond to an attack against Thailand. Exercise Air Progress landed paratroopers from Thailand, France, and the US in Thailand.<sup>215</sup> In exercise Halang Dagat, the Philippines and US simulated harbor defense with minesweepers, underwater demolition, aircraft, hunter-killer teams of helicopters and coastguard cutters, a submarine, and a shore battery. Exercise Saddle Up simulated an amphibious landing by 3,000 infantry troops from the UK in the British colony on Borneo, an island that Indonesia controlled most of. Australia, New Zealand, and the US provided support. Exercise Teamwork II, in Thailand, simulated amphibious reconnaissance and included engineers and “frogmen” mine-clearance experts. Exercise Sea Lion, which was the largest exercise during Eisenhower’s

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<sup>214</sup> SEATO Military Exercises, SETO.

<sup>215</sup> SEATO: Record of Progress, 1958-59, SETO (hereafter, SEATO Record 1958-59).

presidency, used thousands of men and over 60 ships and 100 aircraft. Separate fleets in Manila and Thailand rendezvoused in the South China Sea after ten days of maneuvers.<sup>216</sup>

Dulles told the NSC in a meeting that the first exercise was “the best thing that... ever happened to SEATO,” which, Dulles added, had developed vigor, and put down roots. The exercise made a splendid impression in Southeast Asia and justified the US’ regional collective-security strategy. Dulles spun criticism that it was hastily contrived as a positive for creating realistic circumstances.<sup>217</sup> Yet, there was also evidence that Dulles may have been giving the NSC an overly optimistic appraisal. Privately, to Eisenhower, Dulles noted “slippage in [Thai] military... performance” without adding any specifics.<sup>218</sup> Moreover, the Thai hosts overeagerly announced that all members would participate. The UK complained that its ambassador in the Philippines learned about the exercise through a Tokyo press release. The short notice irritated Pakistan, and Thailand apologized afterward.<sup>219</sup> Ultimately, only the US and Philippines participated.<sup>220</sup>

Other factors also hindered exercises. Just once did every member participate in an exercise. The US only missed one, and since it was a unilateral field command-post exercise in Thailand, it could not have participated anyway. This indicated that the US was more dedicated than other members.<sup>221</sup> Organization and logistics created challenges as well because no members shared borders, and there were great distances between some of them.<sup>222</sup> During

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<sup>216</sup> SEATO: Record of Progress, 1959-60, 14, SETO. For a more detailed account about the specifics of various exercises, see Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, 77-79; for the perspective of the British and Commonwealth forces, see Leebaert, *Grand Improvisation*, 489.

<sup>217</sup> 280<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Mar. 22, 1956, 1-2, Box 7, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 280<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>218</sup> DULTE 28, Mar. 14, 1956, Dulles, John Foster Mar. ‘56, Box 6, Dulles-Herter, EDDE (hereafter, DULTE 28 Mar. 1956).

<sup>219</sup> State Department Memo, Feb. 28, 1956, 179, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>220</sup> SEATO Record, Annex J, p. 1.

<sup>221</sup> SEATO Record, Annex J, p. 1.

<sup>222</sup> SEATO: The First Year, 1955-56, 15, SETO (hereafter, SEATO the First Year).

regional crises, the US acknowledged that a public show of force like a SEATO military exercise could appear as saber-rattling,<sup>223</sup> which the US did intentionally to get Moscow's attention.<sup>224</sup> There were discussions about delaying an exercise until after a Philippine election, which suggested SEATO was unpopular there domestically and this topic will be elaborated on in the next chapters. Lastly, some exercises that the US had previously done were just relabeled SEATO exercises. Since SEATO exhibited some problems executing exercises, such as the lack of organization and participation of many members, the appearance of saber-rattling, and that some US exercises were just relabeled SEATO exercises, it calls into question historian Damien Fenton's contention that SEATO exercises were "highly profitable and successful."<sup>225</sup>

Initially, the US resisted making military plans in SEATO because the defense of Southeast Asia had a "low priority in global planning." A memo by the US' special assistant for SEATO affairs explained, "The revelation of this would not help the morale of the Asian members of SEATO." While this was likely already understood by SEATO's Asian members, the US emphasizing this in a SEATO setting could increase tension.<sup>226</sup> Still, to keep SEATO together, the US accommodated other members that wanted more joint planning, and SEATO established its Military Planning Office in Bangkok in 1957.<sup>227</sup>

Examining SEATO's military planning and strategy demonstrates how SEATO reflected the New Look. SEATO's Military Planning Office inherited US strategic concepts as the foundation for SEATO's grand strategy. US power was so preponderant within SEATO that any plans had to reflect US intentions and capabilities. Nuclear weapons would be used if they were

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<sup>223</sup> Johnson to State Department, Sep. 9, 1959, 112, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16 (hereafter, Johnson to State Sep 1959).

<sup>224</sup> Adams, *Eisenhower's Fine Group of Fellows*, 7.

<sup>225</sup> ANZUS Meeting Minutes, Oct. 4, 1957, 390, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21 (hereafter, ANZUS Meeting Oct. 57); Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, 79.

<sup>226</sup> Abbot to MacArthur, Oct. 19, 1956, 264, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>227</sup> SEATO Record, 30. For more details on SEATO's military organization, see Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, Chapter 3.

deemed militarily necessary and politically acceptable. Because the US was the final arbiter if a situation met those criteria, the Asian members were marginalized. SEATO's planners assumed that their use in the greater Southeast Asia theater would not provoke the USSR to a point where it would intervene. Nuclear weapons would be used strategically to hinder communist military operations in the treaty area. The 25 first-priority strategic targets included eighteen airfields in the southern PRC and North Vietnam, as well as port and transportation facilities in the southern PRC. Destroying those targets would isolate invading communist forces and make them more vulnerable.<sup>228</sup>

Several additional factors went into SEATO military planning. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) understood that a SEATO military intervention would likely be in a limited-war scenario, and the JCS lobbied for no prohibitions on atomic weapons or other military operations. The JCS argued that this would achieve quicker success with fewer US troops and casualties. Still, even if this were permitted, the JCS admitted that the US could not guarantee territorial integrity in SEATO's treaty area. More realistically, the US could help nations remain independent if their people desired it. This applied to nonmembers of SEATO particularly. Although the memo did not explain why the JCS believed this, it appears that the JCS understood the limits of US military power to change the situation on the ground in Southeast Asia unless it had popular indigenous support for US objectives, but that condition was not a given.<sup>229</sup>

In their plans for Southeast Asia during Eisenhower's presidency, Army officers viewed SEATO in terms of grand strategy geopolitics. The Army's analysis of the region identified

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<sup>228</sup> Farrell, "Alphabet Soup and Nuclear War," 86-87, 89-90.

<sup>229</sup> NSC Memo, Sep. 16, 1955, 6, NSC 5405 – Policy in Mainland SE Asia (1), Box 9, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, NSC Memo Sep. 1955).

problems with the New Look's reliance on deterrence with nuclear weapons and how the rigid bipolar Cold War ideological framework did not fit well in Southeast Asia where complexity, ambiguity, and nationalism reigned. For example, Army officers recognized that Indonesia's neutrality policy was legitimate, and the Huk rebels in the Philippines were not dupes of Moscow, although they were communists. Still, concerning Indochina, they blamed problems in South Vietnam on North Vietnam and insisted that the US must confront what it perceived as a global communist menace emanating from Moscow. Army officers struggled to reconcile the Army's focus on largescale atomic war in Central Europe with the challenge of fighting in the environment of Southeast Asia, but these contradictions were never resolved or even challenged.<sup>230</sup>

The Soviet-bloc's superiority in its number of ground troops was a factor in SEATO military planning. Eisenhower noted that despite the US' great capabilities, the enemy could concentrate superior strength at one point.<sup>231</sup> SEATO's worst-case scenario was an open invasion of the treaty area by the PRC. Hundreds of thousands of PRC troops could be presented as "volunteers" as they were in the Korean conflict to signal that the PRC wanted to keep the conflict limited. The British cabinet services suspected that the PRC would only be deterred from a military invasion of Southeast Asia if it thought the West would launch nuclear strikes against its homeland in retaliation. This put the British in a position of dependence because they believed the Americans would marginalize British concerns unless the British were needed to tackle common problems.<sup>232</sup> With the possibility of the PRC intervening if SEATO took military action, SEATO anticipated that its military engagement could escalate to general war.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Linn, "Before the Quagmire," 249-50.

<sup>231</sup> Cabinet Meeting, Mar. 23, 1956, 212, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>232</sup> Farrell, "Alphabet Soup and Nuclear War," 87, 101-02.

<sup>233</sup> SEATO Record, 31.

Historian Damien Fenton argues that the PRC's capabilities were largely confined to ground forces, and historian Ronald Nairn contends that the US had "undisputed" control of the sea and airspace. However, there was evidence that SEATO would have to contend with PRC air and naval power. According to a report from a SEATO conference, SEATO intelligence estimated that the gravest threat to SEATO was the PRC's manpower and Air Force. Achieving air superiority was critical in SEATO's plans to degrade the enemy's capabilities, as well as protecting SEATO members and their forces. Doing so would make defending the treaty area practicable.<sup>234</sup> There was also precedent for the PRC leaving its territory with airpower. This happened during the Korean War.<sup>235</sup> As for the Soviet-bloc naval threat in the Southwestern Pacific, notes from an ANZUS meeting chronicled the "great" "menace" of the USSR and PRC's submarine fleets<sup>236</sup> in ANZUS plans to blockade coasts of communist nations and defend sea and air lines of communication in East Asia.<sup>237</sup>

SEATO planned to use nuclear weapons tactically as well. Since SEATO would not have enough conventional forces to repel a largescale communist invasion, tactical nuclear weapons helped fill that gap as a force multiplier. US and NATO warfighting doctrine had come to accept battlefield nuclear weapons that could be delivered by surface-to-surface missiles, heavy artillery, and even smaller ordnances. They could be aimed at enemy forces in the field and their supply lines rather than urban and logistical targets. However, SEATO's military planners anticipated problems unique to Southeast Asia if they relied on tactical nuclear weapons. Dense jungle would inhibit blast, heat, and radiation damage enough to dilute their effectiveness against

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<sup>234</sup> Report of SEATO Conference, Nov. 1955, 1025, in USVR, 5B3C (hereafter, Report of SEATO Conference). Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, 114; Nairn, "SEATO," 6.

<sup>235</sup> Zhang, *Red Wings over the Yalu*.

<sup>236</sup> ANZUS Meeting Oct. 58, 51.

<sup>237</sup> Report of SEATO Conference, 1033.

enemy ground forces on the march. Since it was anticipated that tactical nuclear weapons would not seriously delay a major invasion of Southeast Asia after it began, the British questioned providing them to ground forces. This mattered to Thailand because it bordered Indochina and regarded itself as a front-line state whose security should be SEATO's top priority.<sup>238</sup> Thailand's strategic goal was to ensure that its SEATO allies committed themselves to defending the protocol states, particularly Laos, which served as a buffer for Thailand from the PRC and North Vietnam.<sup>239</sup> This demonstrated that Thailand, which was located in mainland Southeast Asia, considered the protocol states a high priority.

Not only were there problems with the New Look's strategy of relying on a nuclear deterrent to defend Southeast Asia, but historian G. Wyn Rees complements that by arguing how SEATO formalized the American and British presence in Asia, but since they did not commit troops, it limited SEATO's military effectiveness and growth. Because the UK had limited resources and prioritized its security concerns in Europe and the Middle East, it tried to "retard" the development of sophisticated plans in SEATO. What gestures the US and UK made, Rees argues, were more tokens to attempt to reassure the Asian members, who were never convinced of SEATO's Western members sincerity to use nuclear weapons or intervene with ground forces on their behalf.<sup>240</sup> Discussions from an ANZUS meeting extend Rees' argument by revealing how Thailand doubted that Eisenhower would react promptly in a crisis in Southeast Asia.<sup>241</sup> Eisenhower feared that a leader in an Asian nation affiliated with SEATO might take unilateral action that would instigate conflict and draw in SEATO. For example, he said he would not support a South Vietnamese offensive against North Vietnam unless it was retaliation against

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<sup>238</sup> Farrell, "Alphabet Soup and Nuclear War," 83, 89, 97, 102.

<sup>239</sup> Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, 108.

<sup>240</sup> Rees, *Anglo-American Approaches to Alliance Security, 1955-60*, 133-34.

<sup>241</sup> ANZUS Meeting Oct. 57, 392.

communist aggression, had military significance, a good chance of success, and would not provoke communist retribution against “free Asian countries.”<sup>242</sup>

SEATO’s Asian members had different geographical assets to help SEATO undertake military action, but those assets also presented unique security challenges. Thailand’s location made it a good place to organize initial resistance to aggression in mainland Southeast Asia,<sup>243</sup> but it also made it the most vulnerable member. It bordered Indochina and was just around 100 kilometers from the PRC.<sup>244</sup> In Thailand, only the government leaders viewed the role of SEATO as anything beyond defending Thailand.<sup>245</sup> Comprising relatively protected islands, the Philippines would be a significant logistical hub and house important bases.<sup>246</sup> While an invasion of the Philippines in isolation was improbable, it could occur as part of a wider war,<sup>247</sup> and conflict in nearby Taiwan could involve SEATO.<sup>248</sup>

Meanwhile, Pakistan was divided into two parts, West and East, separated by 1,000 miles of Indian territory because they were the majority Muslim areas of the former British colony, compared to the Hindu-majority India. West Pakistan had a buffer because it was separated and distant from Southeast Asia, but it bordered the PRC and was very close to the USSR. In addition, increasing Cold War tensions in South Asia after SEATO’s creation shifted Pakistan’s security concerns more toward its western neighbor Afghanistan, as Pakistan’s primary rival, India, strove to remain neutral. During the early stage of general war, SEATO anticipated the

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<sup>242</sup> 419<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 8.

<sup>243</sup> Radford to Defense Secretary, Nov. 30, 1955, 2, NSC 5405 – Policy in Mainland SE Asia (1), Box 9, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA.

<sup>244</sup> SEATO Record, 10.

<sup>245</sup> Bishop Report, 23.

<sup>246</sup> NSC Memo Sep. 1955, 15.

<sup>247</sup> SEATO Progress Report, Apr. 7, 1959, 80, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16 (hereafter, SEATO Progress Report Apr. 59).

<sup>248</sup> Report of SEATO Conference, 1040.

Soviet bloc would invade Pakistan to secure a warmwater port on its way to the Middle East.<sup>249</sup> Pakistan received advanced weapons beyond what was originally planned, like jets, after Soviet pressure in response to US security facilities in Pakistan.<sup>250</sup> The Pakistani press exaggerated how SEATO supported Pakistan,<sup>251</sup> and the USSR gave \$100 million in aid, which was largely military, to Afghanistan.<sup>252</sup> Pashtuns ruled Afghanistan and encouraged their ethnic kin in Pakistan to rebel and join them.<sup>253</sup> What was particularly alarming to the Pakistanis was that part of the Soviet aid program was devoted to modernizing the Afghan Army and Air Force.<sup>254</sup> Afghanistan was using “all means” to control the disputed territory. This, and Soviet rhetoric threatening Pakistan, caused Pakistan to want to raise the issue in SEATO.<sup>255</sup>

Yet, collaborative military planning where SEATO’s Asian members were equally represented became increasingly difficult because divisions in SEATO on racial lines widened. A memo from the staff of the US’ Commander in Chief Pacific explained that the US military only trusted “the ‘white’ countries” with its “war plans” and questioned the future of SEATO and the US’ meaningful activity in it.<sup>256</sup> Dulles thought if Southeast Asians could hear the NSC’s discussions, it would reassure allies and deter aggression. Yet, the US was restrained because allowing that would raise “serious problems of security.” This comment by Dulles underscored how the US even distrusted SEATO’s Asian members and protocol states, which undoubtedly

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<sup>249</sup> Report of SEATO Conference, 1024.

<sup>250</sup> OCB Report on South Asia, Nov. 9, 1960, 18, NSC 5909/1 – U.S. Policy Toward South Asia, Box 27, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, OCB Report on South Asia Nov. 1960).

<sup>251</sup> DULTE 15, Mar. 8, 1956, 1, Dulles, John Foster Mar. ‘56, Box 6, Dulles-Herter, EDDE.

<sup>252</sup> SEATO Delegation to State Department, Mar. 7, 1956, 187, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21 (hereafter, SEATO Delegation to State Department Mar. 1956).

<sup>253</sup> NSC 5409, 1110.

<sup>254</sup> Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, 110.

<sup>255</sup> SEATO Delegation to State Department Mar. 1956. For more on the USSR’s increased activity in South Asia after the US backed Pakistan, see Venkataramani, *The American Role in Pakistan, 1947-1958*, 360.

<sup>256</sup> Peters to Steeves, Nov. 7, 1958, 60-61, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16.

undermined collective security.<sup>257</sup> Although the US could have executed a bombing campaign without coordinating with the Asian members, and there was reason for concerns about possible leaks, the larger issue was that everyone feeling included created buy-in for collective security.

In a message to Eisenhower, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan from the UK's Conservative Party emphasized the importance of not weakening SEATO with the appearance of an "inner circle," but Macmillan still feared putting "all our cards on the table in... SEATO." Macmillan thought effective planning had to be done by the members that could deploy significant and effective forces, and he recommended planning informally to not attract attention.<sup>258</sup> Historian Mark Pearson argues that the US rejected the idea of an inner circle, but in a memo to Macmillan, Eisenhower agreed that the predominantly white, English-speaking members should do the planning if it did not undermine SEATO or alienate Asian members.<sup>259</sup> The exchange between Eisenhower and Macmillan expressing their preferences for the Americans and British doing the important military planning in SEATO, but trying to hide this from the Asian members, supports historian Derek Leebaert argument that the UK was the key ally in collective-security alliances it participated in with the US.<sup>260</sup>

In addition to the US and UK's clandestine collaboration about SEATO military planning, the US also undertook similar behavior with SEATO's other predominantly white, English-speaking members, which were Australia and New Zealand. ANZUS meeting minutes revealed that much of the US' multilateral strategizing for SEATO happened within ANZUS. There, participants had frank discussions about nuclear weapons, which did not happen in

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<sup>257</sup> 287<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 5.

<sup>258</sup> Macmillan to Eisenhower, Apr. 18, 1958, 2, Dulles, John Foster Apr. 1958 (1), Box 10, Dulles-Herter, EDDE.

<sup>259</sup> Eisenhower to Macmillan, Apr. 24, 1958, 1, Dulles, John Foster Apr. 1958 (1), Box 10, Dulles-Herter, EDDE (hereafter, Eisenhower to Macmillan); Pearson, *Paper Tiger*, 41-42.

<sup>260</sup> Leebaert, *Grand Improvisation*, 494-95.

SEATO.<sup>261</sup> Even though SEATO clearly had internal problems that could hinder military planning, the sole recommendation from a 1959 SEATO progress report was that the SEATO Council note the report.<sup>262</sup>

All those previously mentioned factors complicated matters for SEATO forming defense plans. Yet, in 1959, SEATO created six operational plans. The US was the main contributor, and the plans were derivatives of unilateral US plans. Although defending the protocol states was the clear priority, and scholar Leszek Buszynski argues that SEATO's military plans were limited to preparing for a communist invasion of Indochina, details about the actual plans reveal that Plan 4 was designed to defend against the PRC and DRV trying to overrun all Southeast Asia and Pakistan militarily. Plan 6 was limited to protecting the protocol states from just DRV aggression.<sup>263</sup> Because the Filipinos and British in Malaya had experienced success fighting insurgencies, counterinsurgency was minimized in SEATO planning. According to the plans, the protocol states and Thailand were the first priority, Pakistan was second, and the Philippines and Malaya were third.<sup>264</sup> Because of their lower priority, the Filipinos and Pakistanis complained that their defense concerns were not adequately addressed in SEATO's plans.<sup>265</sup> This disagreement over military strategy and priorities was not conducive to effective collective security. In Southeast Asia, there was not one clear threat that all the SEATO members considered their top priority. Each member had its own security concerns, and the Filipinos and Pakistanis felt slighted because of the emphasis on Indochina, which did not directly affect their security. The policy implications for the NSC were that the New Look expected foreign troops to

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<sup>261</sup> ANZUS Meeting Oct. 57, 392.

<sup>262</sup> SEATO Progress Report Apr. 59, 83.

<sup>263</sup> USVR, 4A1, 27-28; Buszynski, "SEATO," 287. For details on Plans 1-3, see Farrell, "Alphabet Soup and Nuclear War," 93-94.

<sup>264</sup> Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, 113-14.

<sup>265</sup> Farrell, "Alphabet Soup and Nuclear War," 94.

do the ground fighting, and SEATO members had to unanimously agree to intervene militarily. Consequently, if there was a situation in the region where the NSC wanted to engage militarily, SEATO might be more of an obstacle than an asset.

SEATO's military plans typically had three stages. First, SEATO would offer initial resistance with local forces, hold the enemy as far forward as possible, and secure ports and bases to allow reinforcements to enter the operational theater and reach the front. Second, whatever air and naval power was available would remain under its nation's command and destroy the enemy's forces and capacity to wage war. Third, after halting aggression and assembling forces for a counteroffensive, SEATO would attack with the objective of regaining lost territory and critically weakening the enemy's military. For most plans, the US, Thailand, and South Vietnam would supply multiple divisions; the UK, Australia, and New Zealand just one division; and Pakistan, France, and the Philippines less than a division, with the latter two merely contributing a battalion. Thus, in SEATO plans, the US would be one of the major contributors of ground troops for fighting in Southeast Asia, which was not what the NSC had in mind for collective security.<sup>266</sup> SEATO developing multilateral plans challenges scholar Leszek Buszynski's contention that the US viewed SEATO as an instrument for unilateral intervention. The US being so involved with multilateral planning in SEATO meant it viewed SEATO as more than an instrument for unilateral intervention.<sup>267</sup>

In 1956, the British thinktank Chatham House published a report with many insights into the problems SEATO would face if it took military action. Since its members had different political objectives, it would be difficult to agree on a strategic objective for any military

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<sup>266</sup> USVR, 4A1, 28-29. For more details on SEATO's limited-war plans, see Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, Chapter 5.

<sup>267</sup> Buszynski, *SEATO*, 226.

campaign. Some members had much to lose in a war that could escalate. They would be reluctant to intervene unless they faced a direct security threat. Furthermore, a PRC invasion could go directly through Laos, or Burma, and neither of them were members. SEATO intervention required the nation under attack to request SEATO's assistance, and it was unlikely that Laos or Burma would do that because conflict could turn their homelands into a nuclear battlefield. A Soviet veto in the UN blocked the other possibility for legal intervention. Moreover, the threat of massive retaliation undergirded SEATO and the US' deterrent, but global norms had already established that using a hydrogen bomb on a city would be unacceptable unless it was a last resort to save a "great power." Likewise, the strength of SEATO would be US airpower, but there would be limited targets in the treaty area because of the rudimentary infrastructure, and the enemy could conceal its troops in the jungles and rugged terrain. In addition, they would be accustomed to operating under austere conditions. The region's geography would also prohibit the West from using its modern, industrialized armies, which were designed for the plains and urban centers of Europe. To be effective, SEATO would need small, specialized troop units, with air support, who were airlifted in and already trained to fight in tropical conditions with limited supplies. They would be greatly outnumbered, vulnerable to enemy airpower, and need to be supplied in remote places. This required stockpiling supplies beforehand in convenient locations, but SEATO had no bases.<sup>268</sup>

Historian Damien Fenton reveals that during the Korean War, Thailand and the Philippines only contributed a token battalion each to fight. Fenton speculates that it seemed reasonable to expect a similar gesture from the Asian members for SEATO military operations

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<sup>268</sup> Collective Defence in South East Asia, 1956, 145-46, 149, 152-53, 157-58, CHHO (hereafter, Chatham House Collective Defence).

that were not defending direct threats to their homelands.<sup>269</sup> There is more evidence that supports Fenton's position. NSC policy stated that the US should intervene against regional aggression even if a SEATO member refused to participate or only offered token forces.<sup>270</sup> US Vice Admiral A.C. Davis confessed that SEATO left Southeast Asia "no better prepared than before to cope with communist aggression." Dulles issued unilateral declarations about the US' readiness to act under SEATO, but he failed to instill the same dedication in other members.<sup>271</sup> Still, the hesitancy to send troops to fight was not limited to SEATO's Asian members. Dulles doubted that even the UK and France would intervene to defend South Vietnam. Radford agreed, and he added that the US would not want French participation anyway. The US' main objective would be securing Asian participation, which Indochina's former colonizer, the French, returning militarily could complicate.<sup>272</sup> This evidence extends historian Jessica Chapman's argument that France colonizing and interfering in Indochina was unpopular throughout Asia.<sup>273</sup>

There was also evidence that the NSC privately expressed doubt about maintaining its military commitments abroad. In March 1957, the NSC discussed drafts of its new basic national security policy for Eisenhower's second term. The first draft of the policy included "disengaging from overseas involvement," which entailed curtailing foreign influence, decreasing the visible deterrent, surrendering the initiative, and reducing deployments and bases abroad. When Eisenhower saw the NSC's plan for retrenchment, he declared that this "Fortress America" strategy would abandon everything the US believed in. Dulles questioned if this meant renouncing SEATO and remarked that it was unnecessary to station forces in the treaty area.

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<sup>269</sup> Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, 112.

<sup>270</sup> NSC 5612/1, Sep. 5, 1956, 4, NSC 5612/1 – Policy in Mainland Southeast Asia, Box 18, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, NSC 5612/1).

<sup>271</sup> USVR, 4A3, 3-4.

<sup>272</sup> 287<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 5.

<sup>273</sup> Chapman, *Cauldron of Resistance*.

Dulles favored bringing troops home. Eisenhower agreed and admitted that many US forces abroad were deployed for political reasons to placate allies by showing a US security commitment. Even though SEATO had no bases, a big part of the US' power projection that enabled SEATO to deter was the US' bases in the Philippines.<sup>274</sup> Ultimately, Eisenhower chose to continue the New Look and removed options like "disengaging from overseas involvement" from the final policy even though the New Look was far from ideal for helping the NSC achieve its objective for the nations of Southeast Asia. This exhibits how the NSC continued prioritizing its universal grand strategy that focused on deterring a Soviet invasion of Western Europe, which it considered a much greater threat than anything in Southeast Asia.<sup>275</sup>

There was also evidence that SEATO's Western members questioned the premise behind the New Look threatening massive retaliation with nuclear weapons. Historian H.W. Brands explains that JCS Chairman Radford acknowledged that "the NATO allies in particular... demonstrated an excessive fear of nuclear weapons." Then, "Dulles echoed Radford's remarks, saying that 'somehow or other we must manage to remove the taboo from the use of these [nuclear] weapons.'"<sup>276</sup> Eisenhower told British Prime Minister Macmillan, based on Dulles' impression from a SEATO meeting, that New Zealand's new Prime Minister Walter Nash, who took office in 1957, was less disposed to take action that could lead to military intervention.<sup>277</sup> At the 1960 SEATO council meeting, Nash expressed his belief that the Soviet leadership under Nikita Khrushchev was sincere in its continued desire for peace.<sup>278</sup> Nash promoted détente and

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<sup>274</sup> 317<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Mar. 28, 1957, 2-3, Box 8, NSC, EDDE (317<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>275</sup> NSC 5707/8, Jun. 3, 1957, NSC 5707/8 – Basic National Security Policy (1), Box 20, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA.

<sup>276</sup> Brands, "The Age of Vulnerability," 971.

<sup>277</sup> Eisenhower to Macmillan, 2.

<sup>278</sup> State Department to SEATO Delegation, Jun. 1, 1960, 189, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16 (hereafter, State Department to SEATO Delegation Jun. 1960).

disarmament, which was antithetical to New Look-style deterrence.<sup>279</sup> The USSR appeared less threatening to Nash than the NSC and SEATO's European members because New Zealand would not have been a high priority for the Soviet military during general war. Another consideration was that anticommunist public opinion was much stronger in the US than New Zealand, and Eisenhower had the global responsibility of leading the effort to contain communism.

There is some evidence that the provocative nature of the New Look made the region more vulnerable, even for SEATO members. A SEATO progress report stated that communists did not contemplate the overt use of military force, but aggressive posturing by SEATO could cause a miscalculation.<sup>280</sup> This risk of miscalculation could have manifested because the PRC and USSR felt threatened by US "communications facilities" and missile, air, and naval bases in the US' Asian SEATO allies.<sup>281</sup> The Soviet bloc likely would not have got as involved in Afghanistan and India if the US had refrained from making Pakistan a military ally.<sup>282</sup> Continuing the New Look through SEATO also gave the Soviet bloc material for propaganda. The USSR' "ban the bomb" propaganda proved effective in Asia.<sup>283</sup> The US' reliance on nuclear weapons for defense meant the Soviets could promote disarmament while knowing that they would not have to lower their guard and disarm themselves.

Conversely, from the communists' perspective, propaganda that PRC officials promoted often used belligerent rhetoric to try to deter SEATO from supporting states in Southeast Asia militarily. A common message was the PRC's readiness to intervene with massive assistance on

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<sup>279</sup> Pearson, *Paper Tiger*, 84.

<sup>280</sup> SEATO Progress Report Apr. 59, 79.

<sup>281</sup> Mohapatra, *United States-Pakistan Military Alliance*, 85; for the USSR, see Modelski, "The Asian States' Participation in SEATO," 135.

<sup>282</sup> McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, 343.

<sup>283</sup> SEATO Delegation to State Department, Mar. 13, 1958, 20, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16 (hereafter, SEATO Delegation Mar. 58).

behalf of insurgent communist movements in the region.<sup>284</sup> PRC leader Mao Zedong's rhetoric denouncing American imperialism and dismissing the nuclear deterrent as a "paper tiger" raised concerns in SEATO.<sup>285</sup> PRC Premier Zhou Enlai announced that even if war with the US killed 100 million Chinese, 500 million would remain. Mao had made a similar statement in his 1957 speech in Moscow at the World Congress of Communist Parties. In fact, Dulles thought the PRC would welcome this extreme loss of life for the propaganda value.<sup>286</sup> Still, it was more concerning that a US official predicted in 1959 that there would be nuclear weapons in the PRC by 1963, although it was believed that they would be under Soviet custody.<sup>287</sup> Laos' crown prince and the US' Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Walter Robertson agreed that the PRC wanted to infiltrate Indochina with political agents disguised as technicians, and not attack it militarily, because of the very existence of SEATO. While this suggested that the US and its allies thought SEATO had some deterrent value, they also recognized that deterrence did not address the communist threat from subversion.<sup>288</sup>

This was the main problem with implementing the New Look, centered on deterrence, in Southeast Asia through SEATO. The NSC identified subversion as the most likely communist threat to Southeast Asia. The British thinktank Chatham House confirmed this and explained that countersubversion was the crux of the Manila Pact.<sup>289</sup> A SEATO publication from 1957 stated, "Subversion, which has always been a major problem, is the main threat we now face." Viewing this evidence through a non-militaristic lens reveals a different perspective than has been advanced by traditional military historians in their studies of SEATO. Damien Fenton contends

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<sup>284</sup> Boyd, "Communist China and SEATO," 193.

<sup>285</sup> Farrell, "Alphabet Soup and Nuclear War," 93.

<sup>286</sup> Hagerty Diary Mar. 11.

<sup>287</sup> Parsons to Acting Secretary of State, Sep. 15, 1959, 114, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16 (hereafter, Parsons to Acting Secretary of State Sep. 1959).

<sup>288</sup> State Department Memo, Sep. 24, 1956, 821, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>289</sup> Chatham House SEATO, 14.

that SEATO's main purpose was deterring overt aggression, and Brian Farrell argues that the SEATO allies agreed that the PRC and DRV were determined to overrun mainland Southeast Asia.<sup>290</sup> The problem with the NSC focusing on military deterrence through SEATO was that even if it did reduce the likelihood of an external invasion, the most likely communist threat centered around internal opposition to the West through subversion was still not addressed. Evidence from the just mentioned 1957 SEATO publication supports this conclusion, and NSC policies like NSC 162/2 led to stockpiling thousands of nuclear weapons.

Ultimately, the NSC's worldview during Eisenhower's presidency was premised on a paradigm that did not readily apply to Southeast Asia. The foundational basic national-security policy, NSC 162/2, overwhelmingly concentrated on deterring a Soviet invasion of Western Europe with the threat of massive retaliation with nuclear weapons, and the NSC assumed risk in peripheral areas because it prioritized implementing a universal grand strategy that mitigated overall risk. During World War II, the threat was industrialized nations, with large militaries and fully mobilized societies, undertaking conventional operations to expand territorially or secure natural resources. However, with the Western and Soviet blocs being self-contained materially, and strategic deterrence drastically reducing the risk of general war, the Cold War in peripheral areas for the superpowers was more about winning hearts and minds in an ideological struggle. Domestic revolutionary movements that embraced communism as a model for anti-Westernism were the primary enemy the West faced on the battlefield during the Cold War. While the devil's advocate could argue that the New Look was an overall success because it forced the communists to play "small ball" in less important areas, that position was more of a reflection of the NSC's priorities than a strategy to effectively deal with the situation on the ground in

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<sup>290</sup> SEATO, *The Second Year, 1956-1957*, 2, SETO; Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, 230; Farrell, "Alphabet Soup and Nuclear War," 99.

Southeast Asia during Eisenhower's presidency. Since there were not significant internal or external communist threats to SEATO's Asian members, SEATO's military aspects were less important to them than more pressing needs like economic development. If Soviet-bloc forces did undertake an offensive in the treaty area, SEATO's Asian members would have only been expected to send a token force if they were not defending their homeland. US air and naval power would have done a lot of the fighting, and the conflict might have escalated and shifted its focus to Europe, North America, and China.

Although historian Damien Fenton concludes that SEATO succeeded because none of its members fell to communism, correlation must not be conflated with causality.<sup>291</sup> Considering that the communist threat to all the Asian members was minimal before SEATO, historian Arthur Combs has argued more convincingly that it is a stretch to argue that the US' policy kept Thailand communist free, and Thailand's geography that placed it next to Indochina made it the most vulnerable Asian member in SEATO to communism.<sup>292</sup>

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To conclude this chapter, in Southeast Asia, SEATO helped facilitate deterrence, the centerpiece of the New Look. SEATO made the threat of using massive retaliation more credible by legitimizing the use of force through collective security grounded in the UN charter. In addition, the Eisenhower administration substantially increased its nuclear capabilities by increasing the number of warheads it had and improving its means to deliver them. The US maintained its major bases in the Philippines, which helped provide the ability to attack throughout the treaty area and against aggressors' homelands. With the New Look relying on local forces to do ground fighting, the US provided most of the military aid and training to

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<sup>291</sup> Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, 235.

<sup>292</sup> Combs, "The Path Not Taken," 56.

improve SEATO members' military capabilities. SEATO created a military planning office, devised operational plans, and performed numerous military exercises, some of which were quite elaborate. However, there were various reasons why the New Look was not a good regional strategy for Southeast Asia, and it presented problems when the US tried to unite Western and Asian nations in collective security for Southeast Asia through SEATO. The US increasing its nuclear capabilities and providing military aid, and training, to foreign nations proved to be unexpectedly expensive, Asian members wanted to stockpile high-tech military hardware for prestige purposes, it was doubtful if SEATO established a fighting force that had the will, and ability, to effectively combat communists, there were clear disagreements between members about military strategy and priorities, and divisions, especially on racial lines between the Western and Asian members, became more evident. In SEATO's military plans, the US was a principal contributor of ground troops in exclusively limited-war scenarios. This was exactly what the New Look aimed to avoid, and the US was unprepared to engage in them. Moreover, SEATO's Asian members questioned the US' commitment to collective security and were leery about hosting US bases, and especially missiles, because they would become military targets for the Soviet bloc. Nevertheless, the biggest problems with implementing the New Look in Southeast Asia through SEATO were that deterrence by threatening to use massive retaliation with nuclear weapons appeared unnecessarily provocative to many governments and did not address the main communist threat, which was internal subversion in response to unwanted Western influence. That, and the NSC trying to unify and expand support for SEATO, will be explored in the remaining chapters.

### 3. Economic Development: Not Meeting the Expectations of SEATO's Asian Members While Entrenching Authoritarian or Corrupt Regimes

This chapter covers the role SEATO played in facilitating the New Look's component of economic development and how that affected the NSC's ability to achieve its objective for Southeast Asia to have pro-West nations with free and stable governments. This chapter argues, SEATO provided ways to help the NSC implement economic development in Southeast Asia. Modernization theory posited that developing nations should follow the West as a model for how to develop. The NSC tried to apply modernization theory through SEATO economic development programs to decrease dependency on foreign aid, integrate the region's nations into the global capitalist economy, and promote regional solidarity against communism. SEATO's Asian members joined SEATO primarily for economic assistance, but when they did not see the results they expected, they began to lose interest in SEATO, which undermined the US' goal to get them to enthusiastically participate militarily by providing access to troops and bases even when their security was not directly threatened. In response, SEATO created a stronger organization, increased Asian involvement, and implemented some economic development programs. However, SEATO never invested in the largescale programs the Asian members wanted, which could have helped create a regional anticommunist identity. The problem was, SEATO lacked the resources, and the US preferred giving bilateral aid to influence allies in the developing world. In addition, SEATO's Western members did not want to pay for SEATO regional economic development projects, which created tension with Asian members. The creation of SEATO also coincided with SEATO's Asian members becoming less free. Their leaders used what aid they received to help them entrench military dictatorships (in the case of Thailand and Pakistan) or corrupt regimes (in the case of the Philippines), and the US supported

them, in part, because it needed Asian members in SEATO, which were hard to find.

Nevertheless, people in SEATO's Asian members began to protest their less-democratic regimes and the US, which caused instability, and the regimes still opened more to the Soviet bloc for aid and trade.

### *Economic Development in Allies with Authoritarian or Corrupt Regimes*

Although the focus of the New Look was deterrence, it also had nonmilitary components. SEATO reflected the New Look because it was designed to secure the treaty area in various ways to meet the multitude of challenges. One way was the provision in SEATO's treaty to "promote economic progress and social wellbeing."<sup>293</sup> This was consistent with modernization theory, which was popular at that time and advanced the idea that societies followed stages of development that emulated the West. Hence, the US had aspirations to remake the developing world in its image and use economic development as a weapon against communism by creating prosperity through integrating nations into the global capitalist economy.<sup>294</sup> The NSC's basic national security policy in 1959 stated that the US needed greater emphasis on nonmilitary measures to promote economic growth and political development in the "free world."<sup>295</sup> After examining Southeast Asia, the OCB concluded that a primary method of communist aggression, which had surpassed the military threat, was economic. The Soviet bloc was intensifying its trade

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<sup>293</sup> Manila Treaty, 2.

<sup>294</sup> Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*; Engerman, *Staging Growth*, Part 1; Latham, *The Right Kind of Revolution*.

<sup>295</sup> NSC 5906, 6-7.

with the region, which was causing a psychological impact.<sup>296</sup> US intelligence added that starving people followed whoever fed them.<sup>297</sup>

The primary source evidence about the importance of economic development to the Eisenhower administration in Southeast Asia extends works by other historians. Historian Michael Adamson argues that promoting global capitalism was the Eisenhower administration's primary long-term objective. In fact, Dulles called foreign economic aid "far and away the most important single aspect" of American foreign policy to counter threats from Moscow. Many developing nations prioritized improving their economic development over defending themselves from the USSR militarily.<sup>298</sup> Historian Derek Leebaert adds that "world order" became a loose term for constitutionalism, free trade, resistance to aggression, and international cooperation, which began to congeal by the late 1950s. Thus, the US asserting itself in a role that Vice President Nixon described as "the foreign policy leadership of the free world," and participating in global finance and collective security in organizations like SEATO, contributed to promoting this US-based "world order." Since the US idealized individual freedom, it advanced economic aspects of the Cold War more subtly, to complement military aspects, without imposing or enforcing those economic aspects.<sup>299</sup>

Yet, the British thinktank Chatham House identified numerous challenges to implementing modernization theory in Southeast Asia. Most people were subsistence farmers, and their average living standards were a fraction of Westerners'. After independence, new governments wanted to close that gap, but there was insufficient disposable income to fund

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<sup>296</sup> OCB Southeast Asia Progress Report, Jul. 11, 1956, 5, NSC 5405 – Policy in Mainland SE Asia (1), Box 9, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, Southeast Asia Progress Report Jul. 1956).

<sup>297</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 382, Jun. 2, 1955, OCB 350.05 (File #2) (5), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>298</sup> Adamson, "The Most Important Single Aspect of Our Foreign Policy?," 48, 66.

<sup>299</sup> Leebaert, *Grand Improvisation*, 510.

largescale developmental projects through taxation. Before World War II, private companies from colonial nations invested in agriculture, mining, and infrastructure to extract profits. However, those sources dried up because foreign investment in the region posed much greater risks compared to when European governments controlled Southeast Asia. Decolonization created uncertainty with war, revolution, and independent governments taxing, regulating, and nationalizing foreign-owned enterprises. Chatham House concluded that the best way for the West to achieve its objectives in Southeast Asia was to massively increase aid for economic development. This would make the West more attractive by helping the region and reducing the poor economic conditions that made communism attractive. It estimated that reallocating just one percent of the savings in the West would make a tremendous difference. Its analogy was the Marshall Plan had been as important in preserving Western Europe's independence from communism as NATO had been. At the Manila Conference that created SEATO, the Asian members lobbied for a Marshall Plan for Southeast Asia, but the West did not want to pay for it. Hence, SEATO had this tension between the Western and Asian members over economic development aid from its beginning.<sup>300</sup>

Nonetheless, in practice, the US investing heavily in economic development and uniting Southeast Asia as a region against communism, as the Marshall Plan had helped do for Western Europe, would be a struggle because of the regional opposition to Western influence after colonization, which clearly manifested at the previously mentioned Bandung Conference. Before SEATO's first meeting, an OCB report stated that SEATO should not be used in efforts to create regional solidarity in Southeast Asia because it was conceived as an instrument to strengthen the region from the outside, and its membership displayed a strong Western flavor. Thus, the OCB

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<sup>300</sup> Chatham House Collective Defence, 131-32, 137, 166-67.

concluded, regional solidarity could only come organically from inside Southeast Asia and complement SEATO.<sup>301</sup> After SEATO had been operational for over a year, the OCB maintained, “Although the U.S. Government for planning purposes regards the countries of Southeast Asia on a regional basis under such programs as those envisaged under SEATO... the governments and peoples involved do not regard themselves as forming a region.”<sup>302</sup> US intelligence added that the US needed to overcome the widespread belief among Southeast Asians that their “greatest enemy” was the “imperialistic white man.”<sup>303</sup> Hence, the NSC’s vision to oppose communism with regional solidarity, homogeneity, and uniformity would have to be developed because it did not currently exist, and the regional members saw differences between themselves.

Because of widespread opposition to the West in Southeast Asia, the US had trouble getting governments that reflected the will of their people to align with the West. A question the NSC left at the end of the Truman administration was if the US should support nondemocratic regimes if they were independent of Soviet influence. This NSC document was just a list of twelve questions written three weeks before Eisenhower became president. From this document, there was no indication which way the Truman administration leaned on the questions. However, it was in the archive at the Eisenhower Presidential Library, which suggests that the NSC under Truman recognized a difficult problem and passed it on.<sup>304</sup> For the NSC under Eisenhower to pursue economic development, it needed foreign governments that would work with the US, but there was resistance. While the US wanted to see itself as a champion of democracy, opposed to

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<sup>301</sup> Promoting Regional Solidarity in Southeast Asia, Feb. 2, 1955, 3, OCB 091.4 Southeast Asia (File #2) (6), Box 80, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>302</sup> Southeast Asia Progress Report Jul. 1956, 1.

<sup>303</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 358, Apr. 28, 1955, OCB 350.05 (File #2) (4), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>304</sup> Questions About National Security Policies, Undated, NSC 142 – Status of National Security Prog. as of 12/31/52, Box 3, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA.

the more authoritarian Soviet bloc, that vision sometimes conflicted with the New Look's higher priority of containing communism with allies in collective security. Thus, the NSC was willing to compromise the part of its objective for the nations of Southeast Asia to have free governments if they were anticommunist and aligned with the West. Another contributing factor was that the NSC was distrustful that communists would not interfere with elections, especially after the USSR made sure communists won in Eastern Europe.

Historian John Gaddis argues that discrediting dictatorships and globalizing democracy were innovations of the Cold War. While that paradigm may apply to Europe, what happened in SEATO's Asian members, and the developing world in general, during Eisenhower's presidency taints that contention.<sup>305</sup> Discussions in a 1959 NSC meeting about a State Department report on supporting military dictators revealed the NSC's rationale for choosing to back them. There was a developing trend toward military dictators gaining power in newly independent nations. They represented conservative elements in "backward societies" and giving them military aid would provide stability. Eisenhower expressed that people in the developing world "simply cannot understand our ideas of freedom or human dignity. They have lived so long under dictatorships of one form or another, how can we expect them to [successfully] run... a free government?" Supporting military dictatorships could be justified as a temporary phase until those nations could be democratized. Eisenhower wanted to assist them by sending US military advisors who understood nonmilitary matters. In addition, military leaders in developing nations could be trained in the US. Eisenhower called this "the finest report which he had ever heard given before the" NSC. Minutes from the meeting stated, "NSC policy papers... [had] boiler-plate language with respect to objectives calling for 'strong, stable democratic governments with a pro-Western

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<sup>305</sup> Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 263-64.

orientation,” but since the NSC admitted “this was not always going to be possible,” it concluded that “we must look into [think about changing] these objectives more carefully in the future.”<sup>306</sup> This evidence extends historian Kathryn Statler’s argument that the US was torn between its love of democracy and its fear of the will of the people in Southeast Asia.<sup>307</sup>

The NSC’s ability to achieve its objective for the nations of Southeast Asia, and developments in SEATO, were interconnected with domestic political issues in SEATO members. The Asian members became less democratic after the creation of SEATO. In 1957 and 1958, Thailand and Pakistan, respectively, had military coups where Sarit Thanarat and Muhamad Ayub Khan, respectively, assumed power. The NSC discussed how Sarit suffered from alcoholism and would probably die within two years. Moreover, a US official that knew him had “no faith whatsoever in Sarit.”<sup>308</sup> Sarit was corrupt and a risk-adverse gambler who took many mistresses, including schoolgirls. Sarit’s cruelty to enemies extended to public executions of suspected communists, which violated Buddhist ethics.<sup>309</sup> Still, US Secretary of Defense Neil McElroy visited Thailand and Pakistan and pursued chummy relations with the dictators. Eisenhower conveyed his “best wishes” to Ayub, who immediately pressed McElroy for aid as if the US had just been “conquered” and Pakistan was “dictating terms of reparations.”<sup>310</sup> In the Philippines, a regime under Carlos Garcia that the US admitted was corrupt and dependent on US aid emerged<sup>311</sup> when President Magsaysay died in a plane crash in 1957.<sup>312</sup> Nevertheless, Eisenhower invited Garcia to the US. When Garcia accepted, Garcia added that he wanted to

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<sup>306</sup> 410<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Jun. 18, 1959, 1-5, Box 11, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 410<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>307</sup> Statler, *Replacing France*, 286-87.

<sup>308</sup> 337<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Sep. 23, 1957, 8-9, Box 9, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 337<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>309</sup> Chaloeintiarana, *Thailand*, 225-26.

<sup>310</sup> Notes on McElroy’s Trip, Fall 1958, 33-34, 38, Washington Journal, Vol. I, Jul. 1957 to Dec. 1958 (8), Box 1, EOMG (hereafter, McElroy Trip).

<sup>311</sup> Observations of Far East Chiefs, 2.

<sup>312</sup> Cullather, *Illusions of Influence*, 121; Jose, “The Philippines During the Cold War,” 72.

address Congress.<sup>313</sup> Eisenhower responded that he would accommodate his schedule for Garcia and having Garcia address Congress would be “practically automatic” if Garcia requested it.<sup>314</sup> The effect these political changes had on the NSC’s ability to achieve its objective for the nations of Southeast Asia through economic development will now be explored.

Thailand’s “era of democracy” was right before the Sarit coup. In response to criticism from the Western press, Thailand had allowed opposition parties, strengthened parliament, restrained its police, and relaxed press censorship. Yet, political freedom in Thailand corresponded with official support for SEATO weakening and domestic criticism of SEATO increasing.<sup>315</sup> In a 1955 NSC meeting, CIA Director Allen Dulles, brother of the secretary of state, “commented on the tense situation which was developing in Bangkok as a result of the quest for power among the several factions in the Thai Government. He also pointed out evidence of a tendency on the part of Thailand to move in the direction of a more neutralist foreign policy.”<sup>316</sup> Hence, according to the NSC, “Continued stability [in Thailand] depends on the maintenance of power of the ruling oligarch.”<sup>317</sup> When people in Southeast Asia had the chance to vote, they often chose against US interests, as was happening in Thailand. In addition, US intelligence reported that Thai support should not be taken for granted.<sup>318</sup> When elections in Thailand revealed support for continued democratic reforms, the coup occurred.<sup>319</sup> Then, Sarit declared Thailand’s faith in SEATO and frequently publicized the threat of communism.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> DULTE 5, Mar. 12, 1958, Dulles, John Foster Mar. 1958 (1), Box 10, Dulles-Herter, EDDE.

<sup>314</sup> Eisenhower to Dulles, Mar. 12, 1958, Dulles, John Foster Mar. 1958 (1), Box 10, Dulles-Herter, EDDE.

<sup>315</sup> Modelski, “The Asian States’ Participation in SEATO,” 119-20.

<sup>316</sup> 268<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Dec. 1, 1955, 3, Box 7, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>317</sup> 295<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 9.

<sup>318</sup> Intelligence Notes, Aug. 24, 1956, OCB 350.05 (File #3) (7), Box 111 B, OCB Central File, ENSC (hereafter, Intelligence Notes Aug. 24 1956).

<sup>319</sup> 315<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Mar. 6, 1957, 19, Box 8, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>320</sup> OCB Report on Southeast Asia, Aug. 12, 1959, 7, Southeast Asia (1), Box 7, OCB Secretariat, ENSC (hereafter, OCB Report on Southeast Asia Aug. 1959).

Sarit asserted that aid was compensation for being in SEATO and a right Thailand was entitled to.<sup>321</sup> Thailand's leadership defended its government as not being a "military dictatorship" because not all its cabinet members were in the military. The Thais under Sarit framed the issue as being faced with the "dilemma of whether it [Thailand] would retain [a] parliamentary system even at [the] cost of permitting Communists [to] disintegrate [the] country or [if it would] temporarily abandon [the] parliamentary system."<sup>322</sup> However, there was reason to question the veracity of that claim because the NSC consistently assessed Thailand as facing a minimal threat from communism. Consequently, the motivation behind the Thai claim, in the absence of their presenting evidence, was that it was a rationalization for maintaining a military dictatorship. The US echoed this rationalization in a report that stated that it had "no choice but to work with the present group, which is pro-U.S." in Thailand because there were "left-wing candidates." The report did not define left-wing, but it likely referred to not opposing the Soviet bloc instead of something like the Democratic Party in the US or Western European democratic socialists.<sup>323</sup>

The US told Sarit it would withhold aid if he did not crackdown against leftists, neutralists, and journalists. When the US committed to Sarit, it lost popularity with Thais.<sup>324</sup> An OCB report stated that political stability improved under Sarit, although it did not specify how the OCB assessed that. Yet, since OCB reports were expected to concisely summarize the situation on the ground for policymakers in Washington, this lack of specificity was not critical. Still, the report noted that Thai countersubversion efforts had not eliminated covert Communist

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<sup>321</sup> Modelski, "The Asian States' Participation in SEATO," 104.

<sup>322</sup> US SEATO Delegation to State Department, Apr. 11, 1959, 90, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16 (hereafter, US SEATO Delegation to State Department Apr. 1959).

<sup>323</sup> Observations of Far East Chiefs, 6.

<sup>324</sup> Fineman, *A Special Relationship*, 199, 251-52.

Party activities, and government corruption remained. In addition, Sarit desired more military aid, but he recently indicated a preference for economic aid. International loans and US economic and technical assistance created gradual economic progress,<sup>325</sup> but most of those gains went to domestic and foreign capitalists while rural populations continued a subsistence-level existence.<sup>326</sup> Nevertheless, the NSC discussed how rival aspirants might compete for power if Sarit disappeared,<sup>327</sup> and there was talk of another coup.<sup>328</sup> Despite the US' commitment to Sarit, he still met with Soviet officials in Bangkok. He wanted to improve relations and discussed trade with them, which led to agreements for cultural exchanges. An OCB report from a month before Eisenhower left office argued that if Thailand's discontent with the US continued, it might become neutral.<sup>329</sup> Scholar Gavin Boyd found, "The Soviet Union's interest in that country [Thailand] has presumably increased in view of the Thai Government's willingness, late in 1960, to accept Soviet economic aid."<sup>330</sup> Boyd's assessment of Thailand cozying up with the Soviet bloc is persuasive because it was consistent with the primary source evidence.

A 1960 OCB report on the Philippines stated that US objectives were not markedly advanced. Political, economic, and military problems persisted. President Garcia played up differences with the US, particularly over aid and bases, to divert the public's attention from domestic troubles. His government's continued inefficiency and corruption caused growing public disillusionment, and nationalist movements were advancing the government's "Filipino First" agenda that minimized foreign cooperation.<sup>331</sup> In a 1958 NSC meeting, CIA Director Allen

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<sup>325</sup> OCB Report on Southeast Asia Aug. 1959, 6-7.

<sup>326</sup> Ferrara, *The Political Development of Modern Thailand*, 147.

<sup>327</sup> 437<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Mar. 17, 1960, 3, Box 12, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 437<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>328</sup> 467<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Nov. 17, 1960, 3, Box 13, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 467<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>329</sup> OCB Report on Southeast Asia, Dec. 15, 1960, 4, Southeast Asia (3), Box 7, OCB Secretariat, ENSC (hereafter, OCB Report on Southeast Asia Dec. 1960).

<sup>330</sup> Boyd, "Communist China and SEATO," 193.

<sup>331</sup> OCB Report on Philippines Mar. 1960, 1-3.

Dulles called Philippine management of the \$3.5 billion the US had given them since World War II “rotten” because there had been corruption. Eisenhower concluded that the objections in 1935 to granting the Philippines independence foresaw “all the difficulties which we now observed.”<sup>332</sup> Philippine dignitaries, Eisenhower said in an NSC meeting the month before, had been visiting Washington since at least the 1930s with the sole objective of returning home with money to spend for their own purposes.<sup>333</sup>

Eisenhower’s assessment extends historian Nick Cullather’s argument that the US only had the “illusion of influence” in the Philippines because the preeminent importance of US strategic interests there, especially its bases that helped it project military power in Asia, allowed Philippine leaders to turn the relationship to their advantage. Cullather adds that the “Filipino First” movement stymied US interests. The restructured economy that the US acquiesced to, to keep its bases, benefited the landlord-capitalist elites in the Philippines. They established monopolies while commoners encountered unemployment, inflation, and stunted growth. Cullather does not give any holistic numbers of what percent of the population landlord-capitalist elites were, or if modernization theory factored into this relationship, but he does say that 1.2 million Filipinos found themselves out of work after foreign investors withdrew most of the country’s development capital and provoked a recession.<sup>334</sup>

Historian Ricardo Jose found that Philippine foreign policy shifted from an almost total dependence on the US to a more Asia-oriented outlook that included the formation of the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) with Thailand and Malaya in 1961.<sup>335</sup> An OCB report adds

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<sup>332</sup> 368<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Jun. 3, 1958, 4, 6, Box 10, NSC, EDDE. Henceforth, references to just “Dulles” represents the secretary of state and the CIA director will be specified as “Allen Dulles.”

<sup>333</sup> 365<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, May 8, 1958, 6-7, Box 10, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 365<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>334</sup> Cullather, *Illusions of Influence*, 2-5, 139-41, see Chapter 6 for the Filipino First policy.

<sup>335</sup> Jose, “The Philippines During the Cold War,” 72-74.

to Jose's argument that there were problems in US-Philippine relations. Although Garcia gave private, but not public, support when Eisenhower ordered troops into Lebanon, Moscow radio still used the Philippines as an example of "American 'domination.'" Garcia responded by approving visits by Filipinos to the Soviet bloc, and Philippine nationalists advocated for trade with the PRC, a more neutralist foreign policy, and a critical reexamination of US-Philippine relations. Rumors circulated about a possible military coup. The OCB concluded that further deterioration of US-Philippine relations could lead to Philippine trade with the Soviet bloc.<sup>336</sup> Scholar George Modelski has argued that the Philippines was a "Western spokesman." Nevertheless, the evidence from the just mentioned OCB report demonstrated that there were real policy differences in US-Philippine relations, and the Philippines was hardly a "Western spokesman."<sup>337</sup> In addition, an NSC policy paper on the Philippines from 1958 reported that five hundred Huk communist insurgents remained, but Philippine communists now focused on subversion. Their efforts were designed to destroy the US-Philippine alliance and influence the urban intelligentsia that was susceptible to propaganda about nationalism and anticolonialism. Moreover, there were the Moros, a discontented Muslim minority group that was primarily on the southern island of Mindanao. There was history there. The Moros fought American troops during the Philippine insurgency when the US colonized the archipelago in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Continued alienation from the Catholic majority led the Moros to seek greater contact with Muslims in Indonesia, where there was growing communist influence, and the Philippine government expressed concern that they were becoming more subversive.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> OCB Report on Philippines Nov. 1958, 6, 9, 15-16.

<sup>337</sup> Modelski, "The Asian States' Participation in SEATO," 139.

<sup>338</sup> NSC 5813/1, 3, 7.

The NSC's 1959 South-Asia policy reported that the US should continue being allies with Pakistan, despite the military coup, because Ayub's regime was anticommunist and would likely remain pro-West. In addition, Pakistan was a major Asian and Muslim power that moderated anti-West attitudes in the Afro-Asian bloc. Because of US aid, Pakistan had greatly increased its military capabilities since 1954, which allowed it to maintain internal stability and contribute to "free world" strength in the area. Yet, the NSC also recognized how the dictatorship was the root causes of many of the region's problems. Ayub declaring martial law,<sup>339</sup> and the reappearance of officials accepting bribes,<sup>340</sup> fueled protests for democracy. This was especially acute in East Pakistan, which bordered Southeast Asia and had become the center of Pakistani communist activity. However, if Ayub loosened his grip, then East Pakistan might break off in a push for independence, and the Soviets were making inroads there.<sup>341</sup> US-Pakistani relations were tense because the US did not regard Pakistan as an equal partner, which relegated Pakistan to a "lower caste" member of SEATO.<sup>342</sup>

Allying with Pakistan also complicated US relations with other Afro-Asian nations. US intelligence reported that Pakistan was challenging Egypt for leadership of the Muslim world,<sup>343</sup> and it identified that a danger area in US-Pakistani relations was the US giving aid to Egypt to execute the Eisenhower Doctrine,<sup>344</sup> which aimed to keep communism out of the Middle East.<sup>345</sup> Furthermore, a NSC policy paper on South Asia reported that in Pakistan additional economic development was necessary for political stability, and instability could lead to more communist

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<sup>339</sup> NSC 5909/1, Aug. 21, 1959, 5-6, 11, NSC 5909/1 – U.S. Policy Toward South Asia (1), Box 27, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, NSC 5909/1).

<sup>340</sup> OCB Report on South Asia Nov. 1960, 17.

<sup>341</sup> NSC 5909/1, 5.

<sup>342</sup> Venkataramani, *The American Role in Pakistan, 1947-1958*, 356-57, 362.

<sup>343</sup> Intelligence Notes Jan. 18, 1957.

<sup>344</sup> Intelligence Notes, Feb. 8, 1957, OCB 350.05 (File #4) (5), Box 112, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>345</sup> Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*.

influence or regional hostilities that might escalate and threaten world peace. Nevertheless, the NSC admitted that it could not meet Pakistan's desire for economic progress and foreign aid. Pakistan depended on aid, but it would not agree to forgo military for economic aid because of tensions with its neighbors and the communist threat. If Pakistan did not believe that its security needs were met by the US and SEATO in its disputes with its neighbors India and Afghanistan, Pakistan could turn to the PRC and USSR. Still, the NSC concluded that the US needed to pursue mutually acceptable outcomes in disputes in South Asia, but the US' ability to shape events was limited because none of the sides seemed willing to compromise.<sup>346</sup> Thus, the US faced a dilemma. Pakistan was a relatively important ally because it was the only nation in South Asia that would ally with the US, but allying with Pakistan, supporting a dictator there, and Pakistan's incessant demands for aid led to domestic instability in Pakistan and complicated US relations with nations like Egypt, India, and Afghanistan in the NSC's global effort to contain communism. Pakistan wanted other Muslim nations to look to it for leadership of the Muslim world instead of Egypt, and Eisenhower had already opted to not support the Aswan Dam project in Egypt. The US doing more to help Pakistan than Egypt could alienate Egypt.

### *Economic Development Through SEATO*

The forecast for SEATO achieving regional solidarity in Southeast Asia through modernization theory was ominous, and SEATO's Asian members had objectives that were at times inconsistent with the NSC's for the region's nations. Nevertheless, collective security was central to the New Look. Hence, the NSC still planned to use SEATO to unify Southeast Asia.

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<sup>346</sup> NSC 5909/1, 6, 10-12.

The OCB established a working group that would help the US: “Participate actively in SEATO, and seek to develop both its military and non-military aspects in a manner that will convincingly demonstrate the value of SEATO as a regional association, the usefulness of which extends beyond deterrence of Communist expansion.” The nonmilitary aspects it listed were economic, political, informational, and cultural.<sup>347</sup> To achieve its goals, the OCB wanted to create regional solidarity by increasing interdependence between Southeast-Asian nations.<sup>348</sup>

SEATO faced two financial challenges in implementing largescale interstate projects that could promote regional solidarity against communism. First, SEATO’s Western members, besides the US, were cash strapped. The developmental projects they did were often done in ways other than through SEATO. For example, Western British Commonwealth members used the Colombo Plan for Asian development. In fact, according to the New Zealanders, SEATO’s economic provision was “purely cosmetic.”<sup>349</sup> A SEATO publication explained that economic development depended on contributions from organizations like the UN and Colombo Plan. Another potential source of revenue was bilateral aid from SEATO members, which presented the second challenge. The member with the greatest capacity to contribute was the US, but the New Look aimed to control government spending and focused what it did spend for defense on military deterrence.<sup>350</sup>

In a letter to his brother, Eisenhower explained that if the “Communist menace” receded in Asia, the US would end economic aid there.<sup>351</sup> Since the NSC did not see the “Communist menace” receding in Asia, it continued aid. Yet, Eisenhower’s letter demonstrated how he saw

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<sup>347</sup> SEATO Working Group, Mar. 1, 1957, 1, OCB 091.4 Southeast Asia (File #5) (8), Box 81, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>348</sup> Regional Solidarity, Feb. 11, 1955, 2, OCB 091.4 Southeast Asia (File #2) (8), Box 80, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>349</sup> Pearson, *Paper Tiger*, 33, 56.

<sup>350</sup> SEATO the First Year, 3.

<sup>351</sup> President to Milton Eisenhower, Dec. 1, 1954, DDE Diary Dec. 1954 (2), Box 8, DDE Diary Series, EDDE.

foreign aid primarily as a tool for fighting communism, not for economic development to materially benefit Asians, and the expectation of economic development aid from the West was a key reason why SEATO's Asian members joined the organization. Hence, the NSC's emphasis on militarily containing communism with deterrence differed substantially from SEATO's Asian members.

To hold SEATO together, it was important to meet the economic needs of the Asian members because the Asian members questioned why they joined SEATO if they were not getting what they wanted in return.<sup>352</sup> The Thais, "like the Filipinos, they expected that the [SEATO] treaty would lead to increased U.S. aid."<sup>353</sup> Similarly, "Philippine officials favored collective defense chiefly as a way to obtain economic benefits from the United States."<sup>354</sup> A State Department memo to Dulles revealed that SEATO's Asian members believed that joining SEATO would immediately solve their economic problems, and they blamed the US for failing to implement SEATO's economic provisions effectively.<sup>355</sup> Meanwhile, nonmembers in the greater Southeast Asia region also received nonmilitary aid. Accordingly, the US had to balance keeping the Asian members satisfied by receiving enough aid against maintaining good relations with nonmembers and enticing them to join SEATO. This will be further detailed in chapter five.

At SEATO's second annual council meeting in Pakistan in 1956, the Asian members expressed disappointment with the limited economic aid they had received. Thailand's representative wanted SEATO to emphasize "the further development of economic measures designed to promote economic progress and social well-being in the area." The Philippine foreign secretary said SEATO needed "a total effort – military, political, psychological and in

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<sup>352</sup> Franklin, "The Hollow Pact," 249-50.

<sup>353</sup> Fineman, *A Special Relationship*, 197.

<sup>354</sup> Cullather, *Illusions of Influence*, 142.

<sup>355</sup> MacArthur to Dulles Dec. 1955, 161-62.

ever increasing measure, economic.” Pakistan’s prime minister hoped SEATO would achieve its objectives by “promoting the economic welfare of the peoples of this area.”<sup>356</sup> Although SEATO’s Asian members clearly expressed that they wanted more economic assistance, they did not threaten any consequences if they did not receive it at that meeting in 1956.

Still, there were concerns that SEATO could lose Asian members or even collapse entirely if the Asian members did not get what they wanted. Australia’s Foreign Minister Richard Casey told Dulles that SEATO needed to demonstrate economic benefits to Pakistan’s politicians and people.<sup>357</sup> Yet, Casey still opposed Pakistan’s proposal for a permanent economic committee in SEATO, and much of SEATO’s economic function was the Western members assisting the Asian members.<sup>358</sup> Similarly, the US had resisted a permanent staff organization for SEATO. Nonetheless, “by the end of 1955, the U.S. realized that SEATO would fall apart unless something were done to provide a permanent structure.”<sup>359</sup> There were other indications that SEATO needed strengthening as an organization. The Thais were offended that SEATO officials from the UK, Australia, and New Zealand stayed in Singapore and flew to quarterly meetings in Bangkok where sometimes the UK also represented New Zealand, which did not attend.<sup>360</sup>

Furthermore, an OCB working group studied “a proposal for a SEATO-initiated famine alleviation organization” for Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, “The working group concluded that the food bank was not feasible; that the present procedure of coping with the need for greater food inventory in certain countries was being successfully met under P.L. 480, Title I,” which

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<sup>356</sup> Verbatim Proceedings of the Second SEATO Council Meeting, Mar. 6-8, 1956, 3, 22, 25, SEATO Meeting – Mar. 1956, Box 4, Series I: Conference and Trip Files, ECWM (hereafter, Second SEATO Council Meeting Verbatim Proceedings).

<sup>357</sup> Casey to Dulles, Mar. 12, 1957, 312, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>358</sup> US SEATO Delegation to State Department #144, Mar. 12, 1957, 320, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21 (hereafter, US SEATO Delegation to State Department #144).

<sup>359</sup> USVR, 4A1, 26.

<sup>360</sup> Pearson, *Paper Tiger*, 46.

was a bilateral US aid program. Consequently, “The considerations relating to SEATO, although attractive for their political and psychological significances, did not seem to lead on to any practical methods for coping with the perennial famines which arise in the area.”<sup>361</sup> The implications were that SEATO’s Asian members could get what they wanted from bilateral US aid, which meant they did not need to be a member of SEATO to receive the economic aid that had prompted them to join the organization. Hence, they might be less willing to make sacrifices on security issues that were important to the NSC like sending combat troops to do ground fighting through SEATO. Relatedly, giving nonmembers bilateral aid made it difficult for the US to use SEATO membership for leverage.

By 1957, the OCB reported that there had been considerable progress organizing SEATO. To underscore the importance of the regional partners in Southeast Asia, SEATO established a headquarters in Bangkok. SEATO also formed a staff that had representatives from all its members. There were committees for many nonmilitary matters. They included the economy, education, and labor. A study group explored creating an engineering workshop in the treaty area.<sup>362</sup>

A telegram from the US State Department to the US Embassy in Thailand revealed that the US and UK agreed that SEATO’s Asian members needed to participate more actively and lead the organization, but they “drew attention [to] serious problem[s] confronting [the] Asian members in [their] shortage [of] qualified personnel [to] participate in SEATO activities.”<sup>363</sup>

This revealed how the Western members understood that it was critical to SEATO’s survival to

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<sup>361</sup> Food Bank for Southeast Asia, Aug. 22, 1956, OCB 091.4 Southeast Asia (File #5) (6), Box 81, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>362</sup> OCB Southeast Asia Progress Report, Jan. 30, 1957, 3, OCB 091.4 Southeast Asia (File #5) (8), Box 81, OCB Central File, ENSC (hereafter, OCB Southeast Asia Progress Report Jan. 1957); Farrell, “Alphabet Soup and Nuclear War,” 86. For details on SEATO’s organization and a flow chart, see MacCloskey, *Pacts for Peace*, 97-100.

<sup>363</sup> State Department to Thai Embassy, Dec. 22, 1955, 165, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

have the Asian members play a more prominent role, but they largely viewed them as unqualified. Although the telegram did not define what constituted “qualified personnel,” the Western members may have viewed a university degree in economics or prior experience running a corporation as solid qualifications. However, people from SEATO’s Asian members may have better understood local cultures and the desires of indigenous peoples, which were qualifications the Western members could have overlooked.

There were many structural developments in SEATO. The Council of Ministers met annually, and that was where major decisions were made. Typically, each nation was represented by the equivalent of its foreign minister. Eventually, there were about forty international staff posts for civil matters that were filled by people from every member. In addition, the post of SEATO secretary general was created in 1957.<sup>364</sup> Pote Sarasin, a Thai, became SEATO’s first secretary general and held that position through the rest of Eisenhower’s presidency except for a brief stint when he served as Thailand’s prime minister during the transition surrounding the Sarit coup.<sup>365</sup> Scholar Donald Darnell notes that Sarasin was criticized for not being the most qualified person for the job and an Asian front man for the West to manipulate.<sup>366</sup> Sarasin did come from an elite Thai family, and he had been educated in the US and served as the Thai prime minister and foreign minister. That background could be interpreted as signs of a Western puppet out to advance his personal interests by collaborating, but it could also be solid qualifications for someone to lead an organization that had Asian, and Western, members and was headquartered in Thailand.

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<sup>364</sup> Darnell, “Fallen Alliance,” 52-53, 57.

<sup>365</sup> SEATO Record, 25.

<sup>366</sup> Darnell, “Fallen Alliance,” 57.

With a stronger organization and increased involvement from Asian members, the NSC could better use SEATO to achieve its nonmilitary objectives for Southeast Asia. The NSC's Southeast Asia policy explained that the US would, first, groom competent and pro-West leaders to support US modernization and propaganda efforts. Then, it would work to influence the welfare and attitudes of the people through community development and education.<sup>367</sup> The OCB proposed emphasizing the Asian character of SEATO and the importance of Asian members' self-help efforts. The US would provide more SEATO grants and make \$10 million available so SEATO's Committee of Economic Experts could recommend projects. Thus, the US wanted to enable SEATO's Asian members to help themselves but not actively participate in economic development through SEATO because it had higher priorities around the globe.<sup>368</sup> The OCB concluded that Southeast Asians were responsible for their economic progress, and the US government and private assistance would only supplement their efforts.<sup>369</sup>

In linking the military and nonmilitary aspects of SEATO, the Americans thought providing the deterrent would stiffen the resolve of the Asian members and motivate them to promote self-help and move away from dependence on the West.<sup>370</sup> In addition, some infrastructure projects in the region served a civil and military purpose. Examples included airfields, ports, telecommunications, highways, and railroads.<sup>371</sup> Hence, economic development was an important aspect of having a strong defense, not an independent and unrelated aspect.

By the end of Eisenhower's presidency, SEATO had developed many nonmilitary projects. SEATO fostered modernization with skilled-labor projects in eighteen centers that

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<sup>367</sup> NSC 6012, 8.

<sup>368</sup> Furthering US Objectives in SEATO, Feb. 14, 1957, 2, OCB 091.4 Southeast Asia (File #6) (3), Box 81, OCB Central File, ENSC (hereafter, Furthering US Objectives in SEATO).

<sup>369</sup> OCB Report on Southeast Asia, Dec. 30, 1958, 1, Southeast Asia, Subject, OCB, EOSA (hereafter, OCB Report Dec. 1958).

<sup>370</sup> Rees, *Anglo-American Approaches to Alliance Security, 1955-60*, 133.

<sup>371</sup> Modelski, "The Asian States' Participation in SEATO," 99.

instructed 3,500 students each year. The skilled-labor projects trained technicians, carpenters, teachers, mechanics, building constructors, machinists, metalworkers, electricians, and telecommunications operators. They improved health by establishing a Cholera Research Project in East Pakistan and a General Medical Research Project in Bangkok that combated tropical diseases. A community-development conference promoted rural-development centers in Asian members. SEATO also sponsored education by offering research fellowships and scholarships for postgraduate and undergraduate students, as well as support for professorships and traveling lectureships. From 1959 to 1960, 50 teachers from SEATO's Asian members and protocol states visited the US, and 75 faculty members from US institutions were assigned to SEATO members.<sup>372</sup>

To detail a specific example, SEATO's most acclaimed nonmilitary project was its Graduate School of Engineering in Bangkok. Symbolically inaugurated in 1959 on the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Manila Pact, SEATO described the school as "an excellent example of co-operation among Member Governments in the field of technical assistance." The school's mission was to provide advanced education in engineering to students from any nation in the region even if they were not SEATO members. This reinforced the NSC's regional focus in its attempt to forge an anticommunist identity through modernization theory by using education to promote economic development. By 1960, the school had doubled its attendance and added two new laboratories, as well as "an impressive amount of new equipment and a greatly expanded library." Its areas of specialized training were in structural, hydraulic, and highway engineering. Thus, regionally, it was helping to train engineers to construct buildings, waterways, and transportation infrastructure. In 1961, it planned to add a program in sanitary

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<sup>372</sup> SEATO: Record of Progress, 1960-61, 10, 12, 14-17, 29, SETO (hereafter, SEATO Record of Progress 1960-61).

engineering to design sewer systems. Of its thirteen instructors, seven were from the US, and France, the UK and New Zealand each contributed one, which demonstrated how the Western members were trying to pass on knowledge to help modernize. The school's financing came from SEATO member governments and SEATO's common budget, but the US "contributed a major portion of the funds required" and provided opportunities to graduates to further their studies at American universities.<sup>373</sup>

In another example, one of SEATO's nonmilitary programs made an immediate positive impact in the lives of people in one of SEATO's Asian members. SEATO boasted how a Pakistani professor used a SEATO fellowship to discover the cause of, and solve, "one of the most difficult problems of plant pathology," which was cotton root rot and had plagued one of Pakistan's top cash crops. With the fellowship, the Pakistani professor was able to conduct research at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station in New Haven, which was the oldest agricultural center in the US. He had been investigating cotton root rot before the fellowship and finally solved the problem by using biochemical investigations at the US facility. His findings were accepted by leading botanists and plant pathologists in the US and UK. He was just one of eleven scholars that won research fellowships from SEATO's cultural program for 1958-59.<sup>374</sup>

A great example of SEATO helping the NSC implement nonmilitary aspects of the New Look was through one of Eisenhower's signature programs, Atoms for Peace. This was part of Eisenhower's effort to make the nuclear arms buildup more palatable to critics by advertising nuclear energy as a tool to bring electric power to the developing world.<sup>375</sup> At SEATO's first meeting, Dulles gave a speech that urged all SEATO members to participate in Atoms for Peace.

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<sup>373</sup> SEATO Record of Progress 1960-61, 10-11.

<sup>374</sup> SEATO Record, Oct. 1960, 9, SETO (hereafter, SEATO Record Oct. 1960).

<sup>375</sup> Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 10-11.

He announced the Asian members, along with France and Australia, would attend the US Atomic Energy Commission's first reactor training course, and 100 kilograms of fissionable material had been reserved for reactors abroad.<sup>376</sup> In 1956, Dulles signed an atomic-reactor agreement with Thailand,<sup>377</sup> and the regional Nuclear Research and Training Center was being developed in the Philippines.<sup>378</sup>

There was evidence that SEATO's nonmilitary programs had some success. In Eisenhower's speech commemorating the sixth anniversary of the Manila Pact in 1960, he stated, "SEATO's accomplishments in fostering social and economic progress have been noteworthy." Eisenhower cited examples of combatting cholera, training Asian technicians, advancing education, and establishing the Graduate School of Engineering. In terms of additional projects that were under development at that time, Eisenhower explained, there was a radio meteorological network and an institute of tropical agriculture.<sup>379</sup> A 1959 OCB report stated that at a recent SEATO meeting there was less pressure for economic aid, and most nations expressed satisfaction with aid programs.<sup>380</sup> Yet, this may not have reflected genuine satisfaction. The OCB had previously linked reduced demands for economic aid with Dulles taking a "firm stand."<sup>381</sup> Furthermore, a SEATO publication from the end of Eisenhower's presidency stated that there was progress in the overall economies of SEATO's Asian members, but it then conceded that there was still considerable work to do.<sup>382</sup> Numerous factors help explain the shortcomings.

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<sup>376</sup> The Bangkok Conference of the Manila Pact Powers, #5909, Aug. 1955, 13-14, International Organization and Conference Series II, Far Eastern 5, SDPU.

<sup>377</sup> DULTE 28 Mar. 1956.

<sup>378</sup> Southeast Asia Progress Report Jul. 1956, 4.

<sup>379</sup> State Department to US Embassies in SEATO Members, Sep. 5, 1960, 2, SEATO, Box 33, Administration, EDDE.

<sup>380</sup> Landon to Smith, Apr. 30, 1959, 1, Southeast Asia (1), Box 7, OCB Secretariat, ENSC.

<sup>381</sup> Staats to Cutler, Apr. 11, 1957, 1, OCB 091.4 Southeast Asia (File #6) (7), Box 81, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>382</sup> SEATO Record of Progress 1960-61, 24.

US Secretary of State Christian Herter, who took over shortly before Dulles died in May 1959, advised Eisenhower before a SEATO meeting to convince the Asian members that the US fully supported SEATO's mandate to promote economic growth.<sup>383</sup> Yet privately, the NSC acknowledged numerous obstacles. Asian societies and governments were so "primitive" that they did not have private enterprises the US could develop<sup>384</sup> or the ability to readily absorb economic aid.<sup>385</sup> Consequently, US investment would go to inept governments and promote socialism.<sup>386</sup> Yet, this hesitancy to invest conflicted with the US' strategy for Southeast Asian economic development through enabling self-help.<sup>387</sup> When the NSC discussed how free enterprise best promoted economic development, Eisenhower expressed the problem with modernization theory trying to duplicate the West globally when he stated, "We shouldn't tell people in other countries that they are going to starve if they don't do it our way."<sup>388</sup> The Eisenhower administration's struggles to implement modernization theory even emerged in American pop culture at that time. For example, *The Ugly American*, a bestselling novel from 1958, depicted an incompetently administered US development project in Southeast Asia.<sup>389</sup>

SEATO's Asian members expected much higher levels of commitment from SEATO's Western powers than what occurred. Historian G. Wyn Rees argues that this discrepancy resulted in perpetual acrimony and disappointment from SEATO's Asian members.<sup>390</sup> Primary source evidence supports Rees' argument. A 1957 NSC progress report summarized developments as: "There was modest progress in developing SEATO economic and social programs. Nevertheless,

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<sup>383</sup> Herter to Eisenhower, SEATO Meeting Scope Paper, May 30, 1960, 2, Herter, Christian May 1960 (1), Box 13, Dulles-Herter, EDDE (hereafter, SEATO Meeting Scope Paper).

<sup>384</sup> 273<sup>rd</sup> NSC Meeting, Jan. 18, 1956, 10, Box 7, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>385</sup> SEATO Meeting Scope Paper, 2.

<sup>386</sup> 266<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Nov. 15, 1955, 3, Box 7, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>387</sup> SEATO Meeting Scope Paper, 2.

<sup>388</sup> 417<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Aug. 18, 1959, 23, Box 11, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>389</sup> Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission*, 178-79.

<sup>390</sup> Rees, *Anglo-American Approaches to Alliance Security, 1955-60*, 134.

the generation of public attitudes favorable to collective-security pacts and the West in general is becoming increasingly difficult in the area.”<sup>391</sup> The next year, an OCB report stated that there was “Asian dissatisfaction with SEATO” and that operational problems implementing aid and broadening popular support for governments in Southeast Asia was evident.<sup>392</sup>

The NSC tried to address SEATO’s unpopularity in Asia. Discussions from a meeting expressed doubt that people at the “grassroots in foreign countries” understood how the US was helping them. Thus, the US needed to win friends with “impact projects.” The US should put up a sign saying, “The U.S. paved this street, which used to be a mudhole.”<sup>393</sup> Hence, the NSC perceived a messaging problem that locals did not connect American involvement to projects the US contributed to overseas. Still, the definition of an impact project may have been different to NSC members and common people living in Southeast Asia. If somebody did not have a car, the example of a paved road might not seem like an impact project. Conversely, infrastructure might seem more important to an NSC member concerned with planning logistics if Southeast Asia needed to be defended militarily. These potential cultural differences could have compounded the previously mentioned concept of “The Ugly American.”

Another issue was the Soviet bloc competing against the West in the economic realm to win support throughout Southeast Asia. Thailand’s foreign minister said Moscow’s economic offensive could have been countered if “free-world” aid had been increased and supplemented with long-term, regional, development programs, which there were plenty of proposals for.<sup>394</sup> For example, the US ambassador to Thailand expressed concern with a proposed reduction in aid

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<sup>391</sup> NSC Southeast Asia Progress Report, Nov. 26, 1957, 1108, in USVR, 5B3D.

<sup>392</sup> OCB Report Dec. 1958, 1.

<sup>393</sup> 449<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 12.

<sup>394</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 599, Apr. 11, 1956, 1, OCB 350.05 (File #3) (2), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC.

from 45 to 40 million dollars for Thailand's 1958 US assistance program because it would disillusion the Thai prime minister that had supported "free-world" collective security. The ambassador recommended the US do something big like a dam project, which he called an essential ingredient in US-Thai relations. This was important because "the soundness of its basic economy and its large untapped resources Thailand offers a unique opportunity in Asia for US aid programs to achieve spectacular and rapid results." A dam could produce electricity, prevent flooding, and increase the capacity to irrigate agriculture.<sup>395</sup> In other specific examples, US intelligence suggested a pan-Asian highway from Saigon to Istanbul,<sup>396</sup> and the OCB wanted a canal across the Malay Peninsula that would have shortened trade routes by 1,500 miles.<sup>397</sup> Consequently, US officials were aware of the types of largescale regional-developmental projects that people in the region expressed to them that they wanted and SEATO could have invested in; and, according to the Thai foreign minister, those would have been an effective way to counter growing Soviet-bloc economic influence in Southeast Asia.

In addition, there was reason to doubt if the economic-development projects SEATO did improved regional solidarity significantly. Although SEATO's Graduate School of Engineering was open to all Asians, a 1959 report stated that there had been no applications from outside Thailand.<sup>398</sup> Moreover, the Asian members competed for status within SEATO. The Philippines wanted to be the leading Asian member.<sup>399</sup> US intelligence reported that Southeast-Asian nations only supported regional projects if they did not reduce bilateral aid.<sup>400</sup> This signaled that bilateral

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<sup>395</sup> Intelligence Notes, Mar. 1, 1957, OCB 350.05 (File #4) (5), Box 112, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>396</sup> Intelligence Notes, Jan. 10, 1957, OCB 350.05 (File #4) (4), Box 112, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>397</sup> Special Report on Southeast Asia – Thailand, Feb. 9, 1960, Southeast Asia (2), Box 7, OCB Secretariat, ENSC.

<sup>398</sup> Supplement to Staff Notes No. 596, Jul. 25, 1959, 1, Toner Notes Jul. 1959, Box 42, DDE Diary, EDDE.

<sup>399</sup> Observations of Far East Chiefs, 1.

<sup>400</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 372, May 18, 1955, OCB 350.05 (File #2) (4), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC.

aid was a more important component of US relations with the Asian members of SEATO than SEATO projects.

Two key reasons why it was difficult to implement largescale regional-development projects through SEATO were because, first, the Asian members had noncontiguous borders.<sup>401</sup> And second, the US funded almost everything, and the US preferred bilateral aid as its main source of leverage to influence SEATO's Asian members. Dulles advised Eisenhower that if SEATO Secretary General Sarasin pressed him to expand SEATO's economic activities, Eisenhower should reply that the US would examine multilateral economic proposals, but it kept its SEATO commitments with bilateral aid.<sup>402</sup> Hence, SEATO did not replace US bilateral relations, but it supplemented them. The US wanted to do just enough through SEATO to keep the Asian members interested so the US could use SEATO to advance its strategic interests. This could be viewed as the US taking a halfhearted interest in the welfare of the Asian members.

Another factor hindering regional solidarity was that including one of SEATO's protocol states, South Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia, even in nonmilitary matters, proved challenging. The protocol states had restrictions on them joining military alliances, but they were also the nations that were most susceptible to communist threats in the region, especially from insurgencies that economic development could help pacify. The British were reluctant to include South Vietnam in SEATO civil activities because doing so could lead to the South Vietnamese wanting inclusion in SEATO military activities, which would create a backlash since the Geneva Accords prohibited that.<sup>403</sup> Moreover, communist insurgents in the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF) impeded efforts at economic development. The NLF destroyed construction and

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<sup>401</sup> Abbott to Whittington, Feb. 7, 1957, OCB 091.4 Southeast Asia (File #6) (2), Box 81, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>402</sup> Dulles to Eisenhower, Jan. 23, 1959, Staff Notes – Jan. 1959 (1), Box 38, DDE Diary, EDDE (Hereafter, Dulles to Eisenhower Jan. 1959).

<sup>403</sup> State Department to Thai Embassy, May 7, 1957, 342, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

agricultural equipment, terrorized farmers, burnt elementary schools, and sabotaged a malaria eradication program to the point where the World Health Organization questioned the utility of continuing it.<sup>404</sup> The NLF portrayed itself as a pan-Vietnamese organization that was nationally focused. Yet, those actions that retarded national development, and undermined projects that would have clearly benefited common Vietnamese people, exposed how the NLF was more of a front for communists pursuing political objectives.

There were even problems over issues that all SEATO members supported. The NSC promoted Atoms for Peace, and the Asian members wanted electric power. Yet, the NSC discussed the potential security risk of sharing atomic-power designs and how collaboration would constitute a “Tower of Babel,” a biblical reference to people not understanding foreign languages.<sup>405</sup> Moreover, the OCB reported how a lack of Thai expertise made it difficult to fulfil the atomic-energy agreement.<sup>406</sup> The Pakistanis were concerned that Atoms for Peace was benefiting India more than Pakistan.<sup>407</sup> This fueled competition between the bitter rivals. Nuclear energy was a dual-use technology that could be used to meet civilian energy needs and for very destructive weapons.<sup>408</sup> Meanwhile, in the Philippines, Dulles reported how the Philippine president seemed more concerned with using Atoms for Peace for his political advantage than helping his people. He wanted Dulles to be in Manila when the site of the atomic reactor was announced to make his domestic audience think that he had won it in negotiations.<sup>409</sup> Later, an OCB report concluded that it was impossible to establish an Asian Regional Nuclear Center in Manila because nations besides the US would not contribute enough financially.<sup>410</sup> This primary

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<sup>404</sup> OCB Report on Southeast Asia Dec. 1960, 4.

<sup>405</sup> 236<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Feb. 10, 1955, 5, Box 6, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>406</sup> Southeast Asia Progress Report Jul. 1956, 11.

<sup>407</sup> 290<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 12.

<sup>408</sup> Sathasivam, *Uneasy Neighbors*, 159-60.

<sup>409</sup> DULTE 33, Mar. 16, 1956, 2, Dulles John Foster Mar. '56, Box 6, Dulles-Herter, EDDE (hereafter, DULTE 33).

<sup>410</sup> OCB Report on Philippines Nov. 1958, 13.

source evidence extends historian Mara Drogan's argument that Atoms for Peace was neither economical nor ready for export, and it represented a serious proliferation risk.<sup>411</sup> Hence, Atoms for Peace was more for show so the US could say that it was promoting modernization in the developing world, and how nuclear energy could be used for non-destructive purposes, than a program that noticeably improved a significant number of lives.

The OCB studied various problems SEATO encountered and produced reports. One was written by US Ambassador to Thailand Max Bishop. His Bishop Report examined SEATO's civil activities and explained that SEATO was in "virtually complete insulation" from other regional anticommunist organizations like NATO, the Baghdad Pact or Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in the Middle East, and the Organization of American States. Thus, because of this isolation, SEATO had developed "on an experimental basis" and duplicated studies on topics like communist tactics in the economic sphere that NATO had already done. According to the Bishop Report, SEATO's Asian members had a provincial understanding of SEATO and did not view it as a component of global collective security.<sup>412</sup>

Efforts were made to get SEATO to better collaborate with other regional anticommunist organizations. Dulles informed Eisenhower that SEATO Secretary General Sarasin was going to visit nations in the other organizations to publicize SEATO and discuss interorganizational cooperation.<sup>413</sup> However, the US participating in collective security in other regions also influenced relations within SEATO. CENTO received more US economic aid than SEATO<sup>414</sup> even though the US was not an official member. Still, the US participated in CENTO as a

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<sup>411</sup> Drogan, "The Nuclear Imperative."

<sup>412</sup> Bishop Report, 22-24.

<sup>413</sup> Dulles to Eisenhower Jan. 1959.

<sup>414</sup> SEATO Meeting Scope Paper, 1.

member of its major committees and contributed an equal share to its international staff, budget, and economic and military aid programs.<sup>415</sup>

The US did not officially join CENTO because the “pro-Israel lobby” in the US opposed supporting predominantly Arab-Muslim nations in the Middle East militarily. In addition, the US feared that joining would provoke communist and neutral nations in the following ways. The USSR bordered CENTO member Iran, and India did not want additional military support for CENTO member Pakistan, especially after neutral India’s outrage about SEATO.<sup>416</sup> The main differences in that reasoning and the conditions for SEATO were that there was no strong domestic lobby in the US against arming SEATO’s Asian members, and the US was more concerned with provoking the USSR than the PRC because the USSR had much greater military capabilities that Europe would be directly vulnerable to. Moreover, the Middle East had vast oil reserves that both sides would want to control during general war, which the previously mentioned Eisenhower doctrine aimed to protect. This also suggested that the US was less concerned with provoking neutral India than potential great communist military threats like the USSR. Compared to NATO and CENTO, SEATO was less threatened by the US’ principal nemesis, the USSR, and hence, from the NSC’s perspective, less necessary. The communist insurgencies in the protocol states in Indochina did not present as much of a direct threat to US interests.

The US being in, or affiliated with, multiple collective-security organizations created a standard of comparison that led to jealousies within SEATO. CENTO was established after SEATO,<sup>417</sup> but, according to a State Department memo, it had developed faster with greater US

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<sup>415</sup> MacCloskey, *Pacts for Peace*, 116.

<sup>416</sup> Leebaert, *Grand Improvisation*, 442.

<sup>417</sup> SEATO Meeting Scope Paper, 1.

support. Thus, the memo revealed that SEATO's Asian members inferred that the West cared more about the Middle East, and the State Department wondered how to keep SEATO's spirit alive.<sup>418</sup> Furthermore, NATO clearly received more US attention and resources than SEATO, and NATO also had the commitment of US troops stationed in NATO bases in Europe. NATO was also concerned about securing its southern flank during Eisenhower's presidency. Turkey, which connected Europe and the Middle East, was added to NATO in 1952 and was a member of CENTO. NATO's "southern flank" strategy aimed to defend the eastern Mediterranean by improving Turkish-Greek relations and integrating those rivals into the Western defense system.<sup>419</sup>

The NSC choosing to align with authoritarian or corrupt regimes was not unique to SEATO's Asian members and is something that scholars have documented. In a broad study of US foreign relations, historian Michael Hunt argues that the US supporting corrupt dictators abroad made the dictators and the US unpopular in those nations.<sup>420</sup> Scholar Joshua Kurlantzick has studied Jim Thompson, who served with the US' intelligence agency, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), as an officer during World War II. After the war, Thompson remained in Thailand as a civilian. In the 1950s, he advocated for the US to build democracy and capitalism while strengthening traditional cultures, opposed to what it was doing, propping up strongmen with aid in exchange for political support in the Cold War. Thompson befriended opposition forces throughout mainland Southeast Asia and found that the US' efforts alienated many people. After his service to his country, Thompson felt betrayed by the US for its conduct during the Cold War. His grievance was that the US backed anticommunist forces regardless of how corrupt

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<sup>418</sup> State Department to Thai Embassy, Dec. 2, 1955, 156-57, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>419</sup> Chourchoulis, *The Southern Flank of NATO, 1951-1959*.

<sup>420</sup> Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 175-76.

and undemocratic they were. Thompson believed McCarthyism skewed American perceptions and caused Americans to back the wrong factions in Southeast Asia.<sup>421</sup>

The OCB's Robert Cleveland produced a report in 1957 about SEATO. This Cleveland Report extends Hunt and Kurlantzick's arguments about how the US supporting authoritarian or corrupt regimes alienated the people in those nations. It stated that governments in SEATO's Asian members faced domestic criticism for their membership and struggled to defend pro-SEATO policies because they could not show enough benefits from being members. Neutralism was gaining popularity, and SEATO might not survive unless it increased popular support in its Asian members and attracted new Asian members. Many Southeast Asians did not fear communism because the Soviet bloc promoted peaceful coexistence. Thus, the report stated, critics of SEATO in the region "present SEATO as, on the one hand, an impediment to a relaxation of tensions and, on the other, as an expensive military organization, association with which brings no concrete benefits to meet the aspirations of the area for economic and social progress." The report continued, "Small programs... fail to underscore the key point: that membership in collective security pacts is accompanied by preferential treatment. Large scale SEATO programs over and above our bilateral programs are, of course, out of the question for financial and a host of other reasons." Furthermore, many citizens in SEATO's Asian members believed that if their nation withdrew from SEATO, they would receive the same amount of bilateral nonmilitary aid from the US, and then, the Soviet bloc would be more willing to offer them aid as a reward for breaking with Western collective security. The report's suggested remedy was to put a SEATO label on US aid programs and projects.<sup>422</sup> A corresponding OCB

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<sup>421</sup> Kurlantzick, *The Ideal Man*.

<sup>422</sup> Robert Cleveland, SEATO Label on US Aid, Aug. 15, 1957, 2-3, South East Asia, Box 6, Subject, OCB, EOSA (hereafter, Cleveland Report).

memo added that the governments in SEATO's Asian members, and US personnel in those nations, should publicize the nation's membership in SEATO when the transfer of US aid occurred.<sup>423</sup>

However, when Dulles discussed this SEATO-label solution with the Australians, he called it an "artificial proposition unlikely to produce the desired effect."<sup>424</sup> Dulles' assessment seems correct because the greatest problem was that the US designed SEATO, according to the New Look, primarily to deter communist aggression militarily, which was not a major concern to many people in the region and made SEATO appear unnecessarily provocative. In terms of economic development, the problem was more about the quality and quantity of projects SEATO undertook because of its limited resources than SEATO not adequately advertising what it had already done. Hence, the assumption behind the Cleveland Report promoting the SEATO-label solution appears to be that it was something that could be easily suggested and implemented to allow some improvement without having to address the larger strategic and budgetary problems.

Promoting education abroad was a key component of modernization theory and what the NSC aimed to do through SEATO to help achieve its objective for the nations of Southeast Asia. Yet, a discussion in a 1960 NSC meeting exhibited how this was counterproductive. Secretary of State Herter explained how some of the overseas anti-American radicalism stemmed from foreign universities, which the US helped fund. Moreover, students became subversives because they were not finding jobs that required a university degree after they graduated and became disillusioned with the Western model. Eisenhower wondered if the US could augment the salaries of teachers in developing nations. This could make their political views more pro-West.

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<sup>423</sup> Identifying SEATO with Aid Projects, Aug. 14, 1957, 1, South East Asia, Box 6, Subject, OCB, EOSA (hereafter, Identifying SEATO with Aid Projects).

<sup>424</sup> Memo of a Conversation in Canberra, Mar. 10, 1957, 306, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21 (hereafter, Conversation in Canberra Mar. 1957).

Eisenhower concluded that the NSC needed to “disabuse” itself of its old ideas about promoting education abroad as a general principle because much of the education around the world produced outcomes that were against US interests. Instead, Eisenhower wanted a thinktank like the Brookings Institution to study the problem of how to transform education around the world to make foreigners support American positions. Eisenhower argued, “If we merely await the slow process of the peon bettering himself, there will be more revolutions in the world.” Eisenhower explained that “he was trying to keep the Free World from going up in flames,” and education abroad was adding fuel to the fire.<sup>425</sup>

A 1960 telegram from the State Department to the US’ SEATO delegation captured the key predicament the NSC faced. It stated, “If peoples of Southeast Asia were to regard freedom worth dying for, SEATO must make it worth living for.” However, SEATO’s economic aid from “advanced members” was inadequate.<sup>426</sup> Eisenhower described the “dilemma which constantly faced his Administration” as balancing the desire for a strong domestic economy that did not accrue debt against the need to assist “backward countries.”<sup>427</sup> A memo from Secretary of State Herter to Eisenhower stated the importance of convincing SEATO’s other Western members to increase their contributions to SEATO’s economic development programs.<sup>428</sup> Yet, New Zealand had openly addressed all members in its opening statement at a SEATO council meeting about how having the double burden of supporting defense and economic aid was stretching the capacities of Western members.<sup>429</sup> In addition, a memo between US and UK officials about the upcoming SEATO meeting stated that the US and UK were concerned about “the Asian

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<sup>425</sup> 449<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 11-12.

<sup>426</sup> State Department to SEATO Delegation Jun. 1960, 189.

<sup>427</sup> 410<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 2.

<sup>428</sup> SEATO Meeting Scope Paper, 2.

<sup>429</sup> Second SEATO Council Meeting Verbatim Proceedings, 19.

Members raising the question of increased economic aid.” The memo then expressed “the dissatisfaction of the Thais and the [SEATO] Secretary General [Sarasin] with the action of the UK in vetoing an assistant for the Economic Services Officer.” The memo did not specify why they were dissatisfied, but it may have looked like the Western members attempting to obstruct SEATO economic development programs.<sup>430</sup>

The Western members’ resistance to fund economic development in SEATO is something historian James Waite has commented on. He argues that the New Look may have made containment more affordable, but it often failed to foster cooperation with the US’ most dependable allies because it expected them to contribute more than they wanted to through collective security.<sup>431</sup> At least in the example of SEATO during Eisenhower’s presidency, this appears to be true. SEATO undoubtedly had problems with cooperation, even with some of the US’ most dependable allies from the West and Asia. SEATO’s Asian members only wanted to receive, and Western members were very reluctant to give, especially members besides the US. This meant the US was primarily responsible for contributing to SEATO. SEATO’s non-US members could expect the US to accept their lack of contributions because SEATO was more important strategically to the US than the other members.

An analysis of US and SEATO budgets highlights what a low fiscal priority economic development was and how the burden to implement it fell almost exclusively on the US. From SEATO’s beginning in 1955 to 1960, the US’ annual budgets for developmental, economic, and technical assistance, as well as educational exchanges, to mainland Southeast Asia jumped astronomically from 7 to 251 million dollars. This supports historian Gary Hess’ finding how SEATO members received increases in aid after they joined SEATO. In examining the numbers,

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<sup>430</sup> Memo of a Conversation Between US and UK Officials, Apr. 7, 1959, 78, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16.

<sup>431</sup> Waite, “Contesting ‘the Right of Decision,’” 917.

each SEATO member in Asia and the protocol states saw a significant increase after SEATO's creation except the Philippines, whose increase was only modest.<sup>432</sup> Still, comparatively, the US spent a total of \$45 billion a year on defense at the end of Eisenhower's presidency, which meant nonmilitary aid to Southeast Asia was 0.6% of that total.<sup>433</sup> Moreover, even though SEATO's annual budgets increased, the highest total was only \$878,720. After fiscal year 1957-58, the US paid 25 percent of SEATO's annual expenses, which was much higher than any of the other seven members.<sup>434</sup> Overall, most aid attributed to SEATO was not officially paid through SEATO, but it was given bilaterally from the Western members to the Asian members. For fiscal year 1960-61, \$623 million went to SEATO's Asian members and protocol states. The US paid \$612 million (over 98 percent of the total) for various development programs and defense efforts, and only 60 percent went to members. This suggested a big chunk of it went to South Vietnam. The SEATO source that these statistics came from did not specify what percent was for defense, if SEATO's Asian members and protocol states made requests for SEATO aid beyond what was given in this fiscal year, nor if that level of aid was above what the US wanted to spend. Nonetheless, the evidence given so far in this dissertation shows that from SEATO's inception there was a clear tension in SEATO between the Asian members wanting more economic development assistance from the Western members and the Western members' reluctance to accommodate them.<sup>435</sup>

Scholars have written about the results of aid that went to SEATO's Asian members and protocol states. Scholar George Modelski notes that although SEATO's Asian members needed

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<sup>432</sup> NSC 5612/1, 16, 18, 21, 23, 25; NSC 6012, 18-19; for the Philippines, see NSC 5413/1, 8, & NSC 5813/1, 15; for Pakistan, see NSC 5409, 1123, & NSC 5909/1, 24; Hess, "The American Search for Stability in Southeast Asia," 287.

<sup>433</sup> Aliano, *American Defense Policy from Eisenhower to Kennedy*, 281.

<sup>434</sup> SEATO Record, Annex E.

<sup>435</sup> SEATO Record of Progress 1960-61, 24-25.

aid to survive, they received very little.<sup>436</sup> In the protocol states, by 1956, historian Frederik Logevall explains that South Vietnam was the fifth largest recipient of US aid in the world. Nonetheless, 78% percent went to its military budget, which did not include police training and direct equipment transfers. Conversely, only 2 percent went to projects to help common people for matters such as health, housing, and community development. With the military emphasis of aid, Logevall argues, “a well-heeled minority of Vietnamese benefited, while the majority saw little or no gain.”<sup>437</sup> Historian Robert McMahon argues that all the military aid the US gave never succeeded in laying the foundation for a genuinely independent nation in South Vietnam, and it fostered dependence because South Vietnam could not sustain itself without US aid. McMahon adds that the Eisenhower administration’s military emphasis on nation building in Laos was not successful either.<sup>438</sup> SEATO members undoubtedly wanted more economic development aid than they received, and the New Look’s military focus meant the US did not contribute as much as it could have because it prioritized deterrence in Europe. The protocol states, which were not technically SEATO members, received a substantial amount of aid. It is no wonder that SEATO’s Asian members questioned how important it was for them to be official members of SEATO.

There were many examples of how the lack of economic development through SEATO affected US-Philippine relations, which were vital to SEATO and the New Look because the Philippines hosted the US’ most important military bases in the treaty area. In a telegram to Eisenhower, Dulles revealed that on his trip to Manila, he found an “unsatisfactory condition.” The Philippine president, Magsaysay, who was extremely sensitive to criticism, was being

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<sup>436</sup> Modelski, “The Asian States’ Participation in SEATO,” 155.

<sup>437</sup> Logevall, *Embers of War*, 669, 682.

<sup>438</sup> McMahon, “Eisenhower and Third World Nationalism,” 460.

badgered by the Philippine Congress and press about insufficient US aid. They measured friendship by the amount of aid, and other Asian nations received more. Magsaysay had what Dulles characterized as “bad personal advisors” telling Magsaysay to be tough and play up the international communist threat to get more aid. Magsaysay was even reluctant to visit the US unless he returned bearing gifts.<sup>439</sup> The CIA reported that the Philippine business community, and even Magsaysay, had criticized US policies.<sup>440</sup> Hence, to influence the outcome, the US tried to schedule announcements about its aid to the Philippines before a Philippine election and considered using Eisenhower’s emergency fund to facilitate it.<sup>441</sup> The US’ military emphasis also retarded Philippine economic development at times. Filipinos wanted a road that would bypass a bombing practice range the US used and mining companies had to cross, but the US was more concerned with not disrupting its military training than growing the Philippine economy.<sup>442</sup>

My findings are consistent with those of historian Nick Cullather concerning the private sector in the Philippines exacerbating tensions over economic issues with the US, which affected SEATO. Cullather found that as “caciques,” elites in the Philippines, invested more in manufacturing, they became more demanding and suspicious of the US. When the US colony became independent in 1946, there were US-Philippine agreements that permitted the continuation of some US influence, especially over economic matters like tariffs, taxation, regulation of businesses, immigration, citizenship status, and the Philippine monetary currency. The caciques began insisting on unrestricted Philippine control over the economy, as well as tariff concessions, more aid, and firmer defense guarantees from the US at a time when the US

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<sup>439</sup> DULTE 33.

<sup>440</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 591, Mar. 30, 1956, 2-3, OCB 350.05 (File #3) (2), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC (hereafter, Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 591).

<sup>441</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 483, Oct. 25, 1955, OCB 350.05 (File #2) (8), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>442</sup> Intelligence Notes, Mar. 11, 1957, OCB 350.05 (File #4) (6), Box 112, OCB Central File, ENSC.

sought to redirect aid to countries that were in more immediate danger from communist threats. Ultimately, accommodations were made. The US made concessions around trade and Philippine economic autonomy, while the Filipinos displayed loyalty to US strategic aims by participating in SEATO. Thus, Cullather convincingly argues that US-Philippine bilateral relations became a bargain where each side obtained its primary short-term interest and sacrificed secondary goals.<sup>443</sup>

The relatively limited economic aid the US made available to SEATO's Asian members reflected larger trends scholars have noted regarding the New Look. Historian Michael Adamson argues that the New Look's focus on austerity caused Eisenhower to try to achieve global economic development through private capital investment. Foreign aid was only intended to be used as an emergency security response to help the US achieve a short-term political, military, or economic objective, and private capital would be the principal tool to forestall Moscow's economic influence. Economic aid was not supposed to substitute for private capital. Overall, US economic aid declined 23 percent, when adjusted for inflation, during Eisenhower's presidency. Another problem was that leaders in newly independent nations often preferred socialism to state capitalism as a developmental strategy. Consequently, economic foreign-aid programs remained moderate compared to the demands from nations in the developing world during decolonization, and they did little to fulfil the US' goal to curb the communist threat in those regions. Still, because the focus of aid was to contain communism instead of developing economies, most of the nations the US assisted did not see material economic gain, nor were they more stable and democratic.<sup>444</sup> Similarly, scholar Roger Dingman contends that Dulles should get more credit for strengthening existing commitments to SEATO's Asian members than being the architect of a

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<sup>443</sup> Cullather, *Illusions of Influence*, 152; for issues around independence, see NSC 5413/1.

<sup>444</sup> Adamson, "The Most Important Single Aspect of Our Foreign Policy'?", 48, 66.

new Southeast-Asian order.<sup>445</sup> SEATO was not a transformational change in NSC policy to focus on economic development through US governmental aid to make the US and West more popular in the greater Southeast Asia region, but a continuation of the New Look's emphasis on military deterrence and private-sector investment to promote economic growth abroad.

Despite the NSC's strategy to use economic development to achieve its objective for the nations of Southeast Asia, US assessments concluded that the US did not adequately promote economic development in SEATO's Asian members. Although historian Robert Muscat has argued that the US' ability to deliver aid to Thailand was seldom questioned, US intelligence reported that US aid deliveries to Thailand were a year behind schedule, the creation of electric power that was essential to economic development had been meager, skilled-labor training had borne no visible results, and nothing had been done about housing the poor or the regional aid programs, which Dulles had discussed with the Thais.<sup>446</sup> The Philippines wanted to finance economic expansion with foreign aid, which it requested from the US.<sup>447</sup> Yet, a 1960 OCB progress report stated that notwithstanding assets like significant natural resources, "the Philippine economic situation remains difficult, reflecting many of the problems common to underdeveloped nations."<sup>448</sup> The NSC's 1959 South-Asia policy stated that Pakistan still suffered from "persistent economic distress" that would "require substantial external assistance."<sup>449</sup>

These examples showcased how the US realized that its economic aid programs still left work to be desired in SEATO's Asian members. NSC policies clearly prioritized deterring the Soviet military threat to Western Europe over economic development in the developing world.

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<sup>445</sup> Dingman, "John Foster Dulles and the Creation of the South-East Asia Treaty Organization in 1954," 476.

<sup>446</sup> Intelligence Notes, Jun. 19, 1956, OCB 350.05 (File #3) (5), Box 111 B, OCB Central File, ENSC; Muscat, *Thailand and the United States*, 142.

<sup>447</sup> OCB Report on Philippines Nov. 1958, 10.

<sup>448</sup> OCB Report on Philippines Mar. 1960, 2.

<sup>449</sup> NSC 5909/1, 5, 7.

This prioritization was also demonstrated when the NSC discussed food relief to avert famine in Pakistan. When CIA Director Allen Dulles transitioned to the next topic, the availability of fissionable material to the USSR, he called the latter the “most important topic of his intelligence briefing.”<sup>450</sup> While this prioritization is consistent with the NSC’s national-security priorities, it conflicted with SEATO Asian members’ priorities of using SEATO as a vehicle to promote economic development. SEATO’s Asian members received some economic assistance through SEATO, but the mismatch in priorities between them and the NSC was not conducive to creating an effective collective-security organization. Furthermore, discussions in a 1959 NSC meeting revealed, “NSC 5909 made it clear that U.S. military and economic objectives in South Asia were often in conflict and that large military forces tended to weaken rather than strengthen the countries of the area.”<sup>451</sup>

Scholar W.W. Rostow has argued that US developmental aid elevated leaders who were “seriously committed to economic and social development,” and that it was the “strongest tempering force” against international violence and helped reduce “domestic conflicts inherent in the modernization process.”<sup>452</sup> However, in 1960 NSC meetings, Eisenhower recognized the irony that “the countries which received the most assistance became the most unstable,”<sup>453</sup> and he lamented how recently there had been a “rash of revolutions which have overthrown governments – in” US allies like “Cuba, Turkey, and almost in Japan,” although Eisenhower’s assessment of the Japanese government almost being overthrown by protests in 1960 was a stretch. Eisenhower then explained, the US had been working intensely since 1953 to achieve stability, but the results had been “unrest and unhappiness” in regimes in the developing world

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<sup>450</sup> 288<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Jun. 15, 1956, 3, Box 7, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>451</sup> 416<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Aug. 6, 1959, 6, Box 11, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>452</sup> Rostow, *Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Foreign Aid*, 219.

<sup>453</sup> 447<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Jun. 8, 1960, 15, Box 12, NSC, EDDE.

aligned with the US. South American allies had told Eisenhower that US aid perpetuated the ruling class and caused class conflict. Eisenhower wondered if “we were stupidly pushing ahead, carrying out programs without taking into account the effects.” He argued that the situation would be improved if the pro-US dictator in the Dominican Republic, Rafael Trujillo, were hanged because the recipe for stability was not keeping the lid of the pot clamped down until pressure blew it off violently. Eisenhower concluded, “Dictatorship... did not mean stability.” Instead, Eisenhower contemplated supporting “true liberals,” and he even questioned if the US should continue backing governments that did not institute land reform. His analogy was that supporting nondemocratic regimes was like “giving money to a juvenile delinquent to buy a ‘hot rod’ which might kill someone.” He finished by stating that he found the prospect of getting people to support the “free world” so hopeless that “the world was getting into a situation from which it could perhaps be saved only by a large nuclear weapon.”<sup>454</sup>

Without US military aid, the coups and sustained military dictatorships among SEATO’s Asian members would have been more difficult to achieve. Furthermore, their governments had to become more authoritarian, and use their SEATO-related aid, to control growing domestic dissent instead of opposing communism in the region outside their borders as the NSC intended. The OCB’s Cleveland Report explained SEATO’s general unpopularity in the greater Southeast Asia region, even among people in SEATO’s Asian member nations. Furthermore, there was a higher probability of a regime being a SEATO member or protocol state in the greater Southeast Asia region if that nation had a military dictatorship or was a police state. What happened in Thailand and Pakistan were prime examples, and similar developments in South Vietnam and Laos will be further detailed in chapter six. Hence, for the NSC in these examples,

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<sup>454</sup> 449<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 9-10, 12.

anticommunist geostrategic realism trumped the professed goal of supporting the growth of democracy in the region.

The NSC wanted to create a regional anticommunist identity for Southeast Asia through SEATO and thought promoting economic development would help. Nevertheless, in SEATO's Asian members, the people's primary identity had traditionally been at the village or ethnic level, and they became more nationalistic during decolonization. Conversely, the NSC's worldview focused on geopolitics. The OCB's Cleveland Report explained that although there was demand for largescale transnational projects in the greater Southeast Asia region that could have begun realigning identities, SEATO's Western members did not want to finance them. This caused a mismatch between the US' public support for SEATO and the expectations of tangible economic benefits in SEATO's Asian members if they joined. SEATO's Asian members expressed that they wanted a greater emphasis on SEATO economic development on numerous occasions including at SEATO's second annual council meeting in Pakistan in 1956.

When the US and SEATO did not adequately provide what SEATO's Asian members wanted in terms of economic development, they explored alternative partners for trade and aid. Scholars have documented this development. Scholar Warren Hogan's study of the economic relationships among SEATO powers reveals that the Western members' percent of Asian trade with SEATO's Asian members decreased substantially between 1938 and 1958, and Asian members increased their imports from Asia.<sup>455</sup> Historian Robert McMahon argues that by the end of 1955, the US became increasingly concerned about the Soviets' diplomatic and economic activities in the developing world. More specifically, the NSC discussed how, "The CIA... had recently pieced together all available information concerning Soviet offers of economic

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<sup>455</sup> Hogan, "Economic Relationships and the SEATO Powers," 264, 270, 275.

assistance in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East.” Dulles called them “a pattern of coordinated long-term and high-level operations designed to advance Communist influence in all these areas.” Particularly concerning “was that many Third World nations seemed inclined to accept not only rubles from Moscow but the efficacy of the Soviet development model,” which had high economic growth rates at the time. Eisenhower recommended that the US set aside contingency funds so his administration could respond rapidly to Soviet initiatives. Dulles concurred and declared that the battle with the communists was shifting. Therefore, Dulles concluded, the US had to be prepared to meet increasingly serious Soviet economic competition from their increased trade and aid, as well as them modeling and offering to export an alternative economic system.<sup>456</sup>

Primary source evidence extends those scholars’ arguments that SEATO’s Asian members looked for alternative economic partners, including the Soviet bloc. An NSC progress report explained that the US competing against Thai farmers by exporting agricultural surpluses to Asia caused Thailand to pursue trade with the Soviet bloc.<sup>457</sup> US intelligence reported that Philippine leaders were aware of their economic and military dependence on the US, which they thought made the US take their loyalty for granted. In a bid for more independence, the Philippine president revealed his desire for trade with the USSR.<sup>458</sup> An OCB report connected the Philippine president visiting Japan with an attempt to find economic solutions with Asians and decrease their dependence on the US.<sup>459</sup> US intelligence reported that Pakistan invited the USSR to its ceremony proclaiming itself the Republic of Pakistan when it created a constitution

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<sup>456</sup> McMahon, *The Limits of Empire*, 74.

<sup>457</sup> Southeast Asia Progress Report Jul. 1956, 11.

<sup>458</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 591, 3.

<sup>459</sup> OCB Report on Philippines Nov. 1958, 1.

and estimated that the Soviets would explore trade agreements while they were there.<sup>460</sup> Finally, the US embassy in Pakistan described the Soviets' offer of aid for East Pakistan a "master political stroke" because it exposed divisions in Pakistan. Since East Pakistan felt neglected by West Pakistan, where the seat of government was, the US would become the "public whipping boy" in East Pakistan, which bordered Southeast Asia, if it tried to obstruct Soviet aid there.<sup>461</sup>

While these documents do not reveal a significant economic relationship between SEATO's Asian members and the Soviet bloc, the larger point was that the NSC wanted SEATO to unite the region against communist expansion, in a variety of ways, including economic. However, after the creation of SEATO, SEATO's Asian members complained about the lack of economic development done through SEATO, and they were more open to working with the Soviet bloc on economic issues.

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To conclude this chapter, one of the nonmilitary components of the New Look was economic development, which related to modernization theory. SEATO helped facilitate economic development by being an institution that could organize and promote developmental projects in Southeast Asia that could help forge regional solidarity in support of the West and against communism. The prospect of economic development was a critical factor why the Asian members joined SEATO in the first place, and their continual push for more aid was a defining characteristic of their membership throughout Eisenhower's presidency. Early in SEATO's existence, it struggled to implement economic development. This caused the Asian members to

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<sup>460</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 582, Mar. 19, 1956, 2, OCB 350.05 (File #3) (1), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC; for the constitution, see McCardle Report, Mar. 21, 1956, 3, SEATO Meeting – Mar., 1956, Box 4, Series I: Conference and Trip Files, ECWM (hereafter, McCardle Report).

<sup>461</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 588, Mar. 27, 1956, 2, OCB 350.05 (File #3) (2), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC.

lose interest in regional collective security through SEATO. In response, SEATO created a stronger organization, increased Asian involvement and leadership, and formed many committees and programs to promote economic development so the Asian members would not be dependent on Western aid. Examples included education, skilled-labor training, agriculture, health, energy, transportation, telecommunications, rural development, and infrastructure. Those types of programs, which could lead to material improvement for common people and make the Western system more popular, could help the NSC with its objective to have pro-West nations with stable and free governments in Southeast Asia. However, the small-scale programs SEATO undertook failed to significantly improve the lives of common people, who did not see the benefits of their nation belonging to SEATO outweighing the costs of SEATO unnecessarily impeding a possible détente by heightening Cold War tensions. SEATO's Asian members wanted economic development, but the Western members did not want to pay for the largescale programs they desired. In the end, almost all the expenses were borne by the US, and SEATO's Asian members did not receive as much aid as they expected when they joined SEATO. This further divided SEATO between the Western and Asian members on racial lines, which reflected the region's colonial history. SEATO's Asian members all became less democratic after they joined SEATO. The US continued backing military dictators or corrupt regimes in SEATO's Asian members, even though it expressed that it promoted democracy, because other nations in the greater region would not align with the West. What aid was given did more to entrench these less-democratic regimes than help their people, and increased domestic dissent caused some instability. The NSC realized that it fell short in its goal of achieving regional solidarity for Southeast Asia through SEATO economic development, and SEATO's Asian members began looking more to the Soviet bloc for aid and trade when SEATO did not meet their needs. This

was what the NSC's objective for the nations of Southeast Asia aimed to prevent. Furthermore, calling those regimes free and stable was a debatable proposition, and those were also parts of the NSC's regional objective.

#### 4. Propaganda: The Inability to Create a Regional Anticommunist Identity and Overcome Disunity in SEATO

This chapter covers the role SEATO played in facilitating the New Look's component of propaganda and how that affected the NSC's ability to achieve its objective for Southeast Asia to have pro-West nations with free and stable governments. This chapter argues, SEATO had ways to help the NSC implement propaganda in Southeast Asia. The propaganda war with the Soviet bloc to win allegiance in the developing world took on extra importance during Eisenhower's presidency because the superpowers' growing nuclear capabilities made military conflict increasingly undesirable. In terms of SEATO, propaganda could improve its popularity in its members, especially in Asia, and throughout the greater region, as well as help overcome the growing divisions between its members, especially on racial lines. Yet, despite SEATO's attempt to disseminate propaganda through a variety of ways, such as seminars, pamphlets, radio, film, and cultural exchanges, it still struggled to forge the regional anticommunist identity the NSC sought. SEATO propaganda efforts were insufficiently resourced, which reflected the New Look's military emphasis. In addition, they largely comprised printed works in English. This was not a medium that could readily influence the masses because many people in Southeast Asia were uneducated, especially in English, and lived in rural, and remote, areas where it was difficult to distribute literature. Moreover, the NSC's main propaganda message of militant anticommunism did not resonate strongly throughout the greater region because communism was often viewed more as a viable alternative to the Western model than an existential threat. Consequently, a large degree of disunity remained between SEATO's members. Although SEATO's Western members had their differences with the US over regional policy, the biggest divisions were between SEATO's Western and Asian members. While SEATO's Western and

Asian members remained halfhearted allies to the US for collective security in Southeast Asia through SEATO, the Soviet bloc's propaganda efforts showed signs of success in the region, even in SEATO's Asian members.

### *Trying to Improve SEATO's Popularity*

In addition to using economic development to entice nations to follow the West and increase SEATO's unity and popularity to create regional solidarity against communism, a related nonmilitary component of the New Look was propaganda. After examining Southeast Asia, the OCB concluded that a primary method of communist aggression, which had surpassed the military threat, was political.<sup>462</sup> The NSC wanted the "Creation in Asia of political and social forces which will zealously spread the greater values of the Free World and simultaneously expose the falsity of the Communist ideological offensive."<sup>463</sup> The NSC's main tool to accomplish this was the US Information Agency (USIA). The US Information Service (USIS) was what USIA was commonly referred to for activities abroad. USIS' purpose, explained by the NSC policy about it, was to use communications to persuade foreigners that their aspirations for freedom, progress, and peace were supported and advanced by the objectives and policies of the US. Furthermore, USIS aimed to get foreigners to advance US objectives.<sup>464</sup> The basic assumption the NSC operated under was that the democratic-capitalistic system the West

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<sup>462</sup> Southeast Asia Progress Report Jul. 1956, 5.

<sup>463</sup> NSC 5429/5, Dec. 22, 1954, 3, NSC 5429/5 – Policy Toward the Far East (2), Box 12, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA.

<sup>464</sup> NSC 165, Oct. 9, 1953, 1, NSC 165/1 – United States Information Agency, Box 7, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA. For simplicity's sake, USIS will be used for both the service and agency.

promoted was clearly superior to communism, so people in the developing world just needed to be properly informed, and they would choose to follow the West.

Many historians have studied US propaganda efforts during Eisenhower's presidency, and some of what they found can be extended to the NSC's effort through SEATO in that timeframe. Historian Wilson Dizard found USIS was created at the beginning of the Eisenhower administration in August 1953. Propaganda was a component of the New Look that would complement deterrence in combatting communism, and this happened in SEATO.<sup>465</sup> Historian Richard Arndt found that USIS' use of the euphemism "information" for propaganda derived from George Creel's Committee on Public Information during World War I. Creel's aim was to get the American people to support a major effort to combat an "evil" force after they had desired neutrality, which paralleled USIS' strategy for SEATO during Eisenhower's presidency.<sup>466</sup> Historian Kenneth Osgood found that political warfare through propaganda was a critical component of the Eisenhower administration's effort to win the Cold War. Eisenhower, Osgood adds, was involved with this effort personally to a remarkable extent, and he valued psychological warfare over other types. In the nuclear age, it presented less risk, and there was fear that a military engagement through SEATO could escalate.<sup>467</sup> Historian Laura Belmonte builds on the importance of propaganda to the New Look and contends that Eisenhower accorded informational activities the same stature as military operations, and he was the only president to appoint a propaganda advisor to his cabinet, who was C.D. Jackson. Jackson also attended NSC meetings where discussions about SEATO and propaganda occurred. In World War II, he served with the Office of Strategic Services and in the Psychological Warfare Division.<sup>468</sup> Historian

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<sup>465</sup> Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 63.

<sup>466</sup> Arndt, *The First Resort of Kings*, 27, 273.

<sup>467</sup> Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 6, 362.

<sup>468</sup> Belmonte, *Selling the American Way*, 51; Stern, *C.D. Jackson*.

Nicholas Cull adds that USIS also listened to world opinion. Hence, for propaganda efforts to be effective, the US needed to better comprehend what was going on overseas, including in SEATO's treaty area.<sup>469</sup>

SEATO could help USIS accomplish its mission by both using propaganda efforts to spread the US' message and listening to the response in Southeast Asia. In addition, being an organization with Asian membership presented more familiar faces than if white Americans did it alone, which was important because of the anti-West attitudes during the age of decolonization. In 1957, the OCB reported that SEATO created committees for information and cultural activities.<sup>470</sup> SEATO established its Committee to Combat Communist Subversion at its first council meeting.<sup>471</sup> Propaganda was also critical to unify an increasingly fractured SEATO and overcome the Asian members' discontent about insufficient economic development. In 1955, Dulles headed a meeting with other US officials to address the Asian members' lack of enthusiasm for SEATO. He explained that SEATO had "tremendous potentialities for good or evil." SEATO's success would undermine the communists' propaganda campaign to divide former colonized peoples from their former colonizers, but SEATO's failure would advance the communists' objective.<sup>472</sup> US intelligence reported that USIS officers stationed in Thailand and SEATO's protocol states met to discuss implementing the OCB's plan to promote regional solidarity, which was detailed in the previous chapter, and they made recommendations like having international exchanges.<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>469</sup> Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 486-93.

<sup>470</sup> OCB Southeast Asia Progress Report Jan. 1957, 3.

<sup>471</sup> SEATO Record, 40.

<sup>472</sup> State Department Conversation, Oct. 6, 1955, 145, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21 (hereafter, State Department Conversation Oct. 1955).

<sup>473</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 367, May 11, 1955, OCB 350.05 (File #2) (4), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC.

However, the Eisenhower administration recognized numerous challenges in its desire to unify Southeast Asia against communism. A memo to Dulles stated, “There have been progressive indications that our Asian partners feel that SEATO has bogged down and that it is not, and never was, the intention of the Western members to make it [SEATO] an effective organization.” The memo did not specify what constituted an effective organization according to SEATO’s Asian members, but some of the concerns they had previously expressed were the lack of quality economic development programs and a firm security commitment that a NATO-like structure with Western troops stationed at SEATO bases in the region would have better provided. The memo concluded that the stakes were high because if SEATO failed, the Asian members could say that they had tried to work with the West and then turn to neutralism. They could use the justification that SEATO did not adequately address their problems.<sup>474</sup>

Another major challenge was that an OCB progress report for Southeast Asia revealed that throughout the region, only the governments of Thailand and South Vietnam attempted to associate their people with opposing communism. This indicated that opposing communism was not popular with many people in Southeast Asia.<sup>475</sup> The OCB confirmed this when it reported that there was no strong will to fight communist subversion in Southeast Asia. Governments did not prosecute communist subversion aggressively, and the public opposed increased internal security measures against communism. Hence, the OCB concluded, “Situations could arise where the United States might be associated in the public mind with backing corrupt and authoritarian police systems manipulated by local politicians.”<sup>476</sup> The rise of military dictatorships

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<sup>474</sup> MacArthur to Dulles Dec. 1955, 160-62.

<sup>475</sup> Southeast Asia Progress Report Jul. 1956, 2.

<sup>476</sup> OCB Report on NSC Action 1290-d, Nov. 23, 1955, 6, NSC 5434/1 – Military Assistance Program, Procedure for Review, Box 13, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA.

in Thailand and Pakistan after SEATO's creation, as well as the intensification of corruption in the Philippines, were prime examples of this. No Asian member of SEATO was immune.

Still, the biggest challenge was that there were signs that SEATO's Asian members were not loyal to the US because they were already exploring relations with the Soviet bloc. Since this would upset Western nations, it suggested SEATO's Asian members were not satisfied with their relationship with the Western bloc. Thailand disregarded SEATO recommendations by softening its policy toward the PRC and visiting Beijing on May Day, which was celebrated internationally by leftists to express appreciation for the working class and their struggles. To make it seem that the US was not singlehandedly trying to influence Thailand, the US embassy in Bangkok recommended having SEATO members Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines probe Thailand for an explanation for, and try to get them to reverse, that behavior.<sup>477</sup> Furthermore, less than a year after SEATO began meeting as an organization, US intelligence reported that the Thai press announced a "barrage" of neutralist statements and attributed them to "high Thai officials." The report did not specify what the statements were and who made them, but this made it seem like Thailand's "official line" to the Thai public. US intelligence concluded that this "'neutralist climate' ... [was] having extremely adverse effects on USIS programs in Thailand." Consequently, "if events should force high level talks between the US and Peiping [Beijing] or Moscow regarding Southeast Asia, the Thai Government should be consulted as a partner, not confronted with a *fait accompli*" (that is, a "done deal" that could not be changed). This signified that the US believed that it could not even count on Thailand to be its ally, and that was where SEATO was headquartered.<sup>478</sup> US intelligence later reported that there was increased

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<sup>477</sup> Intelligence Notes, May 16, 1957, OCB 350.05 (File #4) (7), Box 112, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>478</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 511, Dec. 6, 1955, OCB 350.05 (File #2) (9), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC.

anti-Americanism among many Thai students. Over 100 of them applied for scholarships to study in the USSR where they could be indoctrinated with communist propaganda. Nonetheless, the report did not give the number of Thai students in the US or SEATO programs as a standard of comparison.<sup>479</sup>

US intelligence also reported that Pakistan pursued relations with the Soviet bloc, which included the Pakistani prime minister visiting Beijing.<sup>480</sup> US intelligence explained that the Soviets even urged Pakistan to abandon SEATO and embrace the “five principles” for peaceful coexistence that India and the PRC had promoted before the Bandung Conference. Yet, the Soviets added that doing so was not required for Soviet aid or friendship, and Khrushchev, the USSR’s leader, might accept an invitation to visit Pakistan.<sup>481</sup> US intelligence explaining how the Soviets approached nations that were in collective-security pacts with the US warrants some comparative analysis. The US expected loyalty from its SEATO allies, and the Soviets attempted to steer them away from US-led collective-security pacts toward neutrality. Moreover, while the Soviets seemed to be open to giving aid and friendship to developing nations that were aligned with the West, the US’ treatment of communist nations, like the PRC, was exactly the opposite. US policy was to not even recognize the PRC’s legitimacy and maintain an economic embargo against it. Similarly, it is difficult to envision the Eisenhower administration offering aid and friendship to other communist regimes in the developing world, such as North Vietnam, North Korea, or Cuba. The US tried to isolate and put pressure on regimes that aligned with communists, while the Soviets still tried to maintain good relations with a nation like Pakistan

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<sup>479</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 597, Apr. 9, 1956, OCB 350.05 (File #3) (2), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>480</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts, May 7, 1956, 2, OCB 350.05 (File #3) (3), Box 111 B, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>481</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 589, Mar. 28, 1956, OCB 350.05 (File #3) (2), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC.

that was in two anticommunist collective-security alliances. Nonetheless, this could still be interpreted as the Soviets not being strictly altruistic because they had the geopolitical motive to weaken Pakistan's bond with the West.

In SEATO's first year, there were realizations that there was growing Soviet-bloc influence in the region and that it was necessary to take steps to counter it. SEATO's Psychological Warfare Ad-Hoc Committee met in Manila in 1955. Its report explained that whoever took the initiative would likely win the propaganda battle because of Southeast Asians' "political and social immaturity." In addition, one of the stated "assumptions" of the report was "the gullibility and poverty of most of the peoples of Asia make them easily susceptible to the demagogic slogans of communism." The report explicitly using loaded language that almost universally branded the people living in SEATO's treaty area as having "immaturity" and "gullibility" looks tainted with paternalism and Orientalism from today's perspective, but it reflected what SEATO's Psychological Warfare Ad-Hoc Committee reported at that time. The report also revealed that the Soviet bloc concentrated on propaganda as their main tactic in a "cold peace," which the committee argued was more difficult to counter than war, and the Soviet bloc prioritized the SEATO treaty area. There was growing nationalism and discontent among ethnic and religious minorities throughout Southeast Asia, especially from overseas Chinese, and SEATO's efforts to combat propaganda were inadequate. The report's recommendations were for SEATO's members to reevaluate their propaganda programs, focus their propaganda efforts on developing greater national and regional unity, place more emphasis overall on propaganda, and exchange psychological warfare instructors and trainees. Furthermore, SEATO should have committees that worked on propaganda efforts share information better, consolidate, meet at

least every three months, and agree on common definitions.<sup>482</sup> Hence, SEATO leaders understood what was riding on this propaganda war with the Soviet bloc and formed a plan to counter the growing the problem.

The US tried to promote SEATO from its inception. A 1955 OCB report stated that there were public announcements about SEATO at SEATO meetings and through USIS. The report stated that propaganda efforts were reaching a point where the “publicizing of activities can bear fruit.”<sup>483</sup> At a meeting for the SEATO Military Staff Planners, a US public information officer organized the production and distribution of propaganda for representatives from every SEATO member to take back to their nation and use. There were 5,000 still pictures, 25,000 feet of motion picture, and 3,000 feet of television film. USIS was also creating a documentary film about what SEATO was doing. Furthermore, there were six recorded radio interviews with delegates in their native languages, three communiques, and eight releases for the US press.<sup>484</sup>

The OCB’s Southeast Asia progress report that this information came from did not reveal what the general idea or common themes of those pieces of propaganda were. Nevertheless, although the report was silent on the detailed content of the propaganda, it seems likely that it was driven by American assumptions about the danger of international communism, which leaders and government officials in SEATO’s Asian members echoed to justify getting more US aid. In this scenario, the OCB would not have had much direct input from common people in Southeast Asia that needed the most persuading to support the “free world” against communism. Dulles’ reflections on SEATO’s first two council meetings support the position that government

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<sup>482</sup> SEATO Psychological Warfare Ad-Hoc Committee Report, Oct. 3, 1955, 3-8, OCB 091.4 Southeast Asia (File #4) (2), Box 80, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>483</sup> OCB Southeast Asia Progress Report, Nov. 29, 1955, 3, 9, OCB 091.4 Southeast Asia (File #4) (5), Box 80, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>484</sup> Southeast Asia Progress Report, Dec. 7, 1955, 1, OCB 091.4 Southeast Asia (File #4) (5), Box 80, OCB Central File, ENSC (hereafter, Southeast Asia Progress Report Dec. 1955).

officials in SEATO's Asian members backed US objectives. After SEATO's first council meeting, Dulles reported that the leaders in SEATO's Asian members were vigorous and able men who were aware of the danger of communism and willing to surmount it.<sup>485</sup> At the second council meeting, Dulles thanked the Asian members for their political wisdom and experience, as well as their efforts at opposing tyranny. This reflected the US' efforts to get buy-in from the leaders in SEATO's Asian members. SEATO tried to get buy-in from having its first three major meetings in the three Asian member states. The host chaired each one, and the Pakistanis referred to it as a "great honour."<sup>486</sup> This extends historian Daniel Fineman's argument that SEATO's first official meeting was held in Thailand because it highlighted the importance of the only SEATO member in mainland Southeast Asia.<sup>487</sup>

Courting buy-in for SEATO from high-ranking government officials in SEATO member nations continued throughout Eisenhower's presidency. In 1960, in Washington DC, Eisenhower hosted a "stag lunch," which meant only males were invited, for about 50 SEATO officials that represented every member.<sup>488</sup> To not show hierarchy, the seating chart had some invitees seated in alphabetical order by their nation and the US came last.<sup>489</sup> Eisenhower's speech at the stag lunch stressed the importance of diversity in SEATO, which he said protected the most vital part of the "free world" and faced the greatest challenges. Eisenhower emphasizing the preeminence of Southeast Asia when the NSC's basic national-security policy clearly focused on Europe could be seen as playing to his audience to unite government officials in SEATO members, but the NSC was preoccupied with the domino theory in Southeast Asia, and the Cold War was

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<sup>485</sup> Hagerty Diary Mar. 11.

<sup>486</sup> Second SEATO Council Meeting Verbatim Proceedings, 8-9, 33.

<sup>487</sup> Fineman, *A Special Relationship*, 198.

<sup>488</sup> Luncheon at the White House, May 31, 1960, 5-31-60 SEATO – Stag Luncheon (1), Box 88, EABT.

<sup>489</sup> Memo for Mrs. McCaffree, May 18, 1960, 5-31-60 SEATO – Stag Luncheon (1), Box 88, EABT.

largely static in Europe.<sup>490</sup> These “stag” events were common for the Eisenhower administration. They were exclusionary, but they were a way to make personal connections in an informal setting. Unfortunately, there was little record of any casual conversations. However, excluding women did not require much effort because photos from SEATO events revealed that invitees were almost exclusively elderly men in suits or military uniforms. This demographic contrasted sharply with the majority of Southeast Asians who were young, poor, or female, although those demographics did not have much political power.<sup>491</sup>

Historian Ronald Nairn asserts that “it became evident how dimly SEATO understood the mechanics of subversion, to say nothing of counter-action.”<sup>492</sup> However, the OCB’s Bishop Report challenges that assertion. Its examination of countersubversion addressed the need to turn talk among SEATO’s leaders into action. It stated, “While we recognize that security and other considerations preclude bringing most of our bilateral countersubversion arrangements in South East Asia into the SEATO forum, it is evident that we must give new impetus to existing projects in SEATO and develop new ones if SEATO is to play a useful role in this field. We sense a lagging interest within the Organization.” In addition, SEATO combatting subversion outside a member’s borders could drag them into a conflict that did not directly affect their national security. In practice, the Committee of Security Experts devoted most of its time to editing studies and filing them in the archive. Moreover, the committee dealt in generalities and produced no substantive solutions. The Bishop Report’s proposed remedy was to have a countersubversion seminar in Baguio, the Philippines. Since the US proposed, organized, and largely financed it, the US wanted to ensure its success. The seminar’s success depended on how

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<sup>490</sup> Text of Eisenhower’s Greetings, May 31, 1960, 5-31-60 SEATO – Stag Luncheon (1), Box 88, EABT.

<sup>491</sup> SEATO: The Second Year, 1956-57, SETO.

<sup>492</sup> Nairn, “SEATO,” 9.

well the US publicized it during and afterward. The Bishop Report noted that SEATO's Asian members were becoming increasingly ostracized in the region for their membership in SEATO.<sup>493</sup> The Bishop Report demonstrated that the US understood that there was a lack of progress in SEATO's countersubversion efforts, but it may have missed the mark of how to effectively change it. Doubling down on countersubversion propaganda did not address its conclusion that SEATO's Asian members were being ostracized for their support of US anticommunist efforts and doubling down would exacerbate that problem.

Historian Ronald Nairn contends that SEATO symposia were never coordinated.<sup>494</sup> Nevertheless, a SEATO publication described the four-day countersubversion seminar in Baguio as the most intensive and thorough study of the communist threat in Southeast Asia by an international group ever. Since SEATO was the first regional anticommunist organization, this claim was likely true. All members participated, and numerous officials, educators, publicists, and labor-union organizers made speeches. There were also plenary sessions that included everyone, as well as smaller committee meetings, and they informed the participants about communist techniques and effective countermeasures. Still, the conference's main purposes were to focus the public's attention on the threat of subversion in the greater Southeast Asia region and assist SEATO in countering it. SEATO published a book that was over 100 pages about the conference. US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Radford's speech captured the main takeaway from the American perspective. Since the US deterred Soviet-bloc military aggression, communists turned to subversion. Yet SEATO was just "scraps of paper" unless all members

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<sup>493</sup> Bishop Report, 14-16, 23.

<sup>494</sup> Nairn, "SEATO," 8.

fully backed the organization. Since people made governments, Radford argued, it was essential that Southeast Asians understood the threat that communist subversion posed.<sup>495</sup>

While there were large SEATO seminars like the one about countersubversion in Baguio, the governments of SEATO members did most of the pro-SEATO propaganda.<sup>496</sup> However, SEATO also produced some of its own. Historian Ronald Nairn argues that SEATO did little to promote itself besides issue communiqués after council meetings, but the following examples challenge that argument.<sup>497</sup> Much of the propaganda SEATO produced was printed literature, especially pamphlets. SEATO's Public Information Office and Research Office focused on exposing the communist threat and the disparity between what communists promised and delivered.<sup>498</sup> SEATO had produced a million printed items by 1957. English was the primary language since it was common in six of the eight members. It was native to most people in the US, UK, Australia, and New Zealand. While the Philippines and Pakistan had dozens of languages, they used English as a *lingua franca* after being colonies of English-speaking nations.<sup>499</sup> Yet, some SEATO publications were in Thai, and others were in languages that were frequently used in Pakistan like Urdu.<sup>500</sup> It is hard to estimate what percent of the people in the greater region could read one of those pamphlets, or would ever encounter one and be inclined to take an interest in it, but most people were preoccupied with village-level subsistence agriculture and did not have access to much education.

SEATO's rate of publication increased over Eisenhower's presidency. In fiscal year 1960-61, SEATO produced over a million pamphlets. The governments of SEATO's members

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<sup>495</sup> Baguio Seminar, Nov. 1957, 76, 79, 101, SETO.

<sup>496</sup> SEATO Record of Progress 1960-61, 18.

<sup>497</sup> Nairn, "SEATO," 16.

<sup>498</sup> SEATO Record, 41.

<sup>499</sup> Nairn, "SEATO," 13.

<sup>500</sup> SEATO Record, 63.

distributed most of them,<sup>501</sup> but they could also be ordered at no expense.<sup>502</sup> SEATO had annual, quarterly, and bimonthly regular publications<sup>503</sup> that highlighted recent and upcoming events, new publications, and the organization's accomplishments.<sup>504</sup> Some pictures in the publications depicted white soldiers being kind to Asian children, performing humanitarian activities like giving blood, or sharing cake and playing music with military servicemembers from Asian members.<sup>505</sup> Many pamphlets were dedicated to a specific topic. One example ridiculed the PRC's Great Leap Forward, which was an attempt to achieve very high rates of economic growth through dubious means and led to the mass starvation of millions of people in rural China.<sup>506</sup>

Most SEATO pamphlets had an anticommunist theme, and here is a detailed example that represented that genre. A twelve-page publication from 1960 titled "The Challenge" showcased and was authored by a British man, Douglas Hyde, who joined the communist party as a naïve youth before becoming an outspoken opponent of communism. The opening page had a photograph of a middle-aged, clean-cut white man wearing a tie. Hyde joined the communist party in 1928 at the age of seventeen and resigned 20 years later. In that timeframe, he was the editor at the London *Daily Worker*. After renouncing communism, he became an international lecturer, including at SEATO seminars in Asia, and authored books about his folly. Hyde explained communist tactics in training leaders, indoctrinating students, and infiltrating noncommunist groups. One of his main critiques was that communists criticized contradictions in capitalism, but they rationalized contradictions in communism because the theory of dialectical materialism, which the ideology was founded on, held that everything is in a state of

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<sup>501</sup> SEATO Record of Progress 1960-61, 18.

<sup>502</sup> SEATO Record Oct. 1960, 2.

<sup>503</sup> SEATO Record, Annex K, p. 1.

<sup>504</sup> SEATO Record Oct. 1960, 2, 15-16.

<sup>505</sup> SEATO Operation Albatross, Undated, SETO.

<sup>506</sup> Great Leap Forward?, 1959 or 1960, SETO.

flux. Consequently, communists had to perform “somersaults” to adapt. “The Challenge,” as Hyde explained it, was to educate people about the “evils” and “weaknesses of Communism,” and “then the whole fight against Communism can be immensely strengthened.”<sup>507</sup> It is noteworthy that SEATO used a white person from the UK to give an account of how becoming a communist was a mistake when this message from an Asian native to SEATO’s treaty area may have resonated better with the target audience.

In addition to the millions of pamphlets SEATO produced, SEATO’s Public Information Office disseminated propaganda through newspapers, displays, films, and television. An “energetic effort” to use radio<sup>508</sup> ramped up in 1960 and broadcast in many languages. At SEATO’s headquarters, there was the hardware to produce those items. It housed printing machines, a recording studio, and a darkroom to develop still and motion pictures. In 1959, SEATO even began broadcasting a weekly television program.<sup>509</sup> To make SEATO members seem less foreign to each other, propaganda exhibited the cultures and scenic wonders of the Asian members.<sup>510</sup> Unfortunately, I was unable to find many of these materials to assess their quality and validity. The documents from SEATO only summarized what was done.

Improving intercultural understanding was also a focus of SEATO’s Cultural Relations Office. The Thais, Filipinos, and Pakistanis all had very different cultures, and all those cultures were quite foreign to most Westerners. SEATO’s Cultural Relations Office had seminars that merged the East and West with topics like “traditional culture and technical progress in South-east Asia.” One SEATO project even involved cataloging ancient manuscripts in Pakistan.<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>507</sup> Douglas Hyde, *The Challenge*, 1960, SETO.

<sup>508</sup> SEATO Record of Progress 1960-61, 18.

<sup>509</sup> SEATO Record, 62-63.

<sup>510</sup> SEATO Record of Progress 1960-61, 18.

<sup>511</sup> SEATO Record, 54, 56.

Other attempts by SEATO to facilitate intercultural exchanges were a “Southeast Asian Round Table” and the creation of a SEATO cultural identity card.<sup>512</sup> SEATO also tried to promote direct intercultural relations by sending people from one member nation to interact with people in another. When Thai servicemen trained in New Zealand as aircraft mechanics, they visited private homes and helped with harvests at sheep farms.<sup>513</sup>

The OCB recommended that the US play a dynamic role in creating and disseminating SEATO propaganda. Some suggestions it had were emphasizing the nonmilitary role of SEATO through things like trade fairs and cultural groups, which could include musical and dramatic performances.<sup>514</sup> There were many examples of how the Eisenhower administration directly helped SEATO in its propaganda efforts. USIS collected, and forwarded, statements and publicity materials the US made to SEATO’s Public Relations Office<sup>515</sup> and sent personnel to Bangkok to work with SEATO’s public relations officer.<sup>516</sup> The US’ Regional Service Center in Manila gave “generous assistance” to publish materials for SEATO.<sup>517</sup> In 1955, Eisenhower announced the inauguration of daily Voice of America radio broadcasts into Cambodia and used those broadcasts to send his personal greetings.<sup>518</sup> The US ambassador to Thailand advised fulfilling Thailand’s request for mobile library units and radios to demonstrate how SEATO’s Information Committee could be a “clearing house for resources.”<sup>519</sup>

A specific example that was representative of propaganda USIS produced for SEATO was a 1959 film titled “The Children and the Bear,” which screened at commercial cinemas. The

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<sup>512</sup> SEATO Developments Nonmilitary, Jan. 16, 1957, 1, OCB 091.4 Southeast Asia (File #5) (7), Box 81, OCB Central File, ENSC (hereafter, SEATO Developments Nonmilitary).

<sup>513</sup> SEATO Record Mar. 1961, 18.

<sup>514</sup> Furthering US Objectives in SEATO, 2-3.

<sup>515</sup> Identifying SEATO with Aid Projects, 2.

<sup>516</sup> SEATO Developments Nonmilitary, 2.

<sup>517</sup> SEATO Record, 63.

<sup>518</sup> Eisenhower to Cambodian Embassy, Aug. 12, 1955, Cambodia (5), Box 6, International Series, EDDE.

<sup>519</sup> Intelligence Notes, Feb. 7, 1957, OCB 350.05 (File #4) (5), Box 112, OCB Central File, ENSC.

film's cartoon format, and the bear being the classic trope for Russian imperialism, suggested the goal of the film was to get youths to fear communism. In the fifteen-minute film, the narrative began with an abused bear in a zoo that children felt sorry for. The children's facial features and attire were stereotypes of different nationalities. When the bear broke out of his cage, he ate the zookeeper. The children became his friend, but he began sneakily eating the children. One of the children explained what was happening as the children who were eaten wanted to be eaten. Once the other children realized the bear was harmful, the bravest children fought the bear with little sticks. However, when the little sticks were ineffective, they tied their sticks together to make a "great SEATO club" that they had to lift together, and the bear ran away.<sup>520</sup>

Those examples of the US assisting SEATO in pursuing cultural diplomacy reflected trends in the New Look and extend historian Kenneth Osgood's work on Eisenhower's propaganda war in the developing world. Osgood argues that the Eisenhower administration recognized in its first year that aggressive anticommunist psychological warfare was not effective to persuade people in the developing world to align with the West because they generally did not believe that communism was as threatening as many Americans did. Thus, the administration began to emphasize cultural diplomacy over psychological warfare. The difference between them was that psychological warfare preyed on fear and instilled the evil of communism. Conversely, cultural diplomacy highlighted the wonders of American culture while trying not to reveal that the source of the propaganda was the US government. This shift also occurred because governments in the developing world imposed severe limitations on overt USIS propaganda activities done through the press, publications, motion pictures, and radio. By

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<sup>520</sup> SEATO Record of Progress 1960-61, 18. For the entire "The Children and the Bear" video, see CSP3.

comparison, teaching English and cultural programs, if they were not overtly blatant American propaganda, were generally tolerated.<sup>521</sup>

Historian Kevin Schultz argues that America embraced a tri-faith culture that incorporated Catholics and Jews into the mainstream Protestant culture after World War II.<sup>522</sup> Similarly, SEATO attempted to meld Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians to overcome diverse cultures and distinguish the “free world” from the Soviet bloc, which generally denounced organized religion as being fabricated and perpetuated by those with power to maintain their power. The NSC’s Southeast Asia policy from 1960 aimed to get Asian Buddhism to organize with “free world” religious leaders.<sup>523</sup> Dulles even sent greetings to delegates from every Buddhist nation when they met in Burma to commemorate the 2,500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Buddha’s death.<sup>524</sup> There was some evidence that this pro-religion theme resonated in SEATO. One of SEATO’s pamphlets titled “Communism and Religion” explained that every nation with a communist government waged war against religion.<sup>525</sup> In the US Senate hearing on ratifying SEATO, SEATO was described as the first time in the greater Southeast Asia region that Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian nations overcame their differences.<sup>526</sup> The second SEATO council meeting began with one minute of silent prayer or meditation for Buddhists. Then, the Thai delegate’s opening remarks specified that the meeting was in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and 17 percent of Thais were Muslim. He added that the Koran says, “God hates... aggressors,” and SEATO is “purely defensive.”<sup>527</sup> Although this evidence is anecdotal, it appears that in some cases SEATO’s Asian members identified the importance of religion as a real

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<sup>521</sup> Osgood, “Words and Deeds,” 18.

<sup>522</sup> Schultz, *Tri-Faith America*.

<sup>523</sup> NSC 6012, 8.

<sup>524</sup> Southeast Asia Progress Report Jul. 1956, Annex A, p. 1.

<sup>525</sup> Communism and Religion, 1961, SETO.

<sup>526</sup> SEATO Senate Nov., 37.

<sup>527</sup> Second SEATO Council Meeting Verbatim Proceedings, 2, 24, 26.

difference between the “free world” and communism, and US efforts were not just dismissed as scaremongering.

Although the Eisenhower administration made all those efforts to execute the New Look’s nonmilitary component of propaganda in the greater Southeast Asia region to increase SEATO’s unity and popularity, it faced many challenges. Six key factors help explain the problems it encountered. First, Eisenhower’s actions around the 1960 SEATO council meeting in Washington indicated that he did not treat SEATO as a high priority. Even though it was the last opportunity for the US to host one during his presidency, and it had not done so yet, Eisenhower attempted to relocate the meeting to the Philippines and just make an appearance during a trip to Asia.<sup>528</sup> Furthermore, the meeting’s dates were changed after it was preempted by a summit with the Soviets.<sup>529</sup> When the State Department made a poster to publicize the meeting, the memo specified that Eisenhower would not have to be burdened by signing it because they could use a facsimile of his signature.<sup>530</sup> SEATO Secretary General Sarasin wanted Eisenhower to open the meeting and attend the lunch, which the State Department encouraged. Still, Eisenhower made excuses and retorted that just the luncheon was “sufficient from the SEATO standpoint.” Ultimately, he agreed to do both if his absence would offend other members, but he would be “highly displeased to do so.”<sup>531</sup> Eisenhower’s one-on-one meeting with Sarasin was only a “ten-minute courtesy call.”<sup>532</sup> Then, when the SEATO council designated that the anniversary of the signing of the Manila Pact would henceforth be “SEATO Day,” Secretary of State Herter had to recommend to Eisenhower that he agree to attach his name to a statement that praised SEATO.<sup>533</sup>

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<sup>528</sup> Krebs to Brewster, Mar. 31, 1959, Mar. 1959 (1), Box 6, ECAH.

<sup>529</sup> Herter to Eisenhower, Mar. 25, 1960, SEATO, Box 33, Administration, EDDE.

<sup>530</sup> Calhoun to Goodpaster, Mar. 31, 1960, SEATO, Box 33, Administration, EDDE.

<sup>531</sup> Memo of Conference with Eisenhower, May 26, 1960, State Department – 1960 (6), Box 4, State Dept., Subject, EOSS.

<sup>532</sup> Herter to Eisenhower, Apr. 8, 1960, SEATO, Box 33, Administration, EDDE.

<sup>533</sup> Herter to Eisenhower, Sep. 1, 1960, SEATO, Box 33, Administration, EDDE.

Second, the tactics used to disseminate propaganda proved problematic. Some SEATO publications even had a disclaimer that its content did not necessarily represent the views of SEATO and its members. Openly disassociating the source from the content was not a good approach to use the content to get people to support a source that was purportedly unified behind a worthy cause like opposing communism.<sup>534</sup> Similarly, although the US was the principal contributor to SEATO propaganda, US intelligence reported that it would be “far more effective” for Asians to publicize SEATO in the region. The US doing so would be “unproductive” because propaganda from Western sources was unpopular.<sup>535</sup> While on a trip to Asia, primarily for SEATO, Dulles concluded that the propaganda disseminated by USIS was “too voluminous and destroyed its own effect.” Hence, “greater selectivity would make the USIS product more effective.”<sup>536</sup> Yet, Dulles’ position may have only been a gut feeling because historian Jason Parker argues that there was no good metric to measure how effective US propaganda was during the early Cold War. Parker makes a valid point because it is hard to imagine a practical way to quantify the effect of US propaganda in many parts of the developing world.<sup>537</sup> In addition, Eisenhower supported private “people-to-people” programs,<sup>538</sup> but in a memo to Eisenhower, Dulles stated that the State Department needed “to explore the possibilities of utilizing the People-to-People Programs more effectively in the SEATO area.”<sup>539</sup> The NSC even recommended reducing the number of US officials in Southeast Asia because locals protested

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<sup>534</sup> SEATO Record Oct. 1960, 2.

<sup>535</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 485, Oct. 27, 1955, OCB 350.05 (File #2) (8), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>536</sup> 280<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 1, 5.

<sup>537</sup> Parker, *Hearts, Minds, Voices*, 168.

<sup>538</sup> Eisenhower to Dulles, Sep. 21, 1957, White House Correspondence – General 1957 (4), Box 5, White House Memoranda, EJFD (hereafter, Eisenhower to Dulles Sep. 1957).

<sup>539</sup> Dulles to Eisenhower, Sep. 26, 1957, 1, State Department – 1957 (5), Box 2, State Dept., Subject, EOSS.

Americans having privileged positions and lifestyles.<sup>540</sup> Most SEATO staff had short tours.<sup>541</sup> Related to this, historian Ronald Nairn notes that SEATO personnel did not typically view their posting as a career move, gave their allegiance to their nation over SEATO, and stayed in enclaves in Bangkok isolated from local Thai culture. In comparison, thousands of US personnel were stationed overseas at NATO facilities and regularly interacted with local populations.<sup>542</sup>

Third, the strategy of trying to create a regional anticommunist identity for Southeast Asia through SEATO propaganda was suspect. A 1959 OCB report stated that regional evaluations of SEATO should be replaced by national evaluations because nations had divergent attitudes and varying degrees of participation in SEATO. Moreover, “The Thai Foreign Minister” was trying “to develop a Southeast Asian Community of nations separate and distinct from SEATO.”<sup>543</sup> Even after SEATO’s creation, US reports continued to explain that most Asians feared the West more than communism because communism was seen, in part, as opposing Western colonialism. While national leaders in SEATO’s Asian members did not see collective security as US aggression, communist propaganda effectively delivered that message to the masses.<sup>544</sup> A memo from Eisenhower to Dulles stated that SEATO Secretary General Sarasin realized the intensity of the effort of communists to pit Asians against the West, which Sarasin believed could not be countered by merely attacking communist policies. This information caused Eisenhower to question USIS’ effectiveness in Southeast Asia.<sup>545</sup> Likewise, a message from the US’ SEATO delegation said that press coverage of the US promoting its willingness to use nuclear weapons through SEATO just played into communist propaganda

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<sup>540</sup> NSC 6012, 8.

<sup>541</sup> Bishop Report, 25.

<sup>542</sup> Nairn, “SEATO,” 12.

<sup>543</sup> Briefing Memo on Southeast Asia, Jul. 30, 1959, 1, Southeast Asia (1), Box 7, OCB Secretariat, ENSC.

<sup>544</sup> McCardle Report, 5, 18.

<sup>545</sup> Eisenhower to Dulles Sep. 1957.

about how aggressive the West was.<sup>546</sup> Chatham House concluded that it was easier for communists to undertake subversion in Southeast Asia than it was for the West to counter it. This aligned with US assessments. The fundamental problem was the message. Communists portrayed themselves as opposing Western imperialism, which the people of the greater region wanted to end.<sup>547</sup> As historian Kumar Ramakrishna put it, successful propaganda required not just words, but deeds, and SEATO simply did not deliver enough tangible benefits to win the support of the masses in Southeast Asia.<sup>548</sup>

Fourth, propaganda was implemented in ways that were better suited to influence developed nations than reach the masses in Southeast Asia. In an ANZUS meeting, discussions revealed that many Southeast Asians lived in rural villages that were a “world unto itself.” Furthermore, their high illiteracy rates made printed material virtually “useless.”<sup>549</sup> Consequently, Chatham House called radio the most important medium for propaganda, but there were only three radios per thousand people in Southeast Asia, and the British Broadcasting Corporation’s (BBC) audience in the region was predominantly from the upper class. The ratio of people with access to television and film was likely even lower and from a more elite demographic. Voice of America and the BBC were also competing against Soviet-bloc radio broadcasts in Asian languages.<sup>550</sup> There were language barriers too. Westerners could rarely communicate in Southeast Asian vernaculars and had a limited grasp of local cultures. Although former colonies often used their colonizer’s language as a *lingua franca*, outside educated elites,

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<sup>546</sup> SEATO Delegation to State Department, Mar. 9, 1956, 201, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>547</sup> Chatham House Collective Defence, 143.

<sup>548</sup> Ramakrishna, *Emergency Propaganda*, 205.

<sup>549</sup> ANZUS Meeting Minutes, Oct. 26, 1959, 165, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16 (hereafter, ANZUS Meeting Minutes Oct. 1959).

<sup>550</sup> Chatham House Collective Defence, 128-29.

fluency was more limited.<sup>551</sup> For example, the OCB reported the need for a Lao-English dictionary to improve communications.<sup>552</sup>

Fifth, there were many examples of how the Eisenhower administration exhibited disrespect for Southeast Asians. When the Cambodians felt threatened by the Thais interfering in their internal affairs, in an NSC meeting, CIA Director Allen Dulles referred to what was happening as an “opera bouffe,” which was famous for using farce.<sup>553</sup> In an earlier NSC meeting, Eisenhower inquired if there were ethnic and language differences in Southeast Asia. Since Laos was landlocked, he wondered if it could be absorbed by Thailand. Allen Dulles explained that the area was divided between chopsticks in Vietnam and Laos, meaning Chinese influence, and knives in Thailand and Cambodia, meaning Indian influence.<sup>554</sup> A US background briefing on Cambodian Prime Minister Norodom Sihanouk even referred to him as an “enraged sheep” that was unable to resolve the conflict between his heritage of Oriental despotism and study of the French enlightenment.<sup>555</sup> Lastly, the notes from US Secretary of Defense McElroy’s trip to Asia described indigenous women as little more than sex objects, food as “fish rot to the point of putrefaction,” and children as little, naked, brown, and playing in sewers where they had to learn to swim before they could walk so they would not drown.<sup>556</sup> While it is unlikely that anybody from SEATO’s Asian members would have had known about these comments, they demonstrated that even with the NSC’s efforts to create unity through regional anticommunist solidarity, high US officials had a limited grasp of their culture and trouble seeing the people they wanted to unify with as equals with legitimate concerns.

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<sup>551</sup> Nairn, “SEATO,” 8.

<sup>552</sup> Memo of OCB Meeting, Oct. 1, 1959, 3, Southeast Asia (2), Box 7, OCB Secretariat, ENSC (hereafter, OCB Meeting Oct. 1959).

<sup>553</sup> 395<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Jan. 26, 1959, 5, Box 11, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 395<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>554</sup> 374<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Jul. 31, 1958, 3-4, Box 10, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>555</sup> Sihanouk Biographic Sketch, Undated, 3, Cambodia (5), Box 6, International, EDDE.

<sup>556</sup> McElroy Trip, 33-34.

These examples extend scholarship that many historians have done about insensitive cultural attitudes by Americans towards Southeast Asians. For example, historian Michael Hunt found that Americans used stereotypes to dehumanize Southeast Asians by referring to them with derogatory terms like “slopes” and “gooks.”<sup>557</sup> In addition, historian Kenton Clymer has studied how people in the SEATO treaty area embraced their own religion, but resisted different ones, especially if they were imposed by Westerners. In Cambodia, there were crackdowns against Christian missionaries that tried to convert the Buddhist majority. Publications by missionaries were subject to complete censorship, Evangelism and the distribution of their literature became almost impossible, and Christian workers were sometimes jailed. Hence, there was reason to doubt that SEATO trying to unite behind religion in general would be effective because there was evidence that outside religions would be resisted.<sup>558</sup>

While the views of Eisenhower administration officials could be dismissed as them being a product of their times, they also demonstrated how it might be difficult for US officials to take local concerns seriously in Southeast Asia. The NSC had an anticommunist focus for its policies that was not always in alignment with the region’s desires for independence from the West. Furthermore, this conduct replicated the prejudicial views that the European colonial powers were infamous for holding, and the US saw itself as being disconnected from colonialism because it had been a colony itself, had fewer colonies and willingly granted the Philippines independence, and saw its version of colonialism in places like the Philippines as more benevolent and less exploitive than European colonialism. Therefore, it was not surprising that SEATO’s Asian members exhibited a halfhearted commitment to the organization when they

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<sup>557</sup> Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 175.

<sup>558</sup> Clymer, *The United States and Cambodia, 1870-1969*, 80.

could likely sense that people from SEATO's Western members did not see people who looked like them as true equals.

Sixth, even if the Eisenhower administration had a message that resonated with Southeast Asians, the resources it allocated to propaganda were dwarfed even by those for economic development, let alone military spending, and reflected its priorities. Historian Kenneth Osgood has argued that besting the Soviets with propaganda was a central proposition of the New Look, but an analysis of US budgets brings that argument into question for Southeast Asia. At the end of Eisenhower's presidency, the administration's budget for information programs in mainland Southeast Asia was just \$6 million,<sup>559</sup> and there was only another \$2 million for Pakistan.<sup>560</sup> Those figures extend historian Laura Belmonte's criticism of the New Look that in 1960 just 1 percent of defense-related spending was allocated toward propaganda everywhere.<sup>561</sup> Nonetheless, a direct spending comparison was problematic. Military personnel and hardware like jets were expensive to prepare and maintain. Conversely, pamphlets and radio broadcasts were relatively inexpensive. Apart from budgets, another indication of priorities in SEATO was that the Asian members repeatedly expressed their desire for increased funding for economic development but not for more propaganda.

There are some examples of insufficient funding for SEATO propaganda. Because of SEATO's inadequate capacity to print materials, a private company had to be hired to do most of SEATO's printing. While outsourcing does not necessarily equate with a lack of resources, it did mean SEATO did not make adequate long-term investments in the capital equipment it needed to produce all the propaganda material it wanted to create. This suggested underfunding, and

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<sup>559</sup> NSC 6012, 19; Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 71.

<sup>560</sup> NSC 5909/1, 24.

<sup>561</sup> Belmonte, *Selling the American Way*, 179.

SEATO used outsourcing to fill a deficiency.<sup>562</sup> In another instance, after the SEATO Research Service Center expected several hundred books from the US State Department, it became “considerably upset” when it only received ten used books. The center’s director was constantly inquiring about the US fulfilling its promises.<sup>563</sup> In the Philippines, General Carlos Romulo recommended that the US express more interest in SEATO to stimulate enthusiasm. Areas where he wanted additional resources were for information, intelligence, and countersubversion programs, as well as the school for psychological warfare. Nonetheless, the US intelligence document that this information came from did not reveal how much he wanted or received. Thus, it is difficult to evaluate if his requests were feasible or if he had a plan for using the additional resources that was sound. Still, with the limited success SEATO’s efforts had overall with the prevailing anticommunist message, more funding might not have made much of a difference in swaying popular opinion throughout the region.<sup>564</sup>

Despite the Eisenhower administration’s efforts to use SEATO to facilitate the New Look’s component of propaganda to make the people in Southeast Asia more pro-West, and unify SEATO and the region, the results the administration perceived were that it generally lacked success. This was even true in Thailand where SEATO was headquartered. The Thais originally believed that because SEATO was multilateral and included Asian members, it could be used to justify a foreign policy that was loyal to the US and would avoid criticism from liberals that its leaders were puppets and please conservatives with closer ties to US security.<sup>565</sup> Nevertheless, US intelligence reported that the US ambassador to Thailand requested an official

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<sup>562</sup> SEATO Record, 63.

<sup>563</sup> Intelligence Notes, Nov. 7, 1956, OCB 350.05 (File #4) (1), Box 111 B, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>564</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 531, Jan. 5, 1956, 2, OCB 350.05 (File #2) (10), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC (hereafter, Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 531).

<sup>565</sup> Fineman, *A Special Relationship*, 197.

statement from the US that declared its support for SEATO to counter “a current rash of news articles reflecting adversely on the effectiveness and unity of that organization [SEATO].”<sup>566</sup> Discussions from a subsequent NSC meeting about Sarit when he became Thailand’s military dictator in a coup revealed that his “newspaper in Bangkok was by all odds the most anti-American in the city.”<sup>567</sup> These developments cast doubt on historian Kenneth Osgood’s contention that US propaganda efforts were unobstructed in Thailand.<sup>568</sup>

There is also evidence that the Eisenhower administration’s shortcomings with implementing propaganda through SEATO extended beyond Thailand and applied to the entire greater Southeast Asia region. In a SEATO meeting in 1960, Selwyn Lloyd, the UK’s secretary of state of foreign affairs, stated, “As for propaganda offensives, there is [the] question whether [the] free world is acting effectively. Communists have given [the] impression their aid to underdeveloped countries [is] equivalent to [the] free world’s.” Lloyd argued that the communists “must be convinced they will not get away with verbal pledges and uncontrolled promises.”<sup>569</sup> US intelligence explained that Philippine General Romulo called SEATO a “paper façade” that was failing to capture the imagination of Asians.<sup>570</sup> In a 1955 ANZUS meeting, the US representative expressed how it was generally agreed that SEATO had received poor press throughout Asia, and he encouraged efforts to reverse that trend.<sup>571</sup> In 1959, a State Department memo revealed that SEATO was criticized throughout Asia because the US, UK, and France were seen as trying to mastermind Asian affairs,<sup>572</sup> and an earlier State Department memo

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<sup>566</sup> Intelligence Notes, Feb. 25, 1957, OCB 350.05 (File #4) (5), Box 112, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>567</sup> 337<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 9.

<sup>568</sup> Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 123.

<sup>569</sup> State Department Circular Telegram, Jun. 1, 1960, 191, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16 (State Department Circular Telegram Jun. 1960).

<sup>570</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 531, 2.

<sup>571</sup> ANZUS Minutes, Sep. 24, 1955, 142, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>572</sup> State Department Memo of Conversation, Feb. 5, 1959, 70, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16 (hereafter, State Department Conversation Feb. 1959).

revealed that the US tended to receive the “lion’s share” of the blame for whatever SEATO did. Although the memo did not reveal if this was surprising to anyone, since the US was the major military, financial, and public backer of SEATO, that could be expected.<sup>573</sup>

In its study of SEATO, the British thinktank Chatham House found that the political effects of SEATO had to be viewed beyond governmental relationships. While it was previously explained in this dissertation that the governments in SEATO’s Asian members exaggerated the communist threat and outwardly said that they would oppose it to get more aid, Chatham House argued that public opinion was critical, and SEATO’s Asian members were vulnerable to criticism from domestic dissidents.<sup>574</sup> This extends the findings of other historians. For example, scholar Bijan Mohapatra chronicles that public opinion in Pakistan supported the government questioning the wisdom of continuing its SEATO membership.<sup>575</sup> More generally, historian Kenton Clymer notes how the Cambodian deputy prime minister explained that “the Americans have a genius for making themselves unpopular in Asia.”<sup>576</sup>

The examples from primary and secondary sources in the previous paragraphs demonstrated some of the results of the Eisenhower administration’s efforts to use the New Look’s component of propaganda, even with the help of SEATO, to increase the popularity of SEATO and the US in the greater Southeast Asia region. Officials in the Eisenhower administration and SEATO were aware of the struggles to bring the area’s peoples to support the part of the NSC’s regional objective to have pro-West nations, not only in the region generally,

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<sup>573</sup> Parsons to State Department, Jan. 25, 1957, 278, in FRUS, 1955-57. V. 21 (hereafter, Parsons to State Department Jan. 1957).

<sup>574</sup> Chatham House Collective Defence, 125-26.

<sup>575</sup> Mohapatra, *United States-Pakistan Military Alliance*, 108.

<sup>576</sup> Clymer, *The United States and Cambodia, 1870-1969*, 81.

but even in SEATO's Asian members. Ultimately, forming an alliance between the West and Asians did not meld diverse cultures, it exposed their differences and pushed them farther apart.

Historian Kenneth Osgood has studied the Eisenhower administration's use of propaganda extensively and posits an explanation for the poor results, which extends the primary source evidence unearthed in this dissertation about SEATO. Osgood argues that the main problem was the gap between the administration's words and deeds and how the intended audience of US propaganda in the developing world recognized this. There were two major issues, which made the US appear hypocritical, that the administration never adequately remedied. First, the US said it wanted independence for colonies, but it rarely took the side of colonized people in disputes with their European colonizers because the US did not want to jeopardize its relationships with its European allies. A prime example from Southeast Asia was Indonesia's dispute with the Dutch over which nation should control the western portion of New Guinea. This demonstrated that the administration prioritized its European allies and security in Europe over the aspirations for freedom by people in the developing world.<sup>577</sup>

The second issue Osgood identified that made the US appear hypocritical was that it championed equality, but there was domestic racism against people of color in the US. Some white Americans engaged in a backlash against the civil rights movement that gained momentum during Eisenhower's presidency. Eisenhower was not a natural staunch advocate for racial equality, and he did not want to alienate Congressmembers and voters that he needed politically. Consequently, this caused him to support civil rights for people of color in the US unenthusiastically. Communist propaganda exploited America's domestic white supremacy and capitalized on technological progress in the 1950s that allowed the greater ubiquity of visual

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<sup>577</sup> Osgood, "Words and Deeds," 18.

media internationally through photographs, film, and television. Eisenhower understood these problems theoretically, but he never implemented policies to address them. Those two factors, domestic racism and the US' hesitancy to oppose colonialism, Osgood argues, contributed to the broader failure of the US' information policy to effectively win the hearts and minds of many Third World audiences.<sup>578</sup>

Osgood's argument can be applied to Southeast Asia and SEATO. A prime example is that the Bandung Conference was in part a response to the creation of SEATO, and colonialism and racism were two of their main grievances. In terms of those factors directly impeding SEATO, the previously mentioned Pacific Charter was another document that was created and signed at the Manila Conference in tandem with the Manila Pact that created SEATO. The Pacific Charter encouraged the aspirations of colonized peoples and promoted self-determination and equality. It was championed by SEATO's Asian members to make clear that SEATO was not a guise for Western imperialism. Yet, the Pacific Charter was opposed by SEATO's Western members besides the US because the British and French had colonies in the treaty area, and the Australians and New Zealanders felt more comfortable with European control of nearby territory. Consequently, the issues of colonialism and racism drove a wedge in SEATO from its inception and the organization further fractured on racial lines. With the additional baggage the US had from its domestic racism and hesitancy to oppose colonialism, establishing a regional anticommunist identity became even more challenging. As chapter five of this dissertation will detail, the popular backlash against Western colonialism and racism factored into the calculus of nations unaffiliated with SEATO in the greater region for choosing not to join, which seriously undercut SEATO's effectiveness as a regional collective-security organization.

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<sup>578</sup> Osgood, "Words and Deeds," 18.

Although the US and SEATO struggled to use propaganda effectively, there was evidence that the communists had success using it in the greater Southeast Asia region. SEATO Secretary General Sarasin explained that no nation in the treaty area had halted the flow of communist propaganda, domestic communists were even active in nations that had made their Communist Party illegal, and the PRC made continual efforts to exploit its racial and cultural ties to overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia.<sup>579</sup> During Eisenhower's last year as president, a discussion in a SEATO meeting expressed the need for "halting Communist influence" in Southeast Asia from the USSR and PRC.<sup>580</sup> SEATO's second seminar on countersubversion took place in Pakistan in 1960. Numerous people gave speeches, including representatives from every Asian member, that revealed the growing threat from communist subversion. After analyzing the trend,<sup>581</sup> the CIA's Richard Bissell,<sup>582</sup> who was introduced as a State Department consultant, declared, "We have to conclude that the threat of subversion in the SEATO area... is apt to be greater in the years to come."<sup>583</sup> Pakistan even established diplomatic relations with the PRC to look for another way to deter India, which indicated that the Pakistanis did not believe SEATO was effective in doing that.<sup>584</sup>

### *Disunity in SEATO*

The NSC's propaganda efforts through SEATO were designed, in part, to unify SEATO as part of creating regional anticommunist solidarity. Nevertheless, not only did the US struggle

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<sup>579</sup> "Southeast Asia Treaty Organization," *International Organization* Vol. 14, No. 2 (Spring, 1960), 362, UNWI.

<sup>580</sup> State Department Circular Telegram Jun. 1960, 191.

<sup>581</sup> SEATO News Bulletin, May 1960, 3-7, SETO (hereafter, SEATO News Bulletin May 1960).

<sup>582</sup> 89<sup>th</sup> Congress, Second Session, Volume 112 – Part 8, May 3-18, 1966, 9575, CONR (hereafter, Congressional Record May 1966).

<sup>583</sup> SEATO News Bulletin May 1960, 6.

<sup>584</sup> Boyd, "Communist China and SEATO," 170.

to secure solid partnerships with SEATO's Asian members, but there were also signs of disunity between the US and SEATO's other Western members that undermined SEATO's effectiveness. Historian Derek Leebaert found that even though there was a "special relationship" between the US and UK during the Cold War, there were still many tensions between those allies during Eisenhower's presidency, on a variety of issues, despite the UK having prime ministers from its Conservative Party the entire time.<sup>585</sup> Primary source evidence about SEATO extends Leebaert's contention. For example, US intelligence reported that the UK was concerned that the US had "written off Southeast Asia" after getting the Manila Pact, which established SEATO's treaty.<sup>586</sup> Simultaneously, Dulles expressed that he believed the UK never really wanted SEATO.<sup>587</sup> Furthermore, US intelligence reported that the US embassy in Bangkok advised taking a firm stand against the UK's opposition to SEATO distributing anticommunist printed materials. The UK's actions on this issue undermined decisions made within SEATO and, what the report referred to as, SEATO's only significant civil program, which the US had committed considerable support for.<sup>588</sup>

This evidence supports historian G. Wyn Rees' position that the US and UK had different priorities in Southeast Asia. Rees explains that the British believed SEATO was a US-led organization that focused on the protocol states in Indochina. Conversely, the British concentrated on their colonies in Malaya and Singapore. There was even a separate organization, ANZAM, the Anglo-New Zealand-Australia-Malaya security agreement. The British also prioritized their Southeast Asian colonial interests in Brunei (in northern Borneo, which was a

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<sup>585</sup> Leebaert, *Grand Improvisation*, Chapters 19-20.

<sup>586</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 242, Oct. 13, 1954, OCB 350.05 (File #1) (9), Box 110, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>587</sup> State Department Conversation Oct. 1955, 148.

<sup>588</sup> Intelligence Notes, May 13, 1957, OCB 350.05 (File #4) (7), Box 112, OCB Central File, ENSC.

large island that Indonesia controlled most of), as well as nearby Hong Kong. Meanwhile, the Americans worried that the apparent indifference of the British about SEATO would demotivate SEATO's other members. The New Look depended on sharing responsibilities with US allies, but the US believed the British were not bearing their fair share of the defense burden for Southeast Asia.<sup>589</sup> While Rees' contention about the US prioritizing the protocol states has merit, the New Look was a universal strategy, and the US would have been concerned about communist advances in British colonies. Thus, the US' focus on Indochina was because it was the region's hot spot, and the British had relatively firm control in their colonies.

Allying with Western democracies in collective security also meant elections could bring changes that could further expose tensions in SEATO, even between the organization's three strongest powers, the US, UK, and France. The effect of elections was most evident in France. Historian Jean-Pierre Rioux has documented how when socialist Guy Mollet became France's prime minister in 1956, it caused France to shift to the left politically.<sup>590</sup> Happenings in SEATO extend Rioux's argument. Mollet's foreign minister declared that France had "no unanimity of policy" with the US and UK in a speech to the Anglo-American press. This affected SEATO. At a SEATO council meeting, France's foreign minister proclaimed the end of the "era of aggression" by the West and promoted coexistence with the Soviet bloc.<sup>591</sup> US intelligence reported that France also signed a treaty with the PRC,<sup>592</sup> which the US wanted to isolate diplomatically and economically. The US also saw the PRC as the main external threat to Southeast Asia.

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<sup>589</sup> Rees, *Anglo-American Approaches to Alliance Security, 1955-60*, 134.

<sup>590</sup> Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944-1958*, 254-63.

<sup>591</sup> USVR, 4A3, v.

<sup>592</sup> Intelligence Notes, Aug. 14, 1956, 1, OCB 350.05 (File #3) (6), Box 111 B, OCB Central File, ENSC.

That evidence of the division between the US and France over Southeast Asia extends scholarship by historian Kathryn Statler. She posits that there was a contradiction between the Eisenhower administration wanting allies in the New Look for collective security and the administration acting unilaterally to marginalize other SEATO members, and especially the French, with its Vietnam policy.<sup>593</sup> This argument has merit. Both the French and British were allies in collective security in SEATO and in Europe. The US' effort to replace France in Vietnam when the French were struggling to maintain their prestige was disrespectful to the French. The British were strong supporters of the Geneva Accords, which they took a leading role in creating, and the US' policy in Vietnam was not consistent with the spirit of neutrality behind the accords. Collective security is premised on unity around common interests and objectives, which will be detailed in chapter five of this dissertation. A key component of the New Look was the US sharing responsibilities with allies through collective security. When the US acted unilaterally in its Vietnam policy, it created divisions between the leading powers in SEATO. Hence, the effects of SEATO not sufficiently uniting its members with propaganda had policy implications for the NSC in Southeast Asia.

Comparatively, while the French were in the process of disengaging from their former colony of Indochina and denounced SEATO, France's socialist Mollet government did not disavow militarism as a general principle. For example, the French undertook "gunboat diplomacy" against Egypt after Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal. The French had "capital interests" there, and rebels from France's colony in Algeria organized in Cairo. The French participated in a combined military offensive with the UK and Israel without consulting Eisenhower in what became known as the

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<sup>593</sup> Statler, *Replacing France*, 283.

“Suez Crisis.”<sup>594</sup> The Suez Crisis drove a wedge between the US and its important European allies. Eisenhower feared the Soviets would get involved and it could escalate to general war. Eisenhower was also offended that the US’ allies did not consult the US before undertaking what looked like rash military action that was tainted with the appearance of colonialism.<sup>595</sup> Hence, the British and French were willing to fight for their interests in North Africa behind the back of their American ally, but they used SEATO, in part, to restrain US militarism in Southeast Asia. This demonstrated that there was disunity among SEATO’s Western members. Under the influence of the domino theory, the NSC prioritized stopping the spread of communism in Southeast Asia – while the British and French gave a higher priority to retaining control of the Suez Canal. The colonial implications also became starker dividing lines between the Americans and Europeans.

The Suez Crisis also had implications for SEATO’s unity and popularity in Southeast Asia. US intelligence called what happened “a real danger to SEATO’s future” because it made SEATO’s Asian members even more vulnerable to criticism that they were collaborating with “colonialists.” After the Suez Crisis, the US ambassador to Thailand recommended getting France to voluntarily withdraw from SEATO and having the UK quietly surrender its leading position to Australia or New Zealand.<sup>596</sup> Thus, disagreements between the US and its European allies over matters outside Southeast Asia had a carryover effect that caused a setback to the US’ desire to increase SEATO’s unity and popularity, which propaganda efforts struggled to do.

The US ambassador to Thailand’s recommendation of having Australia or New Zealand take a more prominent role in SEATO after the Suez Crisis would also face challenges because

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<sup>594</sup> Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944-1958*, 272-73.

<sup>595</sup> Brown, *Eisenhower’s Nuclear Calculus in Europe*, Chapter 5.

<sup>596</sup> Intelligence Notes, Nov. 15, 1956, OCB 350.05 (File #4) (2), Box 111 B, OCB Central File, ENSC.

of events in domestic politics in those Western members of SEATO. In an NSC meeting, Eisenhower explained that he had trouble understanding why communist influence was growing in the labor movement in Australia and New Zealand because that was incompatible with his understanding of them having a British background and being sturdy people with vast amounts of unexploited land. The Australasia specialist in the NSC meeting explained that it was connected to their Labor Parties' desires for "world unity of labor." Another problem was that Australia's immigration restrictions against nonwhites hurt the West by reinforcing its reputation as racist.<sup>597</sup> This evidence extends arguments by historians about how contentious and complex domestic politics in Australia and New Zealand affected those nations' relations with the US. Peter Edwards and Gregory Pemberton found that in 1957 Australia's Labor Party split, and the more liberal branch was more sympathetic towards communism.<sup>598</sup> Mark Pearson reveals that New Zealand's Labor Party was the more dovish party, and it questioned the morality of military intervention, particularly when it was thought to be at the behest of the US.<sup>599</sup>

Consequently, SEATO became a divisive topic in Australia and New Zealand's domestic politics. A US State Department report explained that conservatives in Australia criticized SEATO for being weak and ineffectual. They argued that SEATO was just a "paper treaty" with no substance backing it. Meanwhile, liberals favored pursuing regional conciliation through the UN and criticized SEATO for its overly militaristic and colonial overtones, as well as its bombastic public statements. This tension was a factor the NSC had to contend with in its relations with Australia.<sup>600</sup> Furthermore, a memo from the US' SEATO delegation to the US State Department explained how currents in New Zealand's domestic politics ran counter to US

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<sup>597</sup> 400<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Mar. 26, 1959, 6, Box 11, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>598</sup> Edwards, *Crises and Commitments*, 183.

<sup>599</sup> Pearson, *Paper Tiger*, 115.

<sup>600</sup> State Department Intelligence Report, Mar. 1, 1956, Item 10390511026, TEXT.

interests. New Zealanders were perplexed why testing nuclear weapons continued and disarmament did not begin.<sup>601</sup>

The threat of massive retaliation with nuclear weapons was the core of New Look deterrence and central to what the US wanted to use SEATO for in Southeast Asia. However, this alienated even some of the US' Western allies. Overall, the domestic leftist political forces in France, Australia, and New Zealand gave reason to question how solid of allies they would be as the US tried to unify the region against communism through SEATO. For SEATO to intervene militarily, it needed unanimous agreement through each member's constitutional processes, and this could meet challenges, even from SEATO's Western members.

Still, divisions between the US and SEATO's Western members were less pronounced than divisions between SEATO's Western and Asian members, even after actions like putting Asians in positions of leadership in SEATO occurred. At the SEATO council meeting in Washington in 1960, New Zealand Prime Minister Nash identified race relations as the most difficult problem at that time.<sup>602</sup> US intelligence reported that by 1956, SEATO meetings had become so contentious over issues like SEATO's role toward Pakistani-Afghani relations, the insurgency in Laos, economic aid for Asian members, and if South Vietnam should be allowed to join, that the British believed discussing them would be embarrassing or nonproductive.<sup>603</sup> In a telegram to Eisenhower, Dulles revealed that when he met with representatives from SEATO's Western members, the possibility of suspicion from Asian members surfaced.<sup>604</sup> Similarly, in an ANZUS meeting, Australia's Foreign Minister Casey expressed how he was discouraged by

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<sup>601</sup> SEATO Delegation to State Department Mar. 1958, 12.

<sup>602</sup> State Department to SEATO Delegation Jun. 1960, 189.

<sup>603</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 554, Feb. 7, 1956, OCB 350.05 (File #2) (10), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>604</sup> DULTE 4, Mar. 11, 1958, Dulles, John Foster Mar. 1958 (1), Box 10, Dulles-Herter, EDDE.

SEATO's Asian members not cooperating with opposing communist subversion. In meetings, the Asian members listened to Western suggestions, but from Casey's perspective, they did not give effective responses. CIA Director Allen Dulles thought that the Asian members knew their security was compromised, and any planning done in SEATO would soon become known to communists in their nations.<sup>605</sup>

Primary source evidence of racial divisions in SEATO extends scholarship by Ceferina Hess. Hess argues that although there were attempts to present SEATO as having equality between all its members, in practice, SEATO was an unequal alliance that was dominated by the West. Overall, the American preeminence produced an American outlook, which other members resented. However, Hess adds, since the US was the dominant economic and military power, other members had to accommodate the US to some degree, and tensions festered. Below the US, the members that had the most influence were the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. Yet contributions to SEATO by members besides the US were marginal. Hess also points out that SEATO was hampered by the fact that the members in the treaty area had alternative, and stronger, defense arrangements involving the US. The Philippines had a mutual defense treaty with the US. Pakistan was in the Middle East defense alliance CENTO. Australia and New Zealand were already protected by the US through ANZUS. Hess concludes that Thailand and the Philippines had no immediate need for SEATO when they joined, and SEATO did not appreciably increase the military security of the Philippines. What security and economic gains the Filipinos made while they were in SEATO were primarily from bilateral arrangements with the US. The US invested enough in the Philippines to make sure it was able to keep its military bases and protect American business interests there.<sup>606</sup> The US' continued reliance on

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<sup>605</sup> ANZUS Meeting Oct. 58, 45.

<sup>606</sup> Hess, "The SEATO Alliance and Philippine-American National Security Policy (1954-1974)," 368, 371, 374-76.

bilateralism with the Philippines suggested that SEATO did not develop into the type of collective-security organization the NSC envisioned for the New Look.

This disunity hindered SEATO's ability to implement collective security. US intelligence reported that there was division and inaction on vital SEATO matters because SEATO had not evolved concrete programs that made it effective in Southeast Asia. The US ambassador to Thailand recommended that the US demonstrate how SEATO was the most important element of its Southeast-Asia policy to combat growing skepticism. Yet, US intelligence did not specify how to achieve this, which may indicate that this was a problem without an obvious solution.<sup>607</sup> This primary source evidence extends arguments by scholars that have commented on the disunity in SEATO between the Western and Asian members. Scholar George Modelski found that Thailand even sided with the Afro-Asian bloc on colonial issues against SEATO members.<sup>608</sup> Historian Ronald Nairn adds that although Thailand hosted SEATO's headquarters, the organization's communications were in English, and Thai representatives became marginalized because they were generally the least fluent in English.<sup>609</sup>

The NSC declared that the US' reputation would be harmed domestically and internationally if it was identified with avoiding elections,<sup>610</sup> yet it did so anyway where leftist factions were popular to prevent them from winning. Moreover, US support for nondemocratic regimes in SEATO's Asian members became a wedge issue that deeply fractured SEATO. An NSC progress report noted how the Thai coup caused "strains" in SEATO.<sup>611</sup> The US' dossier on New Zealand Prime Minister Nash assessed him as having "a deep and warm regard for" the US,

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<sup>607</sup> Intelligence Notes, Feb. 28, 1957, OCB 350.05 (File #4) (5), Box 112, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>608</sup> Modelski, "The Asian States' Participation in SEATO," 116.

<sup>609</sup> Nairn, "SEATO," 13.

<sup>610</sup> NSC 5519, May 17, 1955, 7, NSC 5519 – Vietnam Elections, Box 16, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA.

<sup>611</sup> OCB Southeast Asia Progress Report, Nov. 6, 1957, 1, NSC 5612/1 – Policy in Mainland Southeast Asia, Box 18, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, Southeast Asia Progress Report Nov. 1957).

supporting SEATO, and being on the conservative wing of New Zealand's Labor Party and a dedicated anticommunist. Yet, it also called him a "man of deep moral convictions."<sup>612</sup> This extends historian Mark Pearson's argument that Nash was not about to put unity in SEATO above his ideals.<sup>613</sup> Nash's morals surfaced in a 1960 SEATO meeting where he argued that SEATO should not back governments because they allege the opposition is communist. After calling the elections in South Vietnam and Laos "very disturbing," he described Pakistan as being on a "long journey to... reach democracy." Pakistan's problem was an 81-percent illiteracy rate, not threats from communists. Nash added that Thailand had been making progress towards democracy until "someone came along and seized power." He declared that governments should be freely chosen by their people and not disenfranchise the opposition. The Thai representative in the meeting made a "bitter attack" in response to Nash's comments. He defended Thailand's actions as being necessary to prepare solid ground for representative government and added that criticism by "some... deeply hurt." If the Thai government was not accepted, it would have to reconsider its SEATO membership. Nash responded that he did not want Thailand to leave SEATO, but perhaps New Zealand should because it seemed to be in a "minority of one." The members "firmly agreed" that no information from that closed session, or even the subject of the discussion, would be revealed to the press.<sup>614</sup>

The primary source evidence about New Zealand Prime Minister Nash criticizing undemocratic practices in SEATO's members and protocol states extends the work of other scholars. Scholar Leicester Webb has documented that the Australian Labor Party argued that

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<sup>612</sup> Herter to Eisenhower, Biographic Data on Nash, May 30, 1960, Herter, Christian May 1960 (1), Box 13, Dulles-Herter, EDDE.

<sup>613</sup> Pearson, *Paper Tiger*, 83.

<sup>614</sup> State Department Circular Airgram, Jun. 14, 1960, 195, 200-01, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16 (hereafter, State Department Circular Airgram Jun. 1960).

SEATO was “an instrument for bolstering reactionary regimes.”<sup>615</sup> Scholar George Modelski recognizes an element of hypocrisy that although preventing communists from seizing power in the region had been the principal concern of SEATO, it did not oppose rightwing military coups in its members.<sup>616</sup> A possible reason for this was that rightwing military coups that brought to power a pro-West and anticommunist regime generally supported, and did not challenge, the US’ overarching anticommunist agenda that it hoped to achieve through SEATO.

A second nonmilitary wedge issue was recognizing the PRC diplomatically and having an economic embargo against it. In 1956, Chatham House concluded that the US had little to gain by continuing its policies to isolate the PRC.<sup>617</sup> Yet, in 1957, Dulles expressed “considerable concern” with SEATO’s Asian members’ lack of support for the US’ PRC policy.<sup>618</sup> New Zealand Prime Minister Nash came to power on a party platform to recognize the PRC, but Dulles thought he would “go slow” after they discussed it in 1958.<sup>619</sup> Historian Mark Pearson has written that it was almost inconceivable that New Zealand would not try to please the US on SEATO matters. However, in addition to Nash’s divisive criticism about nondemocratic practices in SEATO’s Asian members and protocol states, by 1960, Nash raised the matter of recognizing the PRC in a SEATO meeting. He argued that the US’ policy was wrong because 600 million people, or 20 percent of humanity, were not represented in the UN by the government that governed them in practice. Moreover, trying to ostracize the PRC just made them arrogant, suspicious, and aggressive. Soon, they would have nuclear weapons, and the West would want to pursue disarmament with them.<sup>620</sup>

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<sup>615</sup> Webb, “Australia and SEATO,” 72.

<sup>616</sup> Modelski, “The Asian States’ Participation in SEATO,” 101.

<sup>617</sup> Chatham House Collective Defence, 164.

<sup>618</sup> Dulles to State Department, Mar. 11, 1957, 312, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>619</sup> DULTE 7, Mar. 12, 1958, Dulles, John Foster Mar. 1958 (1), Box 10, Dulles-Herter, EDDE.

<sup>620</sup> State Department to SEATO Delegation Jun. 1960, 189; Pearson, *Paper Tiger*, 114.

Still, despite New Zealand Prime Minister Nash's well-reasoned argument, in 1960, when SEATO's Asian members had less democratic regimes, they reversed their positions on recognizing the PRC diplomatically and supported the US. In a "spirited discussion," they rebutted Nash and argued that PRC subversion was a threat, and overseas Chinese in their nations could become more subversive if the PRC was universally recognized. When the topic of striking this discussion from the official SEATO record arose, several members said they were not aware that it was being documented, which may have made the exchange more candid. It also exposed SEATO's desire to mask disunity and suggests that other contentious disagreements may have occurred but do not have surviving documentation.<sup>621</sup>

Comparing the Eisenhower administration's relations with SEATO's Asian and Western members reveals patterns. The US had more consistent relations with Asian members, especially when they were ruled by dictators. Western members having stronger democratic institutions meant they were more responsive to the wills of their peoples, which corresponded to changes in governments and foreign policies. Since the US was the predominant power in SEATO, the other members exhibited varying degrees of dependency, but Asian members were more dependent because they were less developed. Yet, apart from New Zealand Prime Minister Nash, Western members still largely hesitated to criticize the US because they feared jeopardizing more important aspects of their relationships with the US than opposing communism in Southeast Asia. Conversely, Asian members were more vocal about their desire for aid because it was a core interest to them. Nevertheless, the US was also dependent on the other members politically because, for collective security to work, it needed Western members to present a multilateral front and Asian members, which it struggled to court, to not appear imperial, access regional

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<sup>621</sup> State Department Circular Airgram Jun. 1960, 194, 199, 202.

bases, and supply ground troops. When the US took the Asian members' dependency for granted and prioritized the New Look's objectives of limiting government spending or attracting uncommitted nations, SEATO's Asian members exercised their leverage by exploring other options. Thus, the US and Asian members used each other for their own advantages. Because they often had divergent or even incompatible objectives for Southeast Asia, SEATO was not built on a strong foundation. Understanding the difficulties SEATO had executing its nonmilitary aspects helps explain its shortcomings during Eisenhower's presidency.

In the NSC's final meeting during Eisenhower's presidency, Eisenhower stated, "Some years back the Council had begun to discuss the idea that the real danger to the U.S. was not military but was rather economic and political. Nevertheless, we have made little advance in convincing Congress of the need for support for economic and political measures, such as funds for USIA [propaganda]." <sup>622</sup> Furthermore, the NSC supporting propaganda through SEATO, even though it understood that the type of propaganda that was being created would likely have limited effectiveness or could even be counterproductive, also reflected the rigidity of the New Look and the NSC's inability to adapt its Eurocentric grand strategy to peripheral regions. Yet, Eisenhower was quite popular politically and had the ability to gain bipartisan support. <sup>623</sup> Thus, what happened in Southeast Asia was primarily a policy failure. Eisenhower grasped that there were better options, and his general popularity made Congressional action feasible, but he failed to act.

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To conclude this chapter, SEATO helped the Eisenhower administration use propaganda, another nonmilitary component of the New Look, in Southeast Asia. The propaganda war with

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<sup>622</sup> 474<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 23.

<sup>623</sup> Kaufman, *Trade and Aid*, 209.

the communists was an important front in the Cold War because the superpowers' increasing nuclear capabilities could make a military confrontation very costly. Thus, propaganda was a way for the US to win allegiance in the developing world while minimizing the threat of military escalation. In SEATO, propaganda was intended to help overcome three main problems. First, SEATO was generally unpopular in the greater Southeast Asia region because it was associated with Western imperialism and militarism after European colonization and the devastation of World War II, and the NSC wanted to use SEATO to help create a regional anticommunist identity to better enable collective security. Second, many people in SEATO's Asian members were disillusioned with SEATO because they believed their lives did not improve significantly through SEATO's meager economic development programs. And third, a successful propaganda campaign could better unify the different members of SEATO, which were becoming increasingly fractured, especially on racial lines between the Western and Asian members. SEATO propaganda efforts included seminars, press releases, cultural exchanges, printed materials, television, film, and radio. Yet, these efforts largely lacked success because Southeast Asia primarily consisted of rural subsistence farmers. SEATO's anticommunist message that was chiefly in printed materials done by Westerners in English struggled to reach the intended audience, and when it did, that message did not resonate because many people in the greater region did not perceive communism as an existential threat as the NSC did. In addition, Eisenhower did not treat SEATO as a high priority, his administration exhibited disrespectful attitudes towards the region's peoples, and few resources were allocated to SEATO propaganda efforts. The internal dynamics of SEATO were complicated because each member had its own domestic politics and interests outside the region that affected SEATO. Liberal political factions in the Western members had goals that conflicted with the NSC's hawkish approach to

containing communism. Consequently, SEATO remained unpopular in the greater region, including in the Asian members, and the disunity among its members worsened over issues like having nondemocratic regimes in nations affiliated with SEATO and establishing diplomatic and economic relations with the PRC. Conversely, the Soviet bloc had some success with its propaganda efforts, and communist subversion not only remained, but was a growing problem, in the greater region. Communist inroads, even in SEATO's Asian members, as well as SEATO's general unpopularity in the greater region and divisions within the organization weakening collective security caused a setback for the NSC in its objective to have pro-West nations with free and stable governments in Southeast Asia.

## 5. Collective Security: Neutrality in Noncommunist Southeast Asian Nations Unaffiliated with SEATO Undermining the Organization

This chapter covers the role SEATO played in facilitating the New Look's component of collective security and how that affected the NSC's ability to achieve its objective for Southeast Asia to have pro-West nations with free and stable governments. Collective security was important to the New Look because implementing it shared costs and responsibilities in the NSC's effort to control defense spending and get allies to make conventional defense commitments to complement the US' strategic deterrence. In focusing on Indonesia, Burma, Malaya, and Singapore, the noncommunist Southeast Asian nations that were never affiliated with SEATO when they were independent, and neutrality, this chapter argues that SEATO allowed the NSC to have an organization that had the ability to undertake collective security regionally in Southeast Asia, but the NSC's zero-sum bipolar view of the Cold War did not accept neutrality out of fear that naïve leaders were vulnerable to being duped by diabolical communist machinations. This "my way or the highway" approach, and rhetoric, from the US caused tension with neutral nations the US wanted as allies because neutrality was very popular in the unaffiliated nations after independence. In addition, neighboring India promoted neutrality as an alternative to aligning with the superpowers in the Cold War. Moreover, SEATO was criticized by neutral nations for being a militarized Western-led alliance. Conversely, the Soviet bloc was more supportive of neutrality than the US, and it gained influence in the greater region. SEATO wanted to add new members to strengthen it within the greater region, but no additional nations ever joined. Still, SEATO needed to account for the unaffiliated nations because its treaty area covered their territory, and any conflict could spill over into SEATO's members, or protocol states, and/or escalate. Actions in neutral Indonesia like its efforts to gain control of Dutch

occupied New Guinea and communists openly participating politically appeared as a threat to some SEATO members. Despite SEATO's additional efforts to strengthen itself from outside the region by working with other pro-West collective-security organizations and getting support from nations as far away as the Americas, compared to NATO, it never achieved much regional solidarity. The NSC's staunch anticommunist views never became mainstream in the greater region. Ultimately, the NSC turned to counterproductive covert operations that turned the unaffiliated nations even more against the US after the failed operations were exposed.

### *Neutrality and SEATO*

Collective security became an increasingly important component of international relations after World War II. The Allies' combined effort during World War II had been instrumental in defeating the Axis powers and morphed into the UN. After the League of Nations proved ineffective at preventing international aggression, the UN tried to remedy that by creating a security council with a mechanism to undertake collective action. Besides SEATO, the West's numerous other regional collective-security organizations, such as NATO, CENTO, and the Organization of American States (OAS),<sup>624</sup> as well as the Soviet bloc's Warsaw Pact, were all established by 1955.<sup>625</sup> In the Asia-Pacific, the US had defense arrangements outside of collective security organizations with many nations. Examples included the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea.<sup>626</sup> The US' collective-security alliances and defense arrangements completely encircled the core of the Soviet bloc as part of the

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<sup>624</sup> SEATO Record, 2. For more details on the other Western collective-security organizations, see MacCloskey, *Pacts for Peace*, NATO, Chapter 3, CENTO, Chapter 6, and the OAS, Chapter 7.

<sup>625</sup> Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 666.

<sup>626</sup> SEATO Record, 3, Sullivan, "SEATO," 8-9.

NSC's strategy of containment. NATO member Norway bordered the USSR's furthest northwestern territory, and Turkey was in both NATO and CENTO. Then, Pakistan had membership in CENTO and SEATO, and the US' defense arrangements continued up the Pacific to Alaska. Canada and Greenland, as part of Denmark, being in NATO closed the circle over the Arctic.<sup>627</sup> Eisenhower also had personal experience that made him predisposed to embrace collective security. Before his presidency, he commanded the Allies in Europe during World War II and was the first commander of NATO.<sup>628</sup>

The growing role of collective security influenced the NSC and was central to the New Look throughout Eisenhower's presidency. In 1954, Eisenhower declared, "Regional groupings to ensure security against aggression constitute the most effective means to assure survival and progress. No nation can stand alone today."<sup>629</sup> Then, at the end of Eisenhower's presidency, the NSC's 1960 Southeast-Asia policy reaffirmed the administration's commitment to collective security when it stated, "The United States should continue to make clear its own devotion to the principle of collective security, its belief that regional security arrangements provide maximum protection at minimum cost for all."<sup>630</sup> An administration press release for "SEATO Day" in 1958 announced, "SEATO will vigorously maintain the protective shield necessary to the preservation of our common heritage of freedom." Because of the administration's desire to cut defense spending to avert the emergence of a garrison state in the US that could limit civil liberties, it wanted to use troops from other nations for ground combat. Hence, collective security was an important component in executing the New Look.<sup>631</sup>

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<sup>627</sup> Leebaert, *Grand Improvisation*, 442.

<sup>628</sup> Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, 17.

<sup>629</sup> Statement Re Military Aid to Pakistan, Feb. 16, 1954, 1, Dulles, Feb. 1954 (1), Box 2, Dulles-Herter, EDDE.

<sup>630</sup> NSC 6012, 5.

<sup>631</sup> Memo for President, Aug. 30, 1958, 2, OF 116-V-1 Asia, Southeast Asia Pact, Box 502, White House Central Files, Official File, 1953-1961, EDER.

However, as covered in chapters two through four, the US' allies in SEATO had different objectives than the NSC, which made executing effective collective security in Southeast Asia a challenge. In addition, events outside the borders of SEATO members, like the Suez Crisis, posed additional challenges. Events like the Bandung Conference exhibited that SEATO stoked discontent in Southeast Asia among many of its indigenous peoples, and they perceived it to have needlessly intensified regional tensions. Their memory of World War II causing widespread death and destruction throughout the region was a relatively recent one. American "nuclear blackmail" during the Taiwan Straits crises generated antipathy against the US, and the New Look's emphasis on deterrence by threats of nuclear annihilation exacerbated those feelings.<sup>632</sup> SEATO establishing a Western military presence in Southeast Asia was denounced strongly by Indonesia and India as a ploy to extend Western hegemony.<sup>633</sup> Historian Matthew Foley argues that thanks primarily to its confrontational policy towards the PRC, and the creation of SEATO for militarized containment, the US was seen by much of Asia, not as the guardian of peace and the champion of freedom, but as "a narrow-minded, intolerant bully, resented for its wealth and feared for its power."<sup>634</sup> An additional challenge with Indonesia was how to make it strong enough to prevent communist domination without encouraging it to take military action to control Western New Guinea, where it was trying to take control from the Dutch.<sup>635</sup> In the early 1960s, Indonesia would also challenge the UK and Malaya for control of North Borneo. Overseas critics of SEATO suspected that the US had a "Messiah complex." Its "he who is not with me is against me" approach to international relations alienated neutralist nations that sought

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<sup>632</sup> Long, *Safe for Decolonization*, 135, 153.

<sup>633</sup> Farrell, "Alphabet Soup and Nuclear War," 84.

<sup>634</sup> Foley, *The Cold War and National Assertion in Southeast Asia*, 117.

<sup>635</sup> State Department Conversation Feb. 1959, 73.

a middle position.<sup>636</sup> A SEATO publication explained, “Some criticism of the aims and objectives of SEATO continues to be heard. The [SEATO] Council agreed that every country has the right to follow the policy it prefers.”<sup>637</sup> There were even signs that the US was influenced by this extensive criticism of SEATO when it softened its firm support for collective security by releasing an official statement critical of alliances. After this, the only SEATO members in Southeast Asia, “the Thais (and Filipinos)... expressed alarm at American official statements critical of alliances.”<sup>638</sup>

One of the main reasons for the hostility to SEATO was the popularity of neutralism in the greater Southeast Asia region. Eisenhower explained to reporters that the US had been neutral for 150 years and how a middle course between superpower blocs could be in a nation’s self-interest.<sup>639</sup> Still, because neutrality tolerated, and did not oppose, communism, the NSC viewed neutrality as an obstacle to building regional collective security effectively to contain communism. If a region had pockets of neutrality, containment through regional solidarity would be difficult. In addition, the NSC explained in its 1954 South-Asia policy how neutrality could deny potential military facilities and strategic resources to the West.<sup>640</sup> Dulles contended that it would be difficult to prevent communist takeovers because neutrals believed the problem with the world was the Cold War power struggle, which did not directly affect neutral nations unless there was overspill from a largescale war. Therefore, according to many neutralists, trying to contain communism was the problem, which was antithetical to the NSC’s perspective. Dulles argued that this accommodating attitude played into the communist conspiracy to control neutral

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<sup>636</sup> Thomas, “A Critical Appraisal of SEATO,” 926.

<sup>637</sup> SEATO: Record of Partnership, 1957-58, 25, SETO.

<sup>638</sup> Modelski, “The Asian States’ Participation in SEATO,” 114.

<sup>639</sup> Brands, *The Specter of Neutralism*, 305, 311-12, 317.

<sup>640</sup> NSC 5409, 1113.

governments that did not “realize that the Communist intentions are so diabolical and so hostile to their freedom and independence.” Consequently, they would “succumb” unless they developed “a crusading spirit against the evil forces of Communism.” Dulles wanted to infuse the “crusading spirit” into the next SEATO meeting.<sup>641</sup> From the American perspective, naïve people in the developing world that promoted neutrality had already been duped by the communists into believing that communism was a benevolent ideology instead of an existential threat to human freedom around the globe. Furthermore, Dulles had deep religious convictions and communism’s harsh critique of religion troubled him deeply.<sup>642</sup>

That evidence extends work by historians that have noted the Eisenhower administration’s strong opposition to neutrality. Historian Kathryn Statler argues, “For Dulles, neutralism was not an option.”<sup>643</sup> Historian Ang Cheng Guan adds that leaders of nations pursuing neutrality in Southeast Asia were “to the Americans... [the] equivalent to being pro-communist.”<sup>644</sup> Historian Seth Jacobs explains it as neutrality’s association with appeasement, which became something to avoid after it was tried with the Germans before World War II, and it only caused them to take more.<sup>645</sup> Historian William Rust adds that Dulles had a deep disdain for neutrality,<sup>646</sup> and historian James Cable explains that Dulles considered neutrality immoral.<sup>647</sup> Neutrality also had a link to the subversion that SEATO was so concerned about. If a government in the region did not oppose communism, communist subversives could operate more freely.

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<sup>641</sup> US-UK Foreign Ministers Meeting, Jan. 31, 1956, 170-71, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21 (hereafter, Foreign Ministers Meeting Jan. 1956).

<sup>642</sup> Hoopes, “God and John Foster Dulles;” Mulder, “The Moral World of John Foster Dulles.”

<sup>643</sup> Statler, *Replacing France*, 284.

<sup>644</sup> Ang, *Southeast Asia’s Cold War*, 85.

<sup>645</sup> Jacobs, *The Universe Unraveling*, 19.

<sup>646</sup> Rust, *Eisenhower and Cambodia*, 4-5.

<sup>647</sup> Cable, *The Geneva Conference of 1954 on Indochina*, 85.

Despite Dulles' efforts, other SEATO members kept tolerating neutrality. Dulles encouraged the UK foreign minister to be more vigorous in combatting neutrality.<sup>648</sup> Yet, a paper from the British to the Americans titled "Defense of Southeast Asia Against the Communist Threat" argued neutrality would have to be accepted indefinitely, and it was not hostile to Western interests. Southeast-Asian nations would look for leadership in nearby bigger nations. The choices were India or the PRC, and the West could not stop the growing influence of India in Asia. Therefore, according to the UK, Indian neutrality was better than PRC communism. Nevertheless, the response from US officials expressed disagreement with the UK's position that Indian influence should be encouraged.<sup>649</sup> Representatives from the Philippines, Pakistan, and Australia expressed that they would accept neutrality at a SEATO meeting if it was not a ploy to play the Western and Soviet blocs against each other in bids for more aid. The Australians concluded that denouncing neutrality would be counterproductive. Although the document did not specify why, it is probably because neutrality was so popular throughout the region that criticizing it would produce a backlash.<sup>650</sup> Consequently, the NSC's opposition to neutrality was much more extreme than either its SEATO allies or the prevailing attitude in the greater Southeast Asia region.

Scholar Bradley Simpson uncovered that at the Bandung Conference in April 1955, Indonesia's President Sukarno had warned the participants that the modern guise of colonialism was economic and intellectual control by a "skillful and determined enemy."<sup>651</sup> Several primary sources extend Simpson's work and confirm that the Eisenhower administration clearly understood how some states connected the US and SEATO to colonization and pursued

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<sup>648</sup> Foreign Ministers Meeting Jan. 1956, 170.

<sup>649</sup> Editorial note, Mar. 2, 1957, 292-93, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>650</sup> US SEATO Delegation to State Department #144, 318-19.

<sup>651</sup> Simpson, "Southeast Asia in the Cold War," 48.

neutrality in response. Neutrality was a passive policy compared to the economic and intellectual control that Sukarno warned about. Yet, in a 1960 meeting, the NSC noted Indonesia's influence on the Afro-Asian anticolonial bloc, and Indonesia denounced Western nations as colonial powers.<sup>652</sup> In November 1955, shortly after SEATO came into existence, the OCB reported an increasing trend toward neutralism throughout Southeast Asia, and there was little indication that the US could reverse it.<sup>653</sup> In a 1955 report, the OCB faulted the Bandung Conference and its exclusion of whites, as well as the "ineffectiveness of SEATO," as factors for the increased popularity of neutrality, although the report did not specify how SEATO was ineffective.<sup>654</sup>

Between 1957 and 1960, SEATO's Research Office produced four background briefs that revealed its perspective on Afro-Asian activities, which included "Communist 'Afro-Asian' Activities" from 1960.<sup>655</sup> When the NSC discussed the 1957 Afro-Asian conference in Cairo, Egypt, CIA Director Allen Dulles explained that the participants "had largely followed Soviet bloc leadership" because of the "pro-Soviet resolutions," even though there was some opposition to them. He did not specify what the "pro-Soviet resolutions" were.<sup>656</sup> There was also an Afro-Asian Economic Conference in Cairo in December 1958.<sup>657</sup> In a meeting with the US, Australia's Foreign Minister Casey expressed concern that there would soon be 12 to 20 "new nations," including Malaya, which would join the Afro-Asian bloc in the UN after they became independent. Casey feared its growing self-confidence and potential increase of strength in the General Assembly, where it could vote with the Soviet bloc and oppose Western interests

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<sup>652</sup> 472<sup>nd</sup> NSC Meeting, Dec. 29, 1960, 10, Box 13, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 472<sup>nd</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>653</sup> OCB Southeast Asia Progress Report, Nov. 15, 1955, 3, OCB 091.4 Southeast Asia (File #4) (3), Box 80, OCB Central File, ENSC (hereafter, OCB Southeast Asia Progress Report Nov. 1955).

<sup>654</sup> OCB Southeast Asia Progress Report, Dec. 1, 1955, 2, OCB 091.4 Southeast Asia (File #4) (3), Box 80, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>655</sup> SEATO Record, Annex L, p. 1-2.

<sup>656</sup> 350<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Jan. 6, 1958, 2, Box 9, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>657</sup> Modelski, *SEATO*, xxix.

because of its lingering hostility toward the West because of colonization.<sup>658</sup> In an NSC meeting in the last month of his presidency, Eisenhower stated that one of the US' "most serious problems" would soon be its relations with the UN. He believed it was a "major error" for the UN to admit any nation that claimed independence. Ultimately, Eisenhower concluded, since it was headquartered in New York, "the UN may have to leave U.S. territory."<sup>659</sup> Eisenhower's views about minimizing the UN and trying to prevent newly independent nations from joining it contradicted the concept of national self-determination that the UN was founded on, and which the US had supported historically. What changed under Eisenhower was his administration's increased fear of the Soviet bloc being able to steer new neutral nations toward communism. Some of these newly independent states were the product of nationalist movements led by communist revolutionaries. Thus, Eisenhower correctly assessed that admitting them to the UN could be adding proxy votes for the USSR instead of truly independent voices of free people exercising self-determination.

What made matters worse from the NSC's perspective was that the leader of the worldwide neutral movement, India, had growing influence in Southeast, and South, Asia. The 1954 NSC policy on South Asia declared that the region must choose between "the Kremlin or the West."<sup>660</sup> However, although historian Robert McMahon has argued that the US proved incapable of appreciating India's deep neutralist stance, in 1959, the NSC stated that South Asia was neutral apart from the US' ally and SEATO member Pakistan.<sup>661</sup> The problem of India's neutrality was compounded by its continuing bitter rivalry with Pakistan. Three years earlier, Dulles revealed to the NSC in a 1956 meeting that the most significant observation he made on a

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<sup>658</sup> Conversation in Canberra Mar. 1957, 305.

<sup>659</sup> 474<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 24.

<sup>660</sup> NSC 5409, 1113.

<sup>661</sup> NSC Memo May 1959, 2; McMahon, "Eisenhower and Third World Nationalism," 462.

trip abroad, which was primarily for SEATO, was the “extreme animosity” between India and Pakistan. It was worse than he expected, and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru’s face contorted because of fear and hatred whenever Pakistan was discussed. Nehru was angry at the US for aiding Pakistan militarily, and Dulles speculated that India might accept Soviet military aid in response, although Dulles strongly discouraged India from doing so.<sup>662</sup>

Nevertheless, the NSC clearly saw India as an important player that it did not want to alienate. Highlighting the relative importance of India in its grand strategy compared to a SEATO ally, Dulles even declared in an NSC meeting that he would rather lose an ally like Thailand than a neutral like India to communism.<sup>663</sup> In a January 1961 memo, the SANE organization in the US that criticized the New Look for fueling the nuclear arms race, explained that India was particularly influential in Indochina because it was on the commission that supervised the Geneva Accords along with Poland and Canada. The commission had the leading global neutral power, India, and then second-tier powers in the Soviet and Western blocs, respectively.<sup>664</sup> The NSC challenging the spirit of neutrality from the Geneva Accords was an issue that had been around for years. In 1957, the US embassy in South Vietnam reported that the Canadians, who were on the commission to supervise the Geneva Accords, doubted the wisdom of South Vietnam even participating in SEATO nonmilitary activities because it could jeopardize South Vietnam’s relations with nations that were important to the region and pursued neutrality like India, Burma, and Cambodia. Moreover, South Vietnam working with SEATO would not positively influence other neutralist and Southeast-Asian nations. Meanwhile, Ho Chi

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<sup>662</sup> 280<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 1-2.

<sup>663</sup> 295<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 12.

<sup>664</sup> SANE Information-Alert Memo, Jan. 6, 1961, Item 14512902020, TEXT (hereafter, SANE Information-Alert Memo).

Minh planned to visit India in 1958, which demonstrated that communist nations were willing to work with neutral nations in the greater Southeast Asia region.<sup>665</sup>

The primary source evidence about how the NSC's opposition to neutrality in a zero-sum approach could be problematic in Southeast Asia because it also alienated nations the US wanted to ally with supports existing scholarship that uses non-US perspectives. Scholar Benedict Kim's study of SEATO examined the relationship between neutral nations and SEATO. He found that Southeast Asians embracing neutrality undermined SEATO. From their perspectives, "Neutral countries attacked SEATO as a Western instrument serving Western interests and an outside intrusion in the region bringing the cold war nearer to them." Because many influential regional powers were hostile to a coalition dominated by Western powers, they refused to join. The nonparticipation of many of the regional powers was one of the serious weaknesses of SEATO because, Kim argues, regional defense against communist aggression which excluded neutrals was "meaningless." The communists could destroy the purpose of SEATO by forging good relationships with neutral nations and leaving holes in the West's efforts at containment. Hence, the question of neutral nations presented SEATO, and the US, with by far their most difficult and delicate problem since neutral nations were very important to SEATO successfully achieving the NSC's objective to contain communism.<sup>666</sup>

Scholar Cezar Velarde's study of SEATO examines the Colombo Powers, which included the neutral nations of Indonesia, Burma, India, and Ceylon, in addition to SEATO member Pakistan. Velarde summarized their criticisms of SEATO in six points. First, SEATO would not promote peace but increase insecurity. Second, SEATO made relaxing international tension more difficult. Third, SEATO divided unity and created misgivings among Asian

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<sup>665</sup> Vietnam Embassy to State Department, Aug. 12, 1957, 361-62, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>666</sup> Kim, "The United States and SEATO," ii, 216.

nations. Fourth, SEATO was a scheme to perpetuate colonialism, which suppressed national liberation in the greater region. Fifth, SEATO was contrary to the spirit of agreement and understanding on nonaggression and noninterference among the Colombo Powers. And sixth, SEATO violated the principles of the UN charter.<sup>667</sup>

Velarde's scholarship on SEATO and neutrality primarily concentrates on India. Velarde found that Indian Prime Minister Nehru's criticism of SEATO had its genesis when Dulles tried to unite allies militarily for "collective action" in Indochina during the 1954 Dien Bien Phu crisis. After SEATO's creation, Nehru saw similarities between SEATO and NATO, which Nehru believed contradicted India's policy of nonalignment with power blocs. Alternatively, Nehru had introduced his "One-World" organization plan that promoted cooperation between Asian nations without outside members or intervention. To Nehru, it seemed likely that SEATO's Western members would dominate the Asian members when SEATO formed policies for security in Asia. Nevertheless, what was particularly unsettling to Nehru about SEATO was Pakistan's membership, which created a "grave threat" to India's national security because the neighbors had ongoing border disputes. Finally, India and the PRC had recently concluded a treaty of amity and Dulles' statement that SEATO was directed against communism, and hence the PRC, was "intolerable" to Indians. In addition to criticism from Nehru and India's government, India's communist party complained that SEATO was part of a conspiracy to encircle the Soviet bloc. India's socialist party argued that SEATO might cause Asian nations to lose their independence. Similarly, the Indian press and public opinion were "furious" about SEATO.<sup>668</sup>

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<sup>667</sup> Velarde, "SEATO," 113, 115-17, 120-23, 125, 136-37.

<sup>668</sup> Velarde, "SEATO," 113, 115-17, 120-23, 125, 136-37.

While the NSC and SEATO found neutrality to be a major obstacle, a December 1955 State Department memo to Dulles acknowledged the Soviets taking a more successful approach. The situation in Southeast Asia had become more serious than when the Manila Pact, which created SEATO, was signed over a year before. The major danger to the treaty area was no longer PRC activities but the USSR's. Soviet leader Khrushchev had visited committed neutralist nations Burma and India,<sup>669</sup> and the USSR supported India in India's disputes with SEATO member Pakistan.<sup>670</sup> According to the memo, the Soviets were following the communist playbook by promoting neutralism to create unwitting allies. Their message, which stressed their peaceful intentions and the West's militarism and imperialism, made "a powerful appeal in these under-developed countries." A reason for this was because the people in the developing world experienced Western imperialism firsthand, but the closed societies in the Soviet bloc concealed how bad conditions were in their nations. Furthermore, the USSR offered aid with what they described as "no strings attached," and the Soviets backed up this claim because they did not require military, political, or other commitments in exchange for their assistance. There were also implications for neutrality in Southeast Asia because of the US using SEATO militarily. The memo stated that the State Department's assessment was that the Soviet objective was to use neutrality to detach Southeast-Asian nations from the West and give communist parties in the region more respectability. The West could justify opposing an insurrection to overthrow a legitimate government in an allied nation, but not change through a legal process. If the US did not adopt effective countermeasures for neutrality, Southeast-Asian nations could drift from neutrality to communism in 5 to 6 years through elections and SEATO could not justify intervening. There was an assumption that if a nation became communist through an election, it

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<sup>669</sup> MacArthur to Dulles Dec. 1955, 159.

<sup>670</sup> Chatham House Collective Defence, 125.

would be difficult for the US to get it to align with the West thereafter. SEATO even changed its emphasis from deterring the PRC, and DRV, militarily to competing with the Soviets for influence in neutral nations.<sup>671</sup>

Three years later, in 1958, SEATO acknowledged that communists were winning elections in the treaty area.<sup>672</sup> Minutes from a SEATO meeting explained that the foremost danger was still communists encouraging neutralism. In the meeting, New Zealand Prime Minister Nash added that the communists “are concentrating on unaligned countries” and use “subversion, insurrection and political and economic penetration.” Consequently, “If their [unaligned countries] economies fall into chaos the need to regain stability will cause them to follow in [the] steps of Russia and China.”<sup>673</sup>

The primary source evidence about how the Soviet bloc was more open to neutrality than the NSC extends existing scholarship. Scholar Benedict Kim’s study of SEATO explains that communist propaganda was geared toward exploiting Asian neutralism with the larger goal of reducing Western influence by promoting neutrality in Southeast Asia. Consequently, the Soviet bloc championed nonalignment and fully supported the desire of Asians for neutrality. It also accused the West of cultural imperialism and not respecting other nations as equals. Despite concerted efforts, the US could not win over neutral nations and get them to be anticommunist allies. Because neutral nations refused to participate in a US-led collective-security pact, the US could do little besides turn to coercion to try to achieve its objectives.<sup>674</sup> Historian Kathryn Statler adds that the US underestimated the powerful forces of nationalism and decolonization during Eisenhower’s presidency. Therefore, imposing its values and culture met fierce

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<sup>671</sup> MacArthur to Dulles Dec. 1955, 159-60.

<sup>672</sup> SEATO Delegation Mar. 58, 19.

<sup>673</sup> SEATO Delegation to State Department Mar. 1958, 11-12.

<sup>674</sup> Kim, “The United States and SEATO,” 226-27.

resistance.<sup>675</sup> The strong anti-Westernism in the region during decolonization supports Statler's contention.

While the NSC wanted neutral nations to join the "free world," it remained neutral on controversial issues in the greater Southeast Asia region when it was politically prudent. Two examples were territorial disputes between Indonesia and the Netherlands over New Guinea and Pakistan and India over Kashmir. This could appear inconsistent because the NSC pursued neutrality in conflicts that it did not want to get involved in, which was the preference of neutral nations in the Cold War. Moreover, these examples where the Dutch and Pakistanis were clearly the closer US ally, and Indonesians and Indians were leading neutral powers, supports historian H.W. Brands contention that the Eisenhower administration's policies were based more on geopolitics than ideology. His example was that the US gave aid to neutral but communist Yugoslavia to keep Yugoslavia out of the Soviet bloc.<sup>676</sup>

US officials even began to publicly question the NSC's approach to neutrality. In 1958, Walter Robertson, the US' assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs, testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and stated, "When it comes to the neutrality of some of these countries, I do not think we can insist that they have to make alliances with us in order to be considered members of the free world community. Even if they made [joined Western] military alliances, their contribution to the military effectiveness of [an] alliance would be negligible." Then, in a critique of the NSC's zero-sum approach, Robertson declared, "But the very fact that they do not align themselves with the Communist world is... a clear advantage to the free world."<sup>677</sup> This testimony demonstrated that members of the Eisenhower administration

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<sup>675</sup> Statler, *Replacing France*, 286.

<sup>676</sup> Brands, *The Specter of Neutralism*, 313.

<sup>677</sup> Kim, "The United States and SEATO," 247.

were aware that the NSC's policy about opposing neutrality would need to be reconsidered, which will be expanded on later in this chapter and the next one.

Neutrality also created a dilemma for the NSC over distributing aid in Southeast Asia. In a 1956 NSC meeting, Dulles noted how neutrals changed political directions frequently between the West, Soviet bloc, or other neutrals based on political expediency. Meanwhile, the US Congress only wanted to give aid to dependable allies, and JCS Chairman Radford wanted SEATO to distribute military aid so it would not come out of the Pentagon's budget. The Defense and State Departments sought preferential treatment for nations that joined the US in collective security. Dulles agreed with that philosophy in general, but he wanted flexibility if a nation that was not in a collective-security agreement really needed aid when a treaty ally did not. Eisenhower added, the most important factor in giving aid should be the US' strategic objectives. Eisenhower admitted, if neutral Burma received reimbursable aid, it was unlikely that it would ever be repaid. Radford commented how giving aid to neutral Burma would upset the US' regional allies because they expected material advantages for their commitments. Dulles retorted that if neutrals did not get US aid, then they would turn to the Soviets. Radford countered that the US would struggle to keep its allies if they knew they could get aid without joining an alliance. This could be fatal to SEATO. Dulles argued that the US should abandon its allies if they prevented the US from following its best interest. Radford then explained that the US would be finished in Southeast Asia if it lost Thailand as an ally. Finally, Eisenhower decided that allies should get preferential treatment, but because of the complexities, there needed to be room for exceptions.<sup>678</sup> Eisenhower's admission of the need for more flexibility

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<sup>678</sup> 295<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 11-13, 16.

reflected how he understood that the New Look needed more flexibility in regions like Southeast Asia.

Compared to neutral nations' criticism of SEATO, there was anecdotal evidence that American institutions, and especially the media, largely supported SEATO and increased their interest in Asia. Television programs like *The Big Picture*, which was produced by the US Army and aired on commercial television, explained SEATO's perspective.<sup>679</sup> SEATO Secretary General Sarasin agreed to appear before the National Press Club and on the television show "Meet the Press."<sup>680</sup> US newspapers relying on SEATO sources largely printed pro-SEATO articles with headlines like "SEATO Treaty Called Success," "SEATO Winning Cold War," and "SEATO Advisers Report 'Progress' on Defense."<sup>681</sup> A conference at the University of South Carolina in 1959 titled "SEATO Tomorrow" stated that the conference's objective was to bring awareness to college students at various institutions about SEATO's importance as a shield against communism.<sup>682</sup> Eisenhower's telegram to the conference's chairperson expressed the president's interest and reiterated SEATO's importance.<sup>683</sup> In terms of American popular culture, *The King and I* was a hit movie from 1956, which was adapted from a popular Rodgers and Hammerstein musical that was set in SEATO member Thailand.<sup>684</sup> On the legislative front, one reason why Hawaii, with a predominantly Asian population, was added as a state in 1959 was to help Americans embrace Asians and make people in Asia see the US as less racist.<sup>685</sup> In 1960, Eisenhower issued an executive order that designated SEATO as a public international

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<sup>679</sup> ALST.

<sup>680</sup> Dulles to Eisenhower Jan. 1959.

<sup>681</sup> Folder Foreign Relations: Pacific Pact – SEATO – Sep. 5, 1954 (1), Box 293, ERNC.

<sup>682</sup> Reynolds to Haggerty, Feb. 25, 1959, OF 116-V-1 Asia, Southeast Asia Pact, Box 502, White House Central Files, Official File, 1953-1961, EDER.

<sup>683</sup> Eisenhower to Reynolds, Mar. 4, 1959, OF 116-V-1 Asia, Southeast Asia Pact, Box 502, White House Central Files, Official File, 1953-1961, EDER.

<sup>684</sup> Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*, 2.

<sup>685</sup> Miller-Davenport, *Gateway State*, 2, 4.

organization, which exempted it from taxes and lawsuits.<sup>686</sup> Yet, there were still some domestic critics about the US' role in SEATO. The National Committee for a SANE Nuclear Policy published a memo about how the US organized overthrows of neutral governments, and SEATO's actions could escalate into a world war.<sup>687</sup>

The NSC was looking to increase SEATO membership since before the Manila Conference, but the independent nations in Southeast Asia that did not join, Indonesia and Burma, maintained their preference for neutrality. Indonesia's island geography contributed to it rejecting SEATO. The Indonesians told the Thais that if Indonesia was in Thailand's geographic position, it would be more open to joining SEATO. However, its water barrier surrounding the island archipelago gave it a natural defense against invasions.<sup>688</sup> A rebel group on the Indonesian island of Sumatra declared independence from Indonesia and applied for membership in SEATO, but SEATO rejected it. The idea of having a clearly illegitimate government join SEATO to represent a nation would have undermined the legitimacy of SEATO even more and created a huge backlash from its critics, especially if it intervened militarily in Indonesia's civil strife afterward.<sup>689</sup> In 1955, the Burmese government passed a resolution opposing SEATO.<sup>690</sup> When SEATO Secretary General Sarasin visited Burma in 1959, Burmese officials privately voiced an appreciation for SEATO, which they could appeal to for help even though they were not members. Nevertheless, the Burmese could not express that belief openly. They reiterated that they had to be careful to not antagonize their neighbors, the PRC and India, which were both

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<sup>686</sup> Hagerty Press Release, Feb. 20, 1960, 1, OF 116-V-1 Asia, Southeast Asia Pact, Box 502, White House Central Files, Official File, 1953-1961, EDER.

<sup>687</sup> SANE Information-Alert Memo.

<sup>688</sup> State Department Circular Airgram Jun. 1960, 199.

<sup>689</sup> SEATO Record, 21.

<sup>690</sup> Fifield, *Americans in Southeast Asia*, 242.

hostile to SEATO. In fact, the Burmese feared alienating India just as much as the PRC because of India's rising economic and political influence.<sup>691</sup>

This primary source evidence extends arguments by scholars that have contended that SEATO's inability to add important regional powers like Indonesia and Burma greatly hurt it. Scholar Nabarun Roy argues, "One of the important reasons for SEATO's failure was a lack of regional legitimacy—only three South and Southeast Asian states joined—the addition of a few more Powers from the region would no doubt have significantly shored up its standing in the eyes of the international community."<sup>692</sup> Scholar Ceferina Hess adds, "The fact that the Philippines and Thailand were the only genuinely Southeast Asian states to join the alliance belied its [SEATO's] title through its failure to enlist the other populous nations of the region such as Indonesia and Burma."<sup>693</sup>

Similarly, the most likely candidates to join SEATO were the UK's colonies in Southeast Asia after they became independent, but they never did. Malaya and Singapore, being British territory before their independence in 1957 and 1959, respectively, were technically in SEATO.<sup>694</sup> In addition, the political leader of Malaya, Tunku Abdul Rahman, assured British ministers that Malaya would join after independence.<sup>695</sup> But when independence came, Malaya and Singapore had defense agreements with the British and good relations with Commonwealth associations and the "free world." Those factors conferred most of the advantages of SEATO membership.<sup>696</sup> Conversely, joining would have had costs for Malaya. SEATO membership and foreign troops on Malayan soil became important election issues, and Malaysians overwhelmingly

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<sup>691</sup> Indonesian Embassy to State Department, May 11, 1959, 94, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>692</sup> Roy, "Assuaging Cold War Anxieties," 337-38.

<sup>693</sup> Hess, "The SEATO Alliance and Philippine-American National Security Policy (1954-1974)," 368-69.

<sup>694</sup> SEATO Record, 20.

<sup>695</sup> Ang, *Southeast Asia's Cold War*, 76.

<sup>696</sup> OCB Report on Southeast Asia Aug. 1959, 5.

opposed them.<sup>697</sup> This primary source evidence extends work by several historians. Historian Nicholas Tarling found that Malaya and its neighbors wanted to stay out of international power politics, and it opposed SEATO to not alienate Indonesia or its ethnic Chinese.<sup>698</sup> Historian Mark Pearson adds that Malaya was influenced by the larger Non-Aligned Movement to not join SEATO.<sup>699</sup> Historian Ang Cheng Guan argues that Malaya believed the US would come to its defense even if it was not in SEATO because it was rich in natural resources. Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew described SEATO as “nonsense.” To him, the root cause of SEATO’s unpopularity was the perception of America by Asians. Lee explained that Asians needed to be convinced that Asia was as important to the US as either America or Europe, and Americans understood Europe better than Asia.<sup>700</sup>

Still, there were also other possible candidates for SEATO membership in Southeast Asia. The protocol states in Indochina could have been elevated to full membership, and those options were discussed in SEATO. However, South Vietnam had an authoritarian leader that was largely seen as a US puppet, neutralist sentiments pervaded Cambodia and Laos, and the Geneva Accords’ emphasis on neutrality complicated matters.<sup>701</sup> South Vietnam was expressly prohibited from joining military alliances by the Geneva Accords. For Laos and Cambodia, they could not join a military alliance unless the alliance conformed with the UN charter, and Laos had an additional barrier that it would have to follow “the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Laos” from the Geneva Accords. Scholar George Modelski posits that the states in

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<sup>697</sup> UK-UK Conversation at the UN, Sep. 16, 1957, 380n, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>698</sup> Tarling, *Southeast Asia and the Great Powers*, 5; Tarling, *Regionalism in Southeast Asia*, 97.

<sup>699</sup> Pearson, *Paper Tiger*, 78.

<sup>700</sup> Ang, *Southeast Asia’s Cold War*, 76-77.

<sup>701</sup> Cleveland Report, 2.

Indochina had no legal obstacles to joining a military alliance, but that is inconsistent with the text of the Geneva Accords.<sup>702</sup>

There were also neutral nations in South Asia that the US thought were potential candidates. Dulles invited Indian Prime Minister Nehru to join SEATO, but Nehru refused to participate in an organization that he “morally disapproved” of.<sup>703</sup> In examining reasons for this development, historian Mark Pearson argues, “Any hope that neutral states such as India would join SEATO had evaporated in 1955, when the Bandung Conference added considerable weight to calls for coexistence between communist and non-communist states in Asia and strengthened the emerging Non-Aligned Movement.”<sup>704</sup> Elsewhere in South Asia, a memo to Dulles explained that Ceylon might join if it thought SEATO was effective, but SEATO’s results were not sufficiently persuasive.<sup>705</sup> Ultimately, SEATO never added any members.

Nations in Southeast Asia that were unaffiliated with SEATO could not invoke provisions of the Manila Pact, but SEATO still closely monitored developments in those nations. Their actions could have had a ripple effect and affect members and protocol states. Moreover, they could still request SEATO to come to their defense.<sup>706</sup> North Vietnam was the only territory in Southeast Asia that was controlled by a communist government, but the US considered the rest of the region a common area to defend.<sup>707</sup> The Western SEATO members that were also in the British Commonwealth, which were the UK, Australia, and New Zealand, had lobbied for Singapore to be SEATO’s original headquarters, but Bangkok eventually won out because Dulles thought communists would use Singapore’s colonial status as propaganda to link SEATO

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<sup>702</sup> Final Declaration of Geneva Conference, B23-B24; Modelski, “The Asian States’ Participation in SEATO,” 141-42.

<sup>703</sup> Editorial Note, Undated, 205-06, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>704</sup> Pearson, *Paper Tiger*, 78.

<sup>705</sup> MacArthur to Dulles Dec. 1955, 160.

<sup>706</sup> SEATO Record, 20.

<sup>707</sup> Stump to Carney, Nov. 24, 1955, 155, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

with Western imperialism.<sup>708</sup> Still, Singapore had great military value to the British, which was why they were much more willing to grant independence to Malaya than Singapore. Singapore was essentially a fortress colony on a very small island that stationed 32,000 British troops. Singapore's military complex also housed the regional British naval base, and the British believed Singapore was of cardinal importance to British defense and foreign policy east of the Suez Canal.<sup>709</sup>

Nevertheless, the British had to upgrade their airbases before they could support SEATO missions that ranged beyond defending Malaya and Singapore. The problem was that the prospect of doing so triggered debate among British officials if it would provoke a local backlash. Malaysians publicly discouraged involvement with SEATO and only wanted British bases to defend a direct attack against Malaya.<sup>710</sup> Singaporeans were frightened because their very small city-state became a prospective Soviet target for nuclear weapons in a general war. In the transition to independence, the UK was reluctant to allow Singaporeans to secure Britain's military bases there, which caused acrimonious clashes.<sup>711</sup> Overall, in an economic cost-benefit analysis, the UK's economic returns from Southeast Asia barely matched its spending, and a large part of that spending was military spending.<sup>712</sup> Hence, for SEATO, the British might not want to maintain a military presence in Malaya and Singapore, and when those colonies became independent, they might not join SEATO or allow the British to keep using their bases there.

The British saw a principal advantage of SEATO as getting Australia and New Zealand to commit their forces to defend Malaya. This demonstrated how some members, like the UK in

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<sup>708</sup> Conversation Memo, Feb. 22, 1955, 36, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>709</sup> Murfett, "What's in it for US?," 257.

<sup>710</sup> Farrell, "Alphabet Soup and Nuclear War," 94-95.

<sup>711</sup> Long, *Safe for Decolonization*, 135, 152.

<sup>712</sup> Farrell, "Alphabet Soup and Nuclear War," 100.

this case, used SEATO to advance their private interests over combined interests.<sup>713</sup> The NSC's 1960 Southeast-Asia policy included using SEATO to repel communist aggression against Malaya and Singapore even though they were independent nations and not SEATO members.<sup>714</sup> Because of Singapore's military importance to the West, even after its independence, the US wanted a SEATO telecommunications network linking SEATO's headquarters in Bangkok with Singapore. Since SEATO military exercises occurred outside members' territory, SEATO had to account for Malaya, Singapore, and North Borneo when they were a loosely connected British colony and performed military exercises in it. Although the military exercises demonstrated a deterrent, a US State Department telegram explained that SEATO's opponents could use them as propaganda about SEATO's aggressive nature. The Australians were more optimistic and theorized, "Military planning... and exercises have impact on others including some neutralists who may gain comfort from this work," although they did not explain their reasoning, and one of the common criticisms of SEATO by neutrals was its militaristic appearance.<sup>715</sup>

When Burma had border difficulties with the PRC, the CIA reported that Burma considered appealing for SEATO's help. Even though it was not a member, it was in SEATO's treaty area.<sup>716</sup> The NSC had contingency plans to defend Indonesia as well. This would include the help of SEATO members Australia and New Zealand. Although Indonesia was not a SEATO member, the NSC wanted to stop communism everywhere in the region. The US wanted those nearby SEATO allies to help because the US Congress would need to deliberate about sending US troops to Southeast Asia, and that could take a considerable amount of time.<sup>717</sup>

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<sup>713</sup> UK Embassy to State Department, Feb. 21, 1957, 285, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>714</sup> NSC 6012, 14-15.

<sup>715</sup> State Department Circular Telegram Jun. 1960, 193-94.

<sup>716</sup> Robertson to Dulles, Aug. 29, 1956, 239, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>717</sup> 229<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Dec. 21, 1954, 2, Box 6, NSC, EDDE.

Although the NSC and SEATO planned to defend the entire region, the very populous and resource rich Indonesia also began to appear as a threat that needed to be accounted for. Indonesians, with their deep distrust of the West after being colonized, viewed the movement of SEATO forces near their territory as a threat,<sup>718</sup> and SEATO used caution to not violate Indonesian airspace during its military exercises.<sup>719</sup> Reports from a SEATO conference explained that Indonesia's military buildup with jets and a navy exceeded its internal security requirements. Therefore, if communists took power in Indonesia, even legitimately through an election, they would control that hardware and could go on the offensive. Moreover, in Indonesia's dispute with the Dutch over who should control the western part of New Guinea, the Australians, who controlled the eastern part, wanted SEATO to warn Indonesia to not use force. There was fear that Indonesians in New Guinea could create a labor dispute as a pretext for the Indonesian armed forces to intervene, which the British thought would eventually involve a SEATO response, especially if they threatened Australia's part of New Guinea.<sup>720</sup> The Australians even lobbied for New Guinea to be designated as a territory covered by SEATO.<sup>721</sup> However, New Guinea divided SEATO's Western and Asian members. The Thais said they would not want to be involved in SEATO action in response to an Indonesian attack, even on Australia's part of New Guinea, which was a hypothetical contingency that was brought to SEATO Secretary General Sarasin's attention when he toured Australia.<sup>722</sup>

Conversely, Indonesia continually received more support from the UN's growing Afro-Asian bloc in the controversy over New Guinea, which Asians attributed to the effects of the

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<sup>718</sup> Ang, *Southeast Asia's Cold War*, 76.

<sup>719</sup> ANZUS Meeting, Nov. 17, 1956, 269, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21 (hereafter, ANZUS Meeting Nov. 1956).

<sup>720</sup> US SEATO Delegation to State Department Apr. 1959, 87-88.

<sup>721</sup> Edwards, *Crises and Commitments*, 158.

<sup>722</sup> Modelski, "The Asian States' Participation in SEATO," 94.

Bandung communique. The Dutch and Australians doubted they could prevent a two-thirds majority from supporting Indonesian control of New Guinea in the UN General Assembly. Australia's Foreign Minister Casey hoped the Dutch were not bluffing when they said they would follow South Africa's lead and defy any UN resolutions about the Netherlands relinquishing control in New Guinea.<sup>723</sup> The British also voted against Indonesian efforts to control New Guinea.<sup>724</sup> Dulles feared that if Indonesians gained control of New Guinea, then New Guinea could become communist, communism would breach the US' offshore island chain that spanned from the Aleutian Island off the coast of Alaska to New Zealand, and communists would move closer to Australia. Plus, Dulles explained that he wanted to show Sukarno that "flirting with communists involves paying a price." Yet, Dulles also recognized that not supporting Indonesia on New Guinea could impair the US' ability to work with Indonesia's anticommunist rebels, who were gaining strength on Indonesia's outer islands. This would be even more important if communists took over the island of Java where Indonesia's political capital was.<sup>725</sup> Similarly, Dulles feared Indonesia's government using force would set a precedent for the PRC annexing Taiwan.<sup>726</sup> Thus, in the case of New Guinea, the private interests of members were factors that SEATO had to account for, but since the tensions were not satisfactorily resolved, they divided the organization.

After gaining independence, many new nations in the developing world tried to steer clear of their former Western colonizers, and they pursued neutrality to demonstrate independence. This thwarted the NSC's objective to get them to cooperate with the "free world." As the wealthiest nation, the US could try to buy allegiance from foreign nations, especially ones

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<sup>723</sup> ANZUS Meeting Oct. 57, 388.

<sup>724</sup> Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation in Southeast Asia*, 212.

<sup>725</sup> ANZUS Meeting Oct. 57, 389.

<sup>726</sup> State Department Conversation Feb. 1959, 72.

that struggled economically, as most newly independent nations did. However, that was a more effective strategy for nations with leaders that were willing to cooperate with the US than neutral nations. Comparatively, in 1959 budget estimates for Southeast Asia, the average total for military, economic, and technical aid, as well as information programs, was nearly ten times greater for SEATO's members and protocol states than Southeast Asian nations that were unaffiliated with SEATO.<sup>727</sup> Those unaffiliated nations, Indonesia, Burma, Malaya, and Singapore, were willing to sacrifice the prospect of US aid and security for their independence. In a 1959 NSC meeting, CIA Director Allen Dulles explained that the intelligence community estimated that the overall situation in underdeveloped nations had become worse. As free elections often produced leftist and neutral leaders that the US opposed, he concluded, parliamentary democracy was not an exportable commodity to them. This was a "very severe problem" with "no clear answer." Accordingly, the US might have to accept systems such as Sukarno's "Guided Democracy," which entailed increased executive power that arrested members of the opposition, even though Sukarno was further left and more sympathetic to communism than the NSC liked.<sup>728</sup> The NSC was becoming aware that the worldview of most people in the developing world was incompatible with members of the NSC. In newly independent nations, the people's desire for independence from the West trumped their fear of communism, and the NSC wanted them to cooperate with the West to oppose communism.

While historian Gary Hess argues that SEATO had more of a psychological than a military purpose in improving the US' ability to defend Southeast Asia, that argument needs to be reexamined when the nations in Southeast Asia that were unaffiliated with SEATO are

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<sup>727</sup> NSC 5913/1, Sep. 25, 1959, 13-14, NSC 5913 – Far East, Box 27, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA.

<sup>728</sup> 398<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Mar. 5, 1959, 4, Box 11, NSC, EDDE.

accounted for.<sup>729</sup> Although SEATO did not have a standing army, a collective-security treaty that was backed by the US' deterrent capabilities made the possibility of a US military intervention more credible, which was what the NSC wanted from SEATO. However, that contention does not adequately factor in the psychological effect from the backlash against SEATO because of the affinities for neutrality and anti-Westernism that were prevalent throughout the greater Southeast Asia region. Thus, whatever positive psychological effect SEATO had in deterring communists must be counterbalanced against the negative impact of how opposition to SEATO limited its effectiveness as an organization and the NSC's ability to achieve its objective for the nations of Southeast Asia.

This strong desire for independence from the West undermined the NSC's goal to create an anticommunist regional identity for Southeast Asia and organize it through SEATO. After Malaya, Singapore, and the nations in Indochina became independent during Eisenhower's presidency, the only territory controlled by SEATO members in Southeast Asia was the Philippines, British Borneo, and Thailand, with the last one being the only territory in mainland Southeast Asia. A territorial addition SEATO did make, although it was extremely minor, was when the British agreed to "divorce" Christmas Island, near Indonesia in the Indian Ocean, from Singapore before Singapore became independent and give it to Australia. The Australians wanted it to build an airfield in the potential path of long-range rockets Indonesia was projected to obtain soon.<sup>730</sup> SEATO's lack of territorial control within Southeast Asia was compounded by Indonesia and North Vietnam posing interstate threats, and communist insurgencies existed in Laos, South Vietnam, the Philippines, Burma, and Malaya. To add to those difficulties, a 1958 OCB report revealed that "SEATO has a continuing problem in popularizing the organization

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<sup>729</sup> Hess, "The American Search for Stability in Southeast Asia," 286.

<sup>730</sup> ANZUS Meeting Nov. 1956, 269.

within Asian member countries as well as in the general treaty area.”<sup>731</sup> Although the report did not specify what methodology it used or the impact it had on policy formation, the prospect of SEATO creating an anticommunist regional identity was becoming progressively challenging as support for neutrality increased throughout Southeast Asia after SEATO’s creation.

NSC policies often looked at Southeast Asia as a coherent geographic entity, and this was central to SEATO being a regional collective-security organization with a common purpose to contain communism. Yet, scholars that have examined the perspectives of people in Southeast Asia have argued that this was a problematic approach, which supports the primary source research from the NSC’s perspective in this dissertation. Scholar Benedict Anderson explains that the concept of Southeast Asia as an identity was imposed from the outside and most of the inhabitants in the region did not share it.<sup>732</sup> Scholar James Tyner, in his study of America’s strategy in Southeast Asia, agrees with Anderson and goes even farther to argue that “Southeast Asia... does not exist.” Tyner explains that after World War II the US created a “discourse” about Southeast Asia as a “surrogate space to further American imperial interests,” which “are economic, political, territorial, and moral.” Thus, Tyner’s “guiding thesis... is that the construction of Southeast Asia as a geographic entity has been a crucial component in the creation of the American empire.”<sup>733</sup> Tyner’s language about empire may be overblown. After examining NSC sources extensively, its motive is more defensive to contain communism than offensive to expand “imperial interests.”

Since SEATO struggled to strengthen itself from within Southeast Asia, the US’ concept of the region had to expand, and it tried to reinforce SEATO even more from the outside. In

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<sup>731</sup> OCB Southeast Asia Report, May 28, 1958, 1137, in USVR, 5B3D.

<sup>732</sup> Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons*, 3.

<sup>733</sup> Tyner, *America’s Strategy in Southeast Asia*, 1.

1955, the State Department discussed trying to get Pacific nations in Latin America, such as Chile, Peru, and Mexico to officially declare their support for SEATO.<sup>734</sup> Yet, in 1957, Dulles concluded that enlarging the treaty area was not feasible at that time, but he hoped SEATO might expand to include Japan, the ROC, and South Korea.<sup>735</sup> From the time the US began an earnest effort to create SEATO in 1954 through 1959, the NSC produced five policy papers on Antarctica that stated the USSR believed Antarctica had strategic importance and was improving its naval and air capabilities there.<sup>736</sup> Although it may have just been coincidence, Antarctica was close to SEATO members Australia and New Zealand, and a map of the greater Southeast Asia region exhibited behind the podium at the 1959 SEATO council meeting in New Zealand had Australia in the center and Antarctica was displayed just as prominently as mainland Southeast Asia.<sup>737</sup>

The NSC's efforts to strengthen SEATO from the outside also included attempts to get support from other anticommunist Western-backed, collective-security pacts. Dulles remarked in a message from a SEATO council meeting how these pacts were interdependent, and no pact area would be safe if one of the others were lost. Consequently, the pacts could not be ranked for importance, but they were all connected as part of the New Look's grand strategy to contain communism. Still, with the US allocating substantially more personnel and resources to NATO than SEATO, there was reason to question if Dulles truly believed that the US' pacts could not be ranked in terms of importance.<sup>738</sup> In 1957, the Pakistanis even suggested linking SEATO with the Middle East security pact CENTO to Dulles. Dulles was sympathetic to the idea, but he said

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<sup>734</sup> State Department Conversation Oct. 1955, 147.

<sup>735</sup> Conversation in Canberra Mar. 1957, 305-06.

<sup>736</sup> NSC 5424/1 Progress Report, May 8, 1957, 2, NSC 5424/1 – Policy Toward Antarctica, Box 11, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA. The other NSC policy papers about Antarctica are 5528, 5715, 5804, 5905.

<sup>737</sup> SEATO Record 1958-59.

<sup>738</sup> Dulles to State Department, Mar. 12, 1958, 17, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16.

it was something he would need to study.<sup>739</sup> In 1958, the SEATO council authorized SEATO Secretary General Sarasin to contact other collective-security organizations.<sup>740</sup> In 1959, SEATO agreed to send the chief of its Military Planning Office to visit NATO and CENTO, and he corresponded with NATO about standardization agreements.<sup>741</sup> The OCB's Bishop Report argued that keeping NATO abreast of developments in SEATO might generate sympathy from NATO members that were not in SEATO during a crisis in Southeast Asia. Since the US was the only nation affiliated with every anticommunist pact, it could serve as a liaison to identify what documents would be of use to the other pacts, propose security protocols, and transmit information. This would also allow the US to control all the information.<sup>742</sup> The SEATO Record reveals that eventually SEATO coordinated with NATO, and CENTO, and sent observers from the Military Planning Office to their specialist meetings. However, it does not explain if the US controlled the flow of information, what nation the liaison officer was from, and what were the results of these interactions.<sup>743</sup>

The primary source evidence about the NSC's difficulties in expanding SEATO extends historian John Franklin's argument that SEATO did not struggle because of deficiencies in its military aspects, but SEATO's grand failure was that it did not develop into a larger economic organization that united the region against communism, which Dulles had envisioned. Dulles criticized the Truman administration for reacting to communist initiative and not having a dynamic strategy for Asia. Hence, he wanted a powerful East Asian collective-security grouping that united and expanded on defense agreements the US already had with Japan, the Philippines,

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<sup>739</sup> State Department Conversation, Feb. 26, 1957, 286-87, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>740</sup> OCB Southeast Asia Report, Jan. 7, 1959, 1157, in USVR, 5B3D.

<sup>741</sup> SEATO Progress Report Apr. 59, 82.

<sup>742</sup> Bishop Report, 24.

<sup>743</sup> SEATO Record, 32.

Australia, and New Zealand. After World War II, it was difficult to create a strong group considering the chaos that pervaded Asia with events like the Chinese Civil and Korean Wars. Dulles wanted to slowly build an alliance, but the 1954 crisis in Indochina and the subsequent Geneva Accords forced SEATO to be created hastily. Thus, SEATO was a reaction to communist initiative, which was what Dulles criticized the Truman administration for doing. Because SEATO appeared as a militarized attempt to contain communism, neutral nations like Burma were not interested in joining. Similarly, nonaligned nations like Malaya wondered why they should join when SEATO did not produce more substantial economic benefits. When the US chose sides in domestic matters in Southeast Asian nations and applied economic leverage to get nations to accept its position of opposing communism, it generated charges of imperialism.<sup>744</sup> SEATO's inability to expand and increase membership were factors for serious problems, but this focus minimizes how the internal divisions between SEATO members, which are highlighted in chapters two through four of this dissertation, also undercut its unity. Franklin's analysis also does not adequately account for rightwing concerns about communism in the US. The Republican party was influenced by the China Lobby and frustrated with Truman's passive Asia strategy.

Franklin goes on to argue that the US tried to counter accusations of imperialism by reducing aid to neutral nations, which caused further resentment in the region and prevented more nations from joining SEATO. The New Look's emphasis on controlling government spending also deemphasized aid and aimed to get Asian nations to unite to take care of their own financial futures. Japan joining would have been key because it had the strongest economic and industrial capacity in Asia, but there were anti-American demonstrations in Japan over US-

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<sup>744</sup> Franklin, "The Hollow Pact," 248-50.

Japanese security agreements, and political factions in Japan wanted to focus on domestic economic growth. In addition, Southeast Asians still resented Japan for its actions during World War II. Since the US put its fear of communism ahead of the interests and concerns of nations in the greater region, SEATO never developed into the organization Dulles originally envisioned.<sup>745</sup> Where my interpretation differs from Franklin's is that a major reason for the limited amount of aid that went to neutral nations in Southeast Asia, like Indonesia and Burma, was more because of domestic pressure on the governments in those nations to remain independent from the West than New Look austerity or punitive measures for not cooperating with the US. In addition, Franklin overestimates the importance of adding Japan. Instead, as argued in chapter three of this dissertation, SEATO implementing largescale regional economic development projects would have been more effective at making SEATO more attractive to new members.

In another interpretation to explain SEATO's shortcomings, historian Robert McMahon argues that a prime motivation for American actions was the US' "credibility fixation." Dulles recognized and appreciated the criticisms of the SEATO concept of collective security from the skeptical British and the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, who both pointed out the inadequacy of relying on local forces for any major military action. However, Dulles had a different goal for SEATO. He did not expect it to have to fight a war because SEATO's prime value was the powerful signal it sent about the US' commitment to the region. Hence, even if SEATO was weak in terms of forces on the ground, the US' commitment would serve as the main deterrent, especially to the PRC. Simultaneously, Dulles argued, SEATO could give heart and hope to the region's struggling noncommunist nations. Dulles told Eisenhower that the US needed to account for these political factors so the people in mainland Southeast Asia, including the

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<sup>745</sup> Franklin, "The Hollow Pact," 246, 250-51.

Burmese, Malaysians, and Thais, would stay on the US' side since they would have hope that their nations and the area would not be overrun and occupied until the PRC was destroyed in a major war.<sup>746</sup> While McMahon does not define "credibility fixation," it seems to imply that the US had to convey that it was willing to use enough military force to make deterrence credible. This is consistent with my research. However, McMahon seems to have overestimated how the Eisenhower administration thought that SEATO reassured nations throughout the region.

### *Comparing SEATO to Other Collective Security Organizations*

The NSC's difficulties in dealing with neutrality and popular movements that opposed unwanted Western intervention in the developing world had repercussions on American collective-security organization in regions outside Southeast Asia. What happened with SEATO builds on work by other regional studies about the Eisenhower Administration. Historian Salim Yaqub details how the US was challenged by Arab nationalism in the Middle East, which was where CENTO was. Conservative Arab regimes wanted US aid, but they could not take it politically because of their peoples' hostility toward the West. Relations became so fraught that the US abandoned the previously mentioned Eisenhower doctrine.<sup>747</sup> Historian Steven Rabe studied US relations with Latin America, where the US was a member of the Organization of American States. In Latin America, the US' virulent anticommunism led it to back rightwing dictatorships, which made the US very unpopular. Consequently, the US had to rethink its assumption that its hemispheric containment policy was sound.<sup>748</sup> Overall, in regions of the

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<sup>746</sup> McMahon, "The United States and Southeast Asia in an Era of Decolonization, 1945-1965," 218.

<sup>747</sup> Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*.

<sup>748</sup> Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America*.

developing world where the administration had collective security agreements, each region's peoples generally opposed unwanted Western influence more than communism. Thus, attempts to use Western-backed anticommunist collective security where the people were leery of the West and did not strongly fear communism was a questionable approach, but it was a key component of the New Look, and continued throughout Eisenhower's presidency as part of a universal grand strategy.

Even NATO was not a completely harmonious and united collective-security pact. The Eisenhower administration was more willing to entrust the British with armed nuclear missiles than the French. This affronted the French, who responded by withdrawing from NATO.<sup>749</sup> Still, by comparison, many factors made collective security more difficult for SEATO and the rest of the developing world than NATO. NATO was created in a relatively uncomplicated political situation. There was an atmosphere of understanding and a common need to meet an unambiguous threat from communism.<sup>750</sup> NATO was focused on resisting a massive armed attack from the Soviet bloc into Western Europe,<sup>751</sup> and its members had narrower disparities in industrial advancement and military potential.<sup>752</sup> In addition, NATO members shared borders, were more concentrated geographically, and had more interdependent economies. Their Western culture and political beliefs created a common identity. All the key nations in the region joined, and they committed standing forces and embraced joint command and planning. NATO developed rapidly and displayed strength. Potential new members were eager to join and were readily added. The member with the most resources and capabilities in both pacts, the US, was more committed to NATO. Eisenhower and British Prime Minister Macmillan participated in a

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<sup>749</sup> Brown, *Eisenhower's Nuclear Calculus in Europe*, Chapters 7-8.

<sup>750</sup> USVR, 4A1, 13.

<sup>751</sup> Chatham House Collective Defence, 143.

<sup>752</sup> SEATO Record, 8.

1957 NATO council meeting, whereas Eisenhower showed little interest in SEATO meetings, even when they were in Washington.<sup>753</sup> This Eurocentric focus was one of the reasons the NSC had limited success achieving its objective for the nations of Southeast Asia.

Nevertheless, in accounting for NATO being more effective than SEATO, the Pentagon's report on *US-Vietnamese Relations* argues that there were few structural differences between the treaties. The wording provided the foundation for a strong defensive strategy, and the content of many of their articles were virtually identical. Article 5 of the NATO treaty did use stronger language than SEATO's. It considered an "attack against one... an attack against... all," but NATO members were only required to take whatever action they deemed necessary, which, in practice, was identical to SEATO. While scholars George Modelski, Daniel Fineman, Nick Cullather, and Ronald Nairn have argued that NATO had an automatic response in its well-known Article 5 in their comparisons with SEATO, this is a common misperception. The language of the NATO treaty reveals that no member of NATO was required to respond militarily under any circumstance.<sup>754</sup> Historian G. Wyn Rees argues that the US' unwillingness to underwrite SEATO with a major ground force in peacetime sharply contrasted with its commitments in Europe.<sup>755</sup> This is a valid critique of a structural difference that made NATO stronger than SEATO. Yet, apart from a standing force, SEATO provided all the protection of NATO, and in some ways, SEATO could do more than NATO. SEATO had provisions for technical assistance, social wellbeing, and countersubversion, when NATO was strictly focused on military deterrence. A reason for this may have been that the NSC realized that a holistic

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<sup>753</sup> USVR, 4A1, 13-14, 23.

<sup>754</sup> USVR, 4A1, 16-17, 19; for Article 5, see Webb, "Australia and SEATO," 52; Modelski, "The Asian States' Participation in SEATO," 96; Fineman, *A Special Relationship*, 196; Cullather, *Illusions of Influence*, 143; Nairn, "SEATO," 7.

<sup>755</sup> Rees, *Anglo-American Approaches to Alliance Security, 1955-60*, 133.

approach through one organization might be better after it took a piecemeal approach in Europe with NATO, the Marshall Plan, and Truman doctrine. SEATO could also respond to anything that endangered peace in the entire treaty area instead of NATO's limitations to only respond against attacks in Europe or North America against its members. Finally, unlike NATO, SEATO did not have a clause that implied dependence on the UN to restore peace after hostilities commenced.<sup>756</sup>

Therefore, even though NATO was structurally stronger with a standing force and more specific language to take unified military action, the difficulties that SEATO encountered were more because of the limited will and commitment of the nations in Southeast Asia to regional collective security than the design of the organization. The biggest obstacle to SEATO successfully fulfilling the New Look's component of collective security was the lack of regional buy in, which the popularity of neutrality contributed to. SEATO's protocol states had limitations on their ability to join military alliances, SEATO's Asian members had objectives that differed from the NSC's, and Southeast Asian nations that were unaffiliated with SEATO never chose to join but still had to be accounted for because of the region's interconnectedness. To the frustration of many Americans, few people in developing nations shared the worldview of a "free world" against an evil Soviet bloc.<sup>757</sup> The British thinktank Chatham House explained the situation as the Eisenhower administration insisting on defending nations that did not want to be defended from dangers their governments publicly denied. SEATO was so alienating that even a massive economic-development plan would not have enticed uncommitted nations to join.<sup>758</sup> Moreover, the OCB's Bishop Report concluded that neutralists believed that protection from the

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<sup>756</sup> USVR, 4A1, 16-17, 19.

<sup>757</sup> Newsom, *The Imperial Mantle*, 147.

<sup>758</sup> Chatham House Collective Defence, 166.

US would be automatic in response to any overt Soviet-bloc aggression, even if a nation was not in SEATO. Since the uncommitted nation could also receive US aid, SEATO membership only added unnecessary risks, obligations, and political liabilities without providing much in the way of additional benefits.<sup>759</sup>

With SEATO's lack of support in Southeast Asia, the NSC's concept of Southeast Asia had to expand. SEATO tried to strengthen itself with nations outside the region and by working with other collective-security organizations, but its success was limited. Although US-led collective security made sense in the abstract as part of the New Look grand strategy, and it had success in Europe, it did not fit well in Southeast Asia in the late 1950s. There were challenges the NSC faced in the region, which were not as prevalent in Europe. The foremost one was that the most likely military threats were not conventional armies external to the region, but indigenous communist insurgencies inside the region. In addition, there were issues like allies at times having incompatible outlooks for the region, decolonization, anti-Westernism, neutrality, and governments that openly opposed the US' anticommunist efforts. Other obstacles SEATO faced were that its members did not share any borders, and there was a huge backlash from the region's people and wider world, especially India and the PRC, which brought in competing ideologies. Compared to other collective-security organizations, SEATO was more multifaceted to account for Southeast Asia's great complexity. Yet, SEATO did not have the resources nor resolve to do anything well, and its members' competing interests caused gridlock that led to inaction. SEATO combined elements of NATO and the Marshall Plan in Europe, only it did them on a much smaller scale, and it did not satisfy anyone. Therefore, NATO's relative success

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<sup>759</sup> Bishop Report, 27.

was not due so much to its structure, but its members' and the region's common purpose and culture.<sup>760</sup>

In reference to the numerous security agreements the Eisenhower administration participated in, historians like David Anderson and Kevin Ruane have called this phenomenon "pactomania."<sup>761</sup> In analyzing this assessment, the word "mania" can have negative connotations along the lines of paranoia, but it can also imply a fanatical zeal for something. There seems to be an element of truth for both interpretations. Collective security was central to the New Look, but it was also a continuation of existing US foreign policy. However, the organizations created under Eisenhower, SEATO and CENTO, were forced to fit into a grand strategy where conditions were not good to establish a strong anticommunist collective-security organization. In Southeast Asia and the Middle East, there were prevalent anti-West sentiments because of colonization. After the peoples in those regions had been under Western control for generations, a Western-led military alliance overseeing the region could appear eerily like colonialism, especially with lingering distrust. Hence, avoiding the Cold War and being independent of the West were popular. Each region also had an effective national leader, Sukarno and Nasser, respectively, for these movements. Collective security was more effective in Western Europe through NATO because the popular passions for being independent from the US were not strong enough to pressure governments to undermine, or abandon, regional collective security.

Because the Eisenhower administration had limited success using SEATO to influence nations unaffiliated with SEATO and an extreme fear of neutrality, it turned to unilateral covert operations. In Indonesia, the CIA tried to aid a largescale rebel movement that opposed Sukarno as he veered to the left. In Burma, the CIA supported the ROC troops that clashed with leftist

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<sup>760</sup> SEATO Record, 69.

<sup>761</sup> Anderson, *Trapped by Success*, 73; Ruane, "SEATO."

factions but turned opium into a major business. In Singapore, the CIA tried to recruit spies. These endeavors were counterproductive and became major embarrassments for the US after it botched coverups. They also conveyed that the US was trying to impose its will in other nations' internal affairs, which paralleled colonialism. The only beneficial anticommunist result was the revenue raised from opium sales financing anticommunist efforts, but it simultaneously promoted the global narcotics trade. Furthermore, covert operations largely hindered US relations with the unaffiliated nations and turned the people in those nations further against the US. At the end of Eisenhower's presidency, Indonesia and Burma had leftist regimes that embraced neutrality; and after Malaya and Singapore became independent, they did not join SEATO or become strong US allies. Covert operations in Southeast Asia were not confined to nations unaffiliated with SEATO, and they were used more in Southeast Asia than any region in the developing world. CIA activity in SEATO's protocol states aimed to aid pro-West factions, but they undermined stability. Meanwhile, SEATO members enabled the US to launch covert operations in the greater region by serving as bases. Ultimately, it was exposés by the American press that uncovered many CIA covert operations. The domestic and international response was generally negative towards them. Moreover, when Southeast Asian nations unaffiliated with SEATO exercised democracy, which reflected an overall trend in the greater region, they almost always moved left. The US' response of backing rightwing factions and arming rebel groups damaged its relations with the governments most people in those nations preferred, and they were highlighted in anti-US propaganda.<sup>762</sup>

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<sup>762</sup> NSC 5412, Mar. 15, 1954, NSC 5412/2 – Covert Operations, Box 10, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA; Congressional Record, Sep. 2, 1965, CIA-RDP75-00149R000700100029-6, CIAR; Congressional Record May 1966; Indonesian Operation Original Concept, May 15, 1958, CIA-RDP89B00552R00010004000-9, CIAR; U.S. Says CIA Didn't Do It, Undated, CIA-RDP75-00001R000400010027-4, CIAR; CIA Photographic Intelligence Center Mission C1722, Jul. 14, 1958, CIA-RDP89B00551R000400390002-3, CIAR; CIA Examination of Charges of PRC Involvement in the Illicit Opium Trade, Nov. 9, 1956, CIA-RDP79T00935A000400150001-4, CIAR; Heroin Traffic, Mar. 1972, CIA-RDP74B00415R000400050054-0, CIAR; Foreign Reaction to *New York Times* Series on the C.I.A., May 12,

One of the most significant results from the NSC attempting to influence events in Southeast Asia with covert operations was its complete change of policy toward Indonesia. After failed attempts to assist the rightwing rebels, which included an American pilot being shot down, by 1959, the NSC had abandoned the rebels, switched sides, and began backing Sukarno's left-leaning government. The NSC finally conceded that it was best to accept Indonesian neutrality, which included relations with the Soviet bloc, even though Secretary of State Dulles defended the US' efforts to back the rebels in an NSC meeting.<sup>763</sup> As Sukarno ruled under martial law, CIA Director Allen Dulles announced that Indonesia was the friendliest it had ever been to the US.<sup>764</sup> This development shows an evolution in the NSC's thinking toward neutrality and a realization, that at least in the case of Indonesia in 1959, that accepting neutrality was the best realistic option.

Superpower ideologies were imperfectly aligned with local realities in the developing world, and even the mighty US struggled to influence events.<sup>765</sup> A reason for this was that the NSC attempted to implement components of the New Look like collective security and covert

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1966, CIA-RDP68B00432R000500020013-5, CIAR. For secondary works about the CIA, see Prados, *Safe for Democracy*, especially, 647; Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*; Prados, "The Central Intelligence Agency and the Face of Decolonization under the Eisenhower Administration," especially, 42-43; Immerman, *The Hidden Hand*, especially, 49, 51, 119; Callanan, "Eisenhower, the CIA, and Covert Action," especially, 366; McGarr, "Tinker, Taylor, Soldier, Subversive," especially, 296. For secondary works about Indonesia, see Conboy, *Feet to the Fire*, especially, 155; Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy*, especially, 9; McMahon, "The Point of No Return," especially, 75-76, 96; Roadnight, *United States Policy towards Indonesia in the Truman and Eisenhower Years*, especially, Chapters 6-7; Gardner, *Shared Hopes, Separate Fears*, especially, 141-42; Anwar, "Beneficiary of the Cold War," especially, 318. For secondary works about Burma, see Gibson, *The Secret Army*, especially, 307; Kaufman, "Trouble in the Golden Triangle;" Foley, *The Cold War and National Assertion in Southeast Asia*, especially, 117; Clymer, *A Delicate Relationship*, especially, Chapter 8; Charney, "U Nu, China and the 'Burmese' Cold War," especially, 58; Bo, "Raising Xenophobic Socialism against a Communist Threat," especially, 192. For secondary works about Malaya and Singapore, see Sodhy, *The US-Malaysian Nexus*, especially, Chapter 5; Baker, *Crossroads*, especially, 292, 295, 299; Yong, "The Cold War and the Making of Singapore," especially, 150-51; Long, *Safe for Decolonization*, especially, 178; Belogurova, "The Malayan Communist Party and the Malayan Chinese Association," especially, 138-39; Yong, "The 'Grand Design,'" especially, 142-43; Bertrand, *Political Change in Southeast Asia*, 108; Brown, *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia*, 79; Dreisbach, "Between SEATO and ASEAN," especially, 249.

<sup>763</sup> 395<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 9, briefing notes pp. 1-2, 5.

<sup>764</sup> 429<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Dec. 16, 1959, 5-6, Box 12, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>765</sup> Ricklefs, "The Cold War in Hindsight," 342-43.

operations in nations unaffiliated with SEATO even though the ubiquity of neutrality and anti-Westernism made them unlikely to succeed. This supports historian Jessica Chapman's argument that US foreign policy lacked flexibility and tried to fit geopolitical struggles into its overarching national-security strategy.<sup>766</sup> While planning strategy for Eisenhower's second term in 1957, the NSC identified a major threat to the US as "weakness or instability in critical areas where there is strong pressure for economic or political change."<sup>767</sup> Still, CIA Director Allen Dulles acknowledged in a 1958 NSC meeting that the security situation the US was most likely to encounter was the social unrest the NSC identified earlier, and had since occurred in Indonesia, which he admitted the New Look could not address adequately.<sup>768</sup> A 1959 State Department memo recommended revising the NSC's Far East objectives because they were not realistic.<sup>769</sup> Yet, the NSC's final Southeast-Asia policy in July 1960 had identical objectives to its first one from 1953 except for it specifying the prevention of the region's nations from becoming economically dependent on the Soviet bloc. Even after the struggles SEATO faced, the NSC's final Southeast Asia policy maintained its devotion to collective security in the region.<sup>770</sup>

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To conclude this chapter, SEATO allowed the NSC to have an organization that could undertake regional collective security in Southeast Asia, which was an important component of the New Look. Collective security shared costs and responsibilities as the NSC looked to limit its defense commitments. However, from its inception, SEATO had limited support from within the region. A major obstacle the NSC faced was the popularity of neutrality in the greater region.

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<sup>766</sup> Chapman, *Cauldron of Resistance*, 202.

<sup>767</sup> 317<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 1-2.

<sup>768</sup> 359<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Mar. 20, 1958, 11-12, Box 9, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>769</sup> Parsons to Acting Secretary of State Sep. 1959, 115.

<sup>770</sup> NSC 6012, 5.

The NSC despised neutrality, and saw it as a major threat, because naïve leaders in the developing world could get duped by Soviet-bloc machinations. India, the leader of the neutralist movement, had a contentious relationship with the US and vehemently opposed SEATO. Conversely, the Soviet bloc was more open to neutrality and made relative gains in terms of influencing the greater region how it wanted compared to the US. The NSC found itself in a dilemma where it was in a competition with the Soviet bloc to win the allegiance of uncommitted nations with aid, but the NSC also wanted to reward allies by giving them preferential treatment for aid, without which, they would have less incentive to participate in collective security with the West. Although SEATO's efforts to add new members failed, its defense plans still had to account for nations unaffiliated with SEATO because their territory was in SEATO's treaty area and conflict could spill over or escalate. Indonesia even became viewed as a military threat to some SEATO members because of its aggressive rhetoric about annexing part of New Guinea from the Dutch, and communists had increasing political influence through legitimate means. With limited success at strengthening SEATO from within Southeast Asia, the NSC tried to reinforce SEATO even more from without and link it to other pro-West, collective-security pacts. Nevertheless, SEATO never congealed into a strong organization, especially compared to NATO, because there was no unifying principle undergirding the organization's foundation. The NSC tried to implement anticommunist collective security through SEATO, but the sentiments that pervaded the greater region were for promoting neutrality and minimizing Western influence. With SEATO's lack of success at positively influencing nations unaffiliated with SEATO, the NSC relied more on covert operations throughout Southeast Asia, but those efforts were largely counterproductive and became embarrassments to the Eisenhower administration when they were exposed. A significant result was that by the end of Eisenhower's presidency,

the NSC accepted that neutrality was the best realistic option in Indonesia, and it reversed positions from trying to overthrow Sukarno's left-leaning government to supporting it. As evidence of the NSC being set on implementing the New Look universally, even though it was aware of how doing so through SEATO was problematic in Southeast Asia, the objective in its final Southeast Asia policy remained virtually the same as the first one in Eisenhower's presidency, and the NSC still emphasized using regional collective security.

## 6. Crisis in Indochina: SEATO's Unwillingness to Intervene Militarily in the Laotian Civil War Undermining its Credibility

This chapter covers the role SEATO played in facilitating the New Look's goal to use foreign troops from allied nations for limited war in peripheral areas and how that affected the NSC's ability to achieve its objective for Southeast Asia to have pro-West nations with free and stable governments. In focusing on Indochina, which comprised South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, SEATO's protocol states, as well as the DRV (North Vietnam), this chapter argues that the NSC, working through SEATO, sought to use local troops to fight communist insurgencies in Southeast Asia as part of the larger grand strategy of the New Look. This was important because the NSC wanted to focus US efforts and resources on strategic deterrence to control defense spending. Moreover, indigenous troops were better suited to fight their own conflicts because they did not require as much logistical support as US troops, which made them less expensive. Then, the US could concentrate on contributing combat enablers like airpower, logistics, and naval support as it was needed. However, although the US agreed to respect the Geneva Accords that neutralized Indochina, it did not officially recognize them or argue that they were legitimate. Consequently, it could justify trying to turn SEATO's protocol states into pro-West allies, even though that was antithetical to the intent of the Geneva Accords. In South Vietnam and Laos, the US providing deterrence through SEATO emboldened pro-West regimes to ignore, or not let communists participate in, scheduled reunification elections, and rebellion against the US-backed, pro-West regimes ensued. Meanwhile, Cambodia strove to remain neutral, and the US supported Cambodia's SEATO-friendly neighbors (Thailand and South Vietnam) in their efforts to undermine a government in Cambodia that did not oppose communism. Transnational instability grew throughout Indochina, and in Laos, a three-sided

civil war began as neutralists and communists united against the US-backed, pro-West regime. Yet, SEATO members needed to unanimously agree to undertake military action before SEATO could act, and its members would not do that without an interstate invasion. US and Thai desires for more involvement in Laos through SEATO were thwarted by other members who were unwilling to engage in counterinsurgency, which was the most likely communist military threat in Southeast Asia. Ultimately, this inaction undermined SEATO's credibility to engage in counterinsurgency, which was a significant part of what the NSC wanted from its SEATO allies.

### *Subversion in Indochina*

The Eisenhower administration had tried to assemble a coalition with Western and Asian members to meet Congress' requirements for "united action" to assist the French militarily during the 1954 crisis in Indochina, but it did not have enough support from its allies. After communist control of territory in Indochina was sanctioned by the Geneva Accords as part of a temporary ceasefire before reunification elections, US allies with interests in Southeast Asia became more willing to join a regional collective-security organization to try to contain further communist gains. As chapters two through five have shown, SEATO helped the NSC implement the New Look's components of deterrence, economic development, propaganda, and collective security in Southeast Asia. However, there were forces that the NSC had to contend with, which had their own objectives and agency, in the NSC's effort to achieve its objective for the nations of Southeast Asia. SEATO members were not unified and were halfhearted about fulfilling the NSC's vision of collective security through SEATO, and there was the spirit of neutrality established by the Geneva Accords that fostered great hostility to SEATO in the greater region.

Moreover, a primary purpose for SEATO was to resist subversion in the protocol states, which was the most likely communist threat, but there was the irony that the protocol states were not members. Hence, the question was, now that the NSC had SEATO, would it be able to use SEATO to adequately subdue a communist insurgency that challenged a friendly regime.

Although scholar Leszek Buszynski contends that SEATO could not respond unless there was an obvious external intervention,<sup>771</sup> the SEATO charter was designed with the threat from insurgencies in mind. Its novel provision of countersubversion in a regional collective-security organization allowed it to send troops to engage in counterinsurgency if it was requested by the nation under threat and all the members agreed. Yet, in SEATO's 1957 policy to combat "quasi-overt military action" from groups responsive to some degree of foreign control, the nation under threat would be responsible for intelligence and conventional, and unconventional, operations. Meanwhile, SEATO would only play a supporting role to strengthen that nation's forces.<sup>772</sup> This indicated that SEATO members were still reluctant to send troops to intervene militarily against an insurgency through SEATO, even though they had the ability to do so.

Because of the prevalence of communist subversion, the French argued Indochina should receive special attention from SEATO, but simultaneously, French forces stationed there were not obligated to SEATO.<sup>773</sup> A 1955 State Department memo revealed that SEATO's protocol was more important to Cambodia and Laos because they had fewer capabilities to defend themselves than South Vietnam, which was receiving substantial amounts of US military aid. Still, France intended to safeguard its interests throughout Indochina, including in North Vietnam.<sup>774</sup> France set the standard that if the protocol states grew stronger, then SEATO would

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<sup>771</sup> Buszynski, *SEATO*, 223.

<sup>772</sup> SEATO Progress Report Mar. 57, 299.

<sup>773</sup> SEATO Delegation to State Department, Feb. 24, 1955, 55, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>774</sup> Dillon to State Department, Jan. 6, 1955, 406, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

have been justified.<sup>775</sup> Nevertheless, tension was also building because the French resented the US trying to replace its influence in the protocol states.<sup>776</sup>

Combatting subversion presented challenges to SEATO. The treaty's vague wording about subversion could apply to much of Southeast Asia when SEATO was created. In addition, threats like the "Free Thai" movement, who were leftist Thai dissidents taking refuge in the PRC, were outside the treaty area.<sup>777</sup> Moreover, SEATO undertaking countersubversion would be suspect because the legal justification it used from the UN charter specified collective security against an armed attack, and countersubversion often fell in that ambiguous gray area.<sup>778</sup> Furthermore, the CIA expressed concern how leaks also prevented frank discussions about countersubversion in SEATO.<sup>779</sup> Still, the biggest challenge was anti-Westernism in the age of decolonization, and SEATO appeared as a US-led organization. SEATO gave the US legal justification to stay engaged in Indochina to deter communist aggression, without which, doing so would have had less domestic and international support. Yet, many Indochinese, as well as the neutral and Soviet blocs, interpreted US efforts as promoting imperialism, undermining the popular Geneva Accords, obstructing democracy, propping up authoritarian puppet regimes, and flexing American military muscles to intimidate. In response, communist insurgents channeled popular anti-Western feelings into indigenous uprisings. What happened in Southeast Asia during Eisenhower's presidency extends historian Michael Hunt's argument that while Americans during the Cold War tended to see revolutionary movements as a conspiracy led by the USSR and international communism, the US ignored the historical root causes, such as

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<sup>775</sup> SEATO Delegation Mar. 58, 20.

<sup>776</sup> Clymer, *The United States and Cambodia, 1870-1969*, 38.

<sup>777</sup> Chatham House SEATO, 14-15.

<sup>778</sup> Pearson, *Paper Tiger*, 33.

<sup>779</sup> ANZUS Meeting Oct. 57, 391.

European imperialism, and sided with unpopular and oppressive regimes against nationalist impulses.<sup>780</sup>

The British thinktank Chatham House explained in 1956 that since the US would not likely use nuclear weapons against the PRC unless it was to prevent a communist takeover after overt aggression, the threat of massive retaliation had limited effectiveness against subversion. Furthermore, even if a nation requested help, it was difficult to envision successful SEATO action. SEATO members would have to agree unanimously to intervene and about the level of intervention. If SEATO troops engaged, it was doubtful they would organize a land force significant enough to defeat an insurgency without using large amounts of Western troops. But since insurgencies were inherently a domestic political problem, a massive Western intervention could become counterproductive because it would have colonial implications, make the host government appear as a Western puppet, and not resolve the underlying political problem. Chatham House argued that the best solution was transforming Cambodia, Laos, and Burma into a belt of neutrality that separated the PRC and a reunited Vietnam from SEATO members Thailand and Pakistan. Before Vietnam's scheduled reunification election in 1956, the DRV had agreed to not interfere in Laos if Laos accepted the "five principles" for peaceful coexistence that India and the PRC promoted, and South Vietnam was ready to renounce using force to reunite the nation.<sup>781</sup> Nonetheless, Chatham House's solution that allowed neutrality and additional territorial gains by communists conflicted with NSC policies.

By 1956, SEATO announced that economic development and improved political stability had occurred throughout the treaty area.<sup>782</sup> This was beneficial to the NSC achieving its objective

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<sup>780</sup> Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 175.

<sup>781</sup> Chatham House Collective Defence, 146-47, 149.

<sup>782</sup> Chatham House Collective Defence, 195.

for the nations of Southeast Asia, but in Indochina, it came at a price and conflicted with another part of the NSC's objective to have pro-West nations. In the protocol states, Cambodia and Laos pursued neutrality, and most voters in Vietnam would surely have chosen reunification under DRV leadership had the scheduled election been held.<sup>783</sup> In theory, since SEATO had Asian membership and nonmilitary components like a mandate for regional economic development and the ability to sway people with propaganda, it could help the NSC achieve its objective. The critical factor would be if the people in the protocol states saw SEATO as beneficial in the wake of their traumatic colonial experience under SEATO member France.

There was some evidence that the NSC questioned if Indochina was the key to defending the region. When Dien Bien Phu fell, there was a reappraisal of the domino theory. Dulles explained in a press conference that "Southeast Asia could be secured even without perhaps Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia." Dulles added that Laos and Cambodia were "important but by no means essential" because they were poor countries with meager populations. While historian Charles Stevenson concluded that the US exaggerated the importance of Laos to justify opposing communism there, Dulles' assertion that it was not essential might cause that to be questioned, at least in 1954.<sup>784</sup> Yet, simultaneously, after the Geneva Conference, Dulles described "the great problem" as trying to "salvage" Indochina.<sup>785</sup> Nixon wanted to frame the Geneva Accords as positively as possible, but Dulles cautioned him against it because the result was obviously not what the US had desired.<sup>786</sup> Nonetheless, Dulles admitted that the Geneva Accords could have been worse, and the US needed to build a dike in Southeast Asia after it had successes

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<sup>783</sup> Jacobs, *The Universe Unraveling*; Rust, *Eisenhower and Cambodia*; Logevall, *Embers of War*.

<sup>784</sup> USVR, 2B2, 30-31; Stevenson, *The End of Nowhere*, 240.

<sup>785</sup> 207<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 15.

<sup>786</sup> 206<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Jul. 15, 1954, 15, Box 5, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 206<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

empowering pro-US regimes in Iran and Guatemala.<sup>787</sup> Instead of referring to Indochina generally, the NSC began distinguishing between its nations more, which included “free Vietnam” south of the partition.<sup>788</sup> The US also wanted to establish embassies in Laos and Cambodia to display that they were in the Western camp.<sup>789</sup> It planned to keep its consulate in Hanoi for espionage and to show that it did not accept that communist gains were permanent.<sup>790</sup>

### *Vietnam*

The South Vietnamese figure the NSC wanted to lead the nation was Ngo Dinh Diem. Diem was Catholic, came from an elite family, had spent time in the US, and had bipartisan support in the US Congress. Historian Seth Jacobs’ research that focuses on religious aspects of US-Vietnamese relations reveals that in the context of America’s “1950s religious revival,” and the “straitlaced Puritanism that Dulles personified,” the Eisenhower administration preferred a Catholic to any non-Christian, especially Buddhists, who did not believe in a Supreme Being like the atheistic communists. Eisenhower even said, “Our [American] system demands the Supreme Being.”<sup>791</sup> This belief showed up in the NSC’s basic national security policy from 1959 that stated, “America” was “founded” on “freedom of the human being under God.”<sup>792</sup> Jacobs argues that the Eisenhower administration held fast to the Diem experiment because of the religious connection and racial belief in Orientalism that Asians were childlike and needed to be protected

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<sup>787</sup> Smith to Dulles, Aug. 7, 1954, Telephone Memos Jul. 1, 1954 – Aug. 31, 1954 (2), Box 2, Telephone Conversations, EJFD.

<sup>788</sup> 210<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Aug. 12, 1954, 20, Box 5, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>789</sup> Hagerty Diary Jul. 54, Jul. 21.

<sup>790</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 186, Jul. 23, 1954, OCB 350.05 (File #1) (6), Box 110, OCB Central File, ENSC (hereafter, Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 186).

<sup>791</sup> Jacobs, *America’s Miracle Man in Vietnam*, 264, 270; Jacobs, *Cold War Mandarin*.

<sup>792</sup> NSC 5906, 1.

from the Soviet bloc. Yet, the traits that made Diem attractive to the US also made him seem like a Western collaborator to many Vietnamese.<sup>793</sup>

France's unpopularity in South Vietnam increased after the partition because the rest of Indochina had more independence. South Vietnam's foreign minister resigned, and there was speculation that Diem might also.<sup>794</sup> In a telephone conversation with his brother, CIA Director Allen Dulles argued that South Vietnam needed a strong nationalist government to unite the nation.<sup>795</sup> US intelligence noted that there was no viable candidate besides Diem, who the US liked because of his anticommunism and nationalist credentials.<sup>796</sup> France was undecided whether to ratify the independence treaties, but US intelligence estimated that if France tightened control,<sup>797</sup> or installed puppets, it would meet resistance.<sup>798</sup> Half of the members of the South Vietnamese army were from the Tonkin Delta in the north. Since that was where the DRV had its strongest support, they might be more likely to desert or mutiny.<sup>799</sup> Still, the US ambassador to France thought the US had to continue to support the Associated States to prevent their loss to communists.<sup>800</sup> The French wanted the US to circumvent the Geneva Accords and furnish military aid.<sup>801</sup> CIA Director Allen Dulles thought aid could go to France, who could then distribute it to the Associated States indirectly.<sup>802</sup> Because of France's unpopularity in Vietnam, the opportunity arose for the US to try to take the lead and support a reformed South Vietnamese

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<sup>793</sup> Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam*, 14-15, 263, 274.

<sup>794</sup> 207<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 4.

<sup>795</sup> Allen Dulles to Secretary Dulles, Jul. 27, 1954, Telephone Memos Jul. 1, 1954 – Aug. 31, 1954 (3), Box 2, Telephone Conversations, EJFD.

<sup>796</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 187.

<sup>797</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 189, Jul. 28, 1954, OCB 350.05 (File #1) (6), Box 110, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>798</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 186.

<sup>799</sup> 206<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 15.

<sup>800</sup> Dulles to Bonnet, Aug. 2, 1954, Telephone Memos Jul. 1, 1954 – Aug. 31, 1954 (2), Box 2, Telephone Conversations, EJFD.

<sup>801</sup> 207<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 5.

<sup>802</sup> Allen Dulles to Secretary Dulles, Jul. 19, 1954, Telephone Memos Jul. 1, 1954 – Aug. 31, 1954 (4), Box 2, Telephone Conversations, EJFD.

state that was equipped and trained by the US to demonstrate how effective the New Look could be.

Yet, in a September 1954 meeting, as the US was in the process of creating SEATO at the Manila Conference, the NSC recognized that the chance for stability in Vietnam was remote.<sup>803</sup> Dulles admitted the communists would win the reunification election, so the US had to prevent it. Not only was Ho Chi Minh popular for opposing Western colonialism, but communists did not allow free elections in Eastern Europe, which gave the US reason to be skeptical about the legitimacy of elections that communists participated in. Furthermore, French forces would need to stay until indigenous forces could maintain order, and Emperor Bao Dai, whom the French had put in charge of a collaborationist government before the Geneva Accords, had to be stripped of political power before a national government could form. Bao Dai was from a long line of emperors in a dynasty that had ruled Vietnam for centuries, but the Vietnamese people criticized him for spending a lot of time outside Vietnam, being too closely associated with the French, and living an extravagant lifestyle.<sup>804</sup>

Historian Gary Hess argues that US officials did not question that Indochina was vital to US interests, but at NSC meetings, Secretary of Defense Wilson repeatedly expressed his doubt about that. In August 1954, Wilson said the US would use troops for countersubversion in the Philippines, but not in Indochina, because there was no vital US interest in Indochina. He cautioned against getting trapped into saving Vietnam.<sup>805</sup> In October, even after the Manila Conference created SEATO, Wilson argued that the only sensible action was a complete and immediate US withdrawal from Indochina. The situation was utterly hopeless, the US did not

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<sup>803</sup> 212<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Sep. 2, 1954, 9, Box 6, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>804</sup> 210<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 5, 18.

<sup>805</sup> 210<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 16-17; Hess, "The American Search for Stability in Southeast Asia," 273.

have French and British support for its objectives, and there would be nothing but grief if the US stayed and kept supporting the Diem regime.<sup>806</sup> In November, Wilson stated that US allies did not avoid Vietnam because they were “faint-hearted;” rather, they thought it was unwise to back France because its policies had been wrong for years. Military might did not matter in Vietnam because there was no cause for France to rally the Vietnamese people to fight for. Eisenhower agreed and predicted that France would repeat the same mistakes in its North African colonies.<sup>807</sup>

Parts of the Eisenhower administration besides Secretary of Defense Wilson also noted ominous developments in Indochina in this timeframe. US intelligence reported in October 1954 that relations between SEATO member France and South Vietnam were not good. The US ambassador to Vietnam suggested withholding payments to France for South Vietnam’s defense until the French military stopped menacing Diem’s government.<sup>808</sup> This evidence may cause a rethinking of historian Kenneth Osgood’s contention that the problems with Diem’s regime were not “immediately apparent” to the US. It seems that the US understood that Diem presented problems, but he was the best alternative at that time.<sup>809</sup> The two most influential voices, Eisenhower and Dulles, expressed the need to keep supporting the Diem regime, but they did express caution and envisioned a limited US commitment. Eisenhower only wanted to intervene in response to PRC-inspired subversion.<sup>810</sup> Dulles recommended a “tit for tat” strategy with a proportional response to whatever the communists did.<sup>811</sup> The differences between the senior leaders reflected uncertainty about the complexities of Indochina, even with SEATO. Although

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<sup>806</sup> 219<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Oct. 26, 1954, 4, Box 6, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 219<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>807</sup> 225<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Nov. 24, 1954, 9-10, Box 6, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>808</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 243, Oct. 14, 1954, 1, OCB 350.05 (File #1) (9), Box 110, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>809</sup> Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 118.

<sup>810</sup> 211<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 1.

<sup>811</sup> 210<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 17.

there was no clear good option, the domino theory was still looming, and the NSC viewed communism as a malevolent force that had to be contained.

Still, Eisenhower also argued that the biggest problem was France remaining in Indochina, and the US had to get them out and replace France. This evidence supports historian Lloyd Gardner's argument that Eisenhower wanted "to get the French out of the" US' "way." Thus, consistent with SEATO's Asian members emphasizing self-determination and the Pacific Charter, without the colonial baggage the French carried in Indochina, the US could have better success establishing a stable noncommunist South Vietnam. This demonstrated the tension between the two SEATO allies, the US and France. France did not appreciate the US trying to take over the military mission to prop up the government of South Vietnam. Conversely, the US wanted to be a guiding force and not just a resource provider because the continued French presence was counterproductive since they were so unpopular.<sup>812</sup>

In December 1954, the US ambassador to Cambodia urged empowering the protocol states to invoke SEATO's provisions, but SEATO would not be ratified by every member until February 1955.<sup>813</sup> When J. Lawton Collins presented his plan for stabilizing Vietnam in a January 1955 NSC meeting, which called for a joint Franco-American command to train the South Vietnamese Army, he concluded that even if his recommendations were implemented, the chance of success was "50-50." Collins explained, currently, the DRV only sought to implement the Geneva Accords, but they might resort to military action if the US continued backing Diem. Upon that revelation, National Security Advisor Cutler recommended reaffirming SEATO.<sup>814</sup>

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<sup>812</sup> 219<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 4; Gardner, "How We 'Lost' Vietnam, 1940-54," 136.

<sup>813</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 274, Dec. 3, 1954, OCB 350.05 (File #2) (1), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>814</sup> 234<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Jan. 27, 1955, 15, Box 6, NSC, EDDE; Logevall, *Embers of War*, 639.

By March, the NSC was worried because France pursued accommodation with the DRV, wanted to replace Diem with a more pliant figure,<sup>815</sup> and proposed that Bao Dai arbitrate the “crisis in Saigon” between Diem and the sects that opposed his authoritarian leadership and close ties with the US. Dulles remarked that the US would have to reconsider its Vietnam policy. He saw no good alternatives, but he hoped someone would “take care” of Bao Dai because corruption made him too wealthy for the US to bribe.<sup>816</sup> Yet, simultaneously, Diem was showing his independence,<sup>817</sup> and the CIA explored removing him.<sup>818</sup>

In April, Eisenhower declared that it was essential to destroy sects that opposed Diem, but Collins retorted that doing that would cause civil war and recommended a political solution with a “genuine coalition government” in Vietnam. Still, Eisenhower stated that he saw no alternative but to continue support for South Vietnam, although he admitted that Diem might need to be replaced. This challenges historian Robert McMahon’s contention that the US embraced Diem unreservedly. Eisenhower asked the NSC if there were any objections to adopting the policy to continue supporting South Vietnam, and there were none.<sup>819</sup> The NSC’s rejection of Collins’ views extends historian Kathryn Statler’s argument that many Americans who implemented policy at a tactical level in Vietnam during Eisenhower’s presidency argued that South Vietnam was doomed but the strategists overrode them. Collins was on the ground in Vietnam as the US ambassador, and from his perspective, civil war could be averted by accepting a coalition government instead of trying to eliminate opposition to Diem. With hindsight, it seems that the tacticians on the ground had a clearer understanding of what was

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<sup>815</sup> NSC 5405 Progress Report Supplement, Mar. 15, 1955, 2, OCB 091. Indo-China (File #3) (9), Box 39, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>816</sup> 244<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Apr. 7, 1955, 18, Box 6, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>817</sup> Jacobs, *Cold War Mandarin*, 185.

<sup>818</sup> 245<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Apr. 21, 1955, 2, Box 6, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>819</sup> 246<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Apr. 28, 1955, 16-17, Box 6, NSC, EDDE; McMahon, *The Limits of Empire*, 77.

realistic in Vietnam than the strategists in Washington that tried to make Vietnam fit into the New Look grand strategy.<sup>820</sup>

In a June 1956 NSC meeting, the NSC was still trying to apply the New Look's nuclear emphasis to Indochina. JCS Chairman Radford argued that the US could intervene "with good prospects of success" by using tactical nuclear weapons. If the PRC responded, the US would immediately use atomic weapons against PRC bases. Without atomic weapons, Radford explained, the US would need large military deployments. Dulles called Radford's presentation "admirable." As the NSC's discussion on using atomic weapons in Southeast Asia wound down, Eisenhower floated the idea about sending anti-aircraft Nike missiles equipped with small atomic warheads to Southeast Asia after he heard that Diem and the Thais wanted the US to showcase its atomic capabilities, but there was no record of any further discussion on that idea.<sup>821</sup>

Although the American press called Diem's regime a police state, the Eisenhower administration still tried to package him as its "miracle man."<sup>822</sup> Simultaneously, the administration acknowledged that Diem ran a corrupt oligarchy with his relatives, in-laws, and friends. His domestic popularity kept plummeting, and he antagonized intellectuals particularly.<sup>823</sup> When France's last combat forces withdrew from Vietnam in 1956, SEATO was an operational organization, and provided a deterrent against communist aggression. Diem became emboldened,<sup>824</sup> but he also expressed concern over SEATO's changing emphasis from military to economic activities, his exclusion from information about SEATO developments because South Vietnam was not a member,<sup>825</sup> and SEATO's lack of accomplishments besides

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<sup>820</sup> Statler, *Replacing France*, 284.

<sup>821</sup> 287<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 4-5, 7.

<sup>822</sup> Logevall, *Embers of War*, 649, 679.

<sup>823</sup> Observations of Far East Chiefs, 4; Chapman, *Cauldron of Resistance*, 198.

<sup>824</sup> USVR, 4A5, Summary p. 6.

<sup>825</sup> SEATO Delegation to State Department, Mar. 13, 1957, 327, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

deterrence.<sup>826</sup> Diem's actions antagonized US allies too. His flouting of the Geneva Accords troubled SEATO members like the UK and France so much that the US feared its European allies would isolate the US over that issue.<sup>827</sup> Then, South Vietnam's navy planted its flag in the Spratly Islands, an archipelago in the South China Sea, but the Philippines and France, who were both SEATO members, as well as the ROC, also claimed them.<sup>828</sup> Still, the US saw Diem's regime as the best possible option to lead South Vietnam, and he became almost entirely dependent on the US for security assistance as the US increased its military aid and training.<sup>829</sup>

The catchword "American-Diem" emerged among the South Vietnamese people from resentment over the US replacing France, representing modernization in a rural and traditional society, supporting an unpopular regime, undermining the Geneva Accords, and opposing the reunification election that would have helped create the national identity that many Vietnamese wanted to be united behind.<sup>830</sup> A letter to Eisenhower from an anticommunist Vietnamese explained that many Vietnamese saw little difference between the US' actions and when Vietnam was a French colony, and scholarship by historians like Kathryn Statler supports that contention.<sup>831</sup> Consequently, subversion in South Vietnam increased, which required more policing, and the cycle escalated.<sup>832</sup> The OCB reported that South Vietnamese troops went through villages like a "cloud of locusts" and confiscated food in their anti-subversion campaign.<sup>833</sup> They were able to eliminate the sects because of American aid, but the sects'

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<sup>826</sup> Cleveland Report, 2.

<sup>827</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 414, Jul. 19, 1955, OCB 350.05 (File #2) (6), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>828</sup> Intelligence Notes, Aug. 27, 1956, OCB 350.05 (File #3) (7), Box 111 B, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>829</sup> Southeast Asia Progress Report Jul. 1956, 6-7.

<sup>830</sup> USVR, 4A5, 14.

<sup>831</sup> Luu-Duc-Trung to Eisenhower, Jul. 4, 1960, 2, 122 – Cambodia, Box 799, General File, EDER (hereafter, Luu-Duc-Trung to Eisenhower Jul. 1960); Statler, *Replacing France*, 287.

<sup>832</sup> Southeast Asia Progress Report Jul. 1956, 6-7.

<sup>833</sup> OCB Working Group on Indochina, Nov. 8, 1955, 2, OCB 091. Indo-China (File #5) (2), Box 39, OCB Central File, ENSC.

former members joined groups that opposed Diem, including communists, after they were deprived of rights and political participation.<sup>834</sup> This turned Vietnam into what historian Jessica Chapman describes as a two-sided struggle with communists against the US-backed Diem regime.<sup>835</sup> By 1957, it was generally accepted that there were two Vietnams, and the USSR proposed having both in the UN. Hence, without the reunification election, the prospect of a peaceful solution acceptable to all parties was drastically reduced, and tensions increased. Although SEATO could deter the DRV from trying to reunite Vietnam through an overt military invasion, the DRV assisted subversion in South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand,<sup>836</sup> but an OCB report explained that it kept its involvement small enough to not provoke SEATO.<sup>837</sup>

### *Cambodia*

While Diem's regime in South Vietnam welcomed US and SEATO support, another protocol state, Cambodia, sought neutrality and saw itself as an ant between the fighting elephants of the Western and Soviet blocs.<sup>838</sup> US intelligence explained that to maintain neutrality, any cooperation that Cambodia had with the West would simultaneously cause it to step toward the Soviet bloc, and it would resist joining SEATO.<sup>839</sup> King Sihanouk became Cambodia's prime minister in a 1955 landslide election.<sup>840</sup> Sihanouk was friendly with the US

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<sup>834</sup> Luu-Duc-Trung to Eisenhower Jul. 1960, 2.

<sup>835</sup> Chapman, *Cauldron of Resistance*, 197-98.

<sup>836</sup> USVR, 4A5, Summary pp. 2, 8, 12, Tab 2 p. 50, Tab 4 p. 17.

<sup>837</sup> OCB Report, Security in Vietnam, Dec. 14, 1955, 2, OCB 091.4 Southeast Asia (File #4) (6), Box 81, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>838</sup> Tully, *A Short History of Cambodia*, 124.

<sup>839</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 362, May 4, 1955, OCB 350.05 (File #2) (4), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC (hereafter, Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 362).

<sup>840</sup> Chatham House Collective Defence, 147.

initially, but since US aid had more strings attached than France's, he distanced himself.<sup>841</sup> A telegram from the US Commander in Chief Pacific to the US Chief of the Military Assistance Group in Cambodia stated that "Sihanouk is now promoting pro-Communist policies," without specifying what they were, and Sihanouk accused the US of trying to "ensnare" him in SEATO and denying Cambodia the more-coveted aid SEATO members received.<sup>842</sup> A visit from CIA Director Allen Dulles, which was intended to increase Sihanouk's appreciation for SEATO, did not convince Sihanouk to abandon neutrality and support SEATO.<sup>843</sup> The US embassy in Cambodia argued that until the US developed a "political bomb" that altered Cambodia's neutral stance, SEATO would be ineffective in combatting subversion there.<sup>844</sup>

Nevertheless, the US' biggest obstacle to good relations with Cambodia was the US' support for South Vietnam and Thailand, two US allies affiliated with SEATO on Cambodia's border. US leverage over South Vietnam and Thailand deepened suspicions that SEATO collaborators that adopted anticommunist policies were US puppets and encouraged Sihanouk to resist the "free world" and seek communist support.<sup>845</sup> The Cambodian press criticized the US for many outrages, which included supporting South Vietnam and Thailand's economic war against Cambodia.<sup>846</sup> Sihanouk thought they would use their SEATO military aid against him,<sup>847</sup> and he feared them more than communists.<sup>848</sup> Sihanouk wanted détente with the US, Thailand, and South Vietnam,<sup>849</sup> but the US was unwilling to stop South Vietnam and Thailand from aiding anticommunist rebels in Cambodia because it did not want to alienate its allies in

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<sup>841</sup> Clymer, *The United States and Cambodia, 1870-1969*, 50-51.

<sup>842</sup> Stump to Lodoen, Mar. 22, 1956, 500, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>843</sup> Osborne, *Sihanouk*, 101.

<sup>844</sup> McClintock to State Department, Apr. 29, 1955, 447-48, in FRUS, 1955-57 V. 21.

<sup>845</sup> Kocher to Robertson, Mar. 12, 1959, 298-99, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16.

<sup>846</sup> Robertson to Dulles, Undated, 513, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>847</sup> Strom to State Department, Feb. 28, 1959, 292n, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16.

<sup>848</sup> SEATO Record, 15-16.

<sup>849</sup> Tarling, *Britain and Sihanouk's Cambodia*, 13-14.

mainland Southeast Asia.<sup>850</sup> Sihanouk even explained in a letter to Eisenhower that Cambodia's rebels used Thailand and South Vietnam as sanctuaries.<sup>851</sup>

The US anticipated that Thailand and South Vietnam might invade Cambodia to combat communism, using SEATO as a justification, and spark a regional war that could escalate.<sup>852</sup> France warned, if the US did not control them, Cambodia could request PRC protection.<sup>853</sup> Yet, the US State Department's Christian Herter explained the dilemma that the US would have to withhold aid to get South Vietnam to improve its relations with Cambodia, but that would also weaken Diem's anticommunist efforts.<sup>854</sup> Cambodia's territorial dispute along its border with South Vietnam also inflamed tension.<sup>855</sup> As the US' relationship with Sihanouk became "toxic,"<sup>856</sup> Sihanouk ordered his army chief to form underground organizations to undermine the regime in Saigon.<sup>857</sup>

Analysis in a memo from the US embassy in Cambodia to the State Department explained that there were three options. The US could increase pressure on Cambodia to become more pro-West, reduce interest in Cambodia because it was not an anticommunist ally, or continue the present middle policy. Cutting aid would signal the consequences of neutrality and advantages of cooperating with SEATO to a larger audience. Still, not even strong nonmilitary incentives from SEATO would overcome Cambodia's antagonism to SEATO or desire for neutrality.<sup>858</sup> Sihanouk complained that "SEATO-ists" criticized Cambodia, and his nation

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<sup>850</sup> Rust, *Eisenhower and Cambodia*, 4; Tarling, *Britain and Sihanouk's Cambodia*, 28-31.

<sup>851</sup> Sihanouk to Eisenhower, Apr. 13, 1959, 2, Cambodia (3), Box 6, International Series, EDDE.

<sup>852</sup> McClintock to Bowie, May 21, 1957, 563-64, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>853</sup> State Department Conversation, Mar. 3, 1959, 293, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16.

<sup>854</sup> Herter to US Embassy in Vietnam, Feb. 23, 1959, 287, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16.

<sup>855</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 362.

<sup>856</sup> Rust, *Eisenhower and Cambodia*, 5.

<sup>857</sup> Conboy, *The Cambodian Wars*, 8.

<sup>858</sup> Strom to State Department, Jan. 17, 1958, 572, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

seemed to have no friends.<sup>859</sup> Privately, Sihanouk said he was not anti-SEATO, and would want SEATO's help if communists attacked, but the Cambodian public vilified SEATO because it contradicted the spirit of neutrality from the Geneva Accords and reflected Western militarism. Sihanouk offered to not criticize SEATO if SEATO stopped making statements about protecting Cambodia<sup>860</sup> since he believed SEATO provoked communists in Indochina.<sup>861</sup> Sihanouk had widespread domestic popularity, improved education, controlled all major sources of political power, and was extremely sensitive to pressure or slights,<sup>862</sup> especially from the US media.<sup>863</sup>

As the US and SEATO antagonized Sihanouk, he moved further left, and the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* supported him and attacked SEATO for pressuring Cambodia to abandon neutrality.<sup>864</sup> Sihanouk said he would accept a request by North Vietnam for diplomatic representation despite South Vietnam's objection.<sup>865</sup> Sihanouk also considered bringing prominent communists into his cabinet.<sup>866</sup> His party, the Popular Socialist Community,<sup>867</sup> won every seat in the Assembly, and Sihanouk openly courted aid and friendship from the Soviet bloc.<sup>868</sup> Meanwhile, the estimate for US military aid in 1958 dropped to 25 percent of what Cambodia received in 1956,<sup>869</sup> and Cambodia chose to sever US aid.<sup>870</sup> In addition, according to US intelligence, the PRC viewed the US-Cambodian Mutual Defense Agreement as a violation

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<sup>859</sup> Strom to State Department, Jul. 25, 1958, 241, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16.

<sup>860</sup> Strom to State Department, Sep. 27, 1958, 44, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16.

<sup>861</sup> Tarling, *Britain and Sihanouk's Cambodia*, 17.

<sup>862</sup> NSC Memo, Jul. 11, 1960, 3, NSC 5809 – Policy in Southeast Asia (1), Box 25, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA; Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, xiii.

<sup>863</sup> Clymer, *The United States and Cambodia, 1870-1969*, 53.

<sup>864</sup> US SEATO Delegation to State Department Apr. 1959, 90.

<sup>865</sup> Intelligence Notes, Aug. 30, 1956, 2, OCB 350.05 (File #3) (7), Box 111 B, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>866</sup> Intelligence Notes, Aug. 8, 1956, 2, OCB 350.05 (File #3) (6), Box 111 B, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>867</sup> Clymer, *The United States and Cambodia, 1870-1969*, 42.

<sup>868</sup> US SEATO Delegation to State Department #143, Mar. 12, 1957, 316, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>869</sup> Southeast Asia Progress Report Nov. 1957, Financial Annex, p. 5.

<sup>870</sup> Foley, *The Cold War and National Assertion in Southeast Asia*, 104.

of the Geneva Accords that justified the PRC's arming of North Vietnam.<sup>871</sup> Communist activity in Cambodia, particularly by overseas Chinese, increased because of Sihanouk's accommodation with the Soviet bloc,<sup>872</sup> and it spread through neighboring nations.<sup>873</sup> However, in exchange for Cambodia promoting peaceful coexistence, the PRC agreed to not aid Cambodian communist factions, which also had the DRV vying for their loyalty.<sup>874</sup> When Sihanouk's anti-American campaign intensified, the Soviet bloc recognized Cambodia diplomatically.<sup>875</sup> SEATO members began planning to offset Khrushchev's projected visit.<sup>876</sup> By 1961, Sihanouk signed a friendship and nonaggression treaty with the PRC and accepted \$40 million of its aid for infrastructure, agricultural, and industrial projects.<sup>877</sup>

Sihanouk's actions challenge historian Robert McMahon's contention that "Sihanouk was a staunch anticommunist who not only brought much-needed stability to his corner of Indochina but actually welcomed a direct U.S. military presence." McMahon's analysis focuses on the military aid the US gave Cambodia to oppose communists. Yet, developments like Sihanouk allowing socialists to participate in domestic politics and being open with the Soviet bloc internationally, as well as his public condemnation of SEATO, were not what the NSC wanted. Thus, McMahon's contention is too strong considering these other factors.<sup>878</sup>

Comparing the NSC's approach to neutral Cambodia with South Vietnam, the NSC understood that one of its main tools of leverage, aid, would not be as effective. Where Diem

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<sup>871</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 395, Jun. 21, 1955, 1, OCB 350.05 (File #2) (5), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>872</sup> Southeast Asia Progress Report Nov. 1957, 10.

<sup>873</sup> 437<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 2.

<sup>874</sup> Boyd, "Communist China and SEATO," 177.

<sup>875</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 601, Apr. 13, 1956, OCB 350.05 (File #3) (2), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>876</sup> Intelligence Notes, Sep. 26, 1956, OCB 350.05 (File #3) (7), Box 111 B, OCB Central File, ENSC.

<sup>877</sup> Debevoise to OCB, Jan. 3, 1961, 1, Southeast Asia (3), Box 7, OCB Secretariat, ENSC (hereafter, Debevoise to OCB).

<sup>878</sup> McMahon, *The Limits of Empire*, 83.

continually wanted more US aid, Sihanouk saw accepting US aid as a political liability, and he was more accountable to his people. In fact, Sihanouk warmed up to the Soviet bloc to counterbalance Western overtures and satisfy his people's desire for neutrality. This put the US in the precarious situation of trying to keep neutral nations that tolerated communism away from the Soviet bloc without pushing them closer. Thus, the US had to take a multipronged approach against communism to account for the different types of relationships that nations that the US wanted as allies had with the Soviet bloc. The NSC wanted to make neutral nations pro-West, but it did not have a clear solution for that challenge. In addition, while neutrality to Southeast Asians may have meant not aligning with any superpower bloc, to the US, any relations with the Soviet bloc did not appear neutral, but a threat to counter.

### *Laos*

Like Cambodia, Laos was another protocol state in Indochina where neutrality was very popular among its people. Historian Charles Stevenson concludes that communist control of Laos was unavoidable, but a US intelligence report in 1956 stated that the US ambassador to Laos argued that Laos would remain neutral with a Western orientation if the US did not try to unduly influence Laos and emphasize the need to give it military aid. Such actions would alienate Laos' nationalistic leaders, which the West needed as allies.<sup>879</sup> In addition, the PRC and DRV would stop supporting the Pathet Lao communist insurgents in exchange for a neutral Laos and reunified Vietnam. Historian Mark Moyar contends that US leaders correctly perceived that

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<sup>879</sup> Intelligence Notes Aug. 24 1956; Stevenson, *The End of Nowhere*, 240.

the PRC and DRV were trying to spread communism in Southeast Asia. While this is true from an ideological perspective, Moyar deemphasizes how they were also pragmatic.<sup>880</sup>

After a SEATO meeting, the US publicized the Pathet Lao problem and encouraged the Laotian government to not compromise. The OCB declared that communist control of two provinces in Laos threatened US prestige.<sup>881</sup> Upon Dulles' urging, the Lao prime minister announced that he would settle the Pathet Lao question promptly to win the people's support and not look weak.<sup>882</sup> Laos' crown prince announced, after Dulles' reassurances that SEATO deterred external aggression, that he would establish the government's authority in the Pathet Lao's provinces.<sup>883</sup> Although it violated the Geneva Accords, the Pathet Lao were excluded from the 1955 election, which formed a US-friendly coalition.<sup>884</sup> Then, the Pathet Lao organized militarily and became what the NSC described in 1955 as the greatest threat to SEATO.<sup>885</sup>

US intelligence estimated that communists believed that SEATO would not intervene if the communists kept their military action limited to an insurgency in the two provinces the Geneva Accords reserved for the Pathet Lao. An unchecked insurgency in Laos would also demonstrate SEATO's lack of resolve to neighboring Thailand and South Vietnam.<sup>886</sup> Laos' prime minister published statements that expressed outrage about SEATO interference when he discovered that SEATO discussed Laos without his knowledge.<sup>887</sup> A memo from the US ambassador in Laos in May 1956 reported that Laos blackmailed the US with threats that it

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<sup>880</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 570, Mar. 1, 1956, OCB 350.05 (File #3) (1), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC; Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken*, xiv.

<sup>881</sup> OCB Southeast Asia Progress Report Nov. 1955, 9-10.

<sup>882</sup> Conversation Memo, Feb. 27, 1955, 615, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>883</sup> Dulles to State Department, Feb. 28, 1955, 619, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>884</sup> Southeast Asia Progress Report Jul. 1956, Annex A, p. 2.

<sup>885</sup> Southeast Asia Progress Report Dec. 1955, 2-3.

<sup>886</sup> National Intelligence Estimate, Dec. 20, 1955, 714, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>887</sup> Parsons to State Department Jan. 1957, 278.

would become neutral unless it received more concrete assurances from SEATO.<sup>888</sup> Two months later, an NSC progress report revealed that the US initiated talks for bilateral defense arrangements with Laos, although the report did not specify that the Laotians' attempts at blackmail was a cause. The US pursuing bilateral defense differs from historian Damien Fenton's contention that the US resisted doing so in Southeast Asia.<sup>889</sup> During Eisenhower's second term, Laos was the only nation where the US paid its entire military budget,<sup>890</sup> although it was small compared to other nations, even though the Geneva Accords only permitted a small French military mission.<sup>891</sup> Nonetheless, Laos' dependence on US aid retarded economic growth, widened inequality,<sup>892</sup> increased corruption, and fueled communist propaganda.<sup>893</sup>

Reflecting the Laotian people's desire for neutrality, Souvanna Phouma, Laos' popular neutralist, became prime minister in 1956. Souvanna supported the Geneva Accords and "five principles" for peaceful coexistence that India and the PRC established.<sup>894</sup> In Beijing, Souvanna declared he would not accept SEATO protection, and SEATO's existence violated the Geneva Accords' prohibitions on military alliances.<sup>895</sup> In radio broadcasts directed at SEATO countries, the PRC stated it would not tolerate SEATO intervention. US intelligence estimated that the PRC would intervene militarily if SEATO did. The PRC's massive military intervention in the Korean War a few years earlier made this threat even more real.<sup>896</sup> Souvanna's compromise with the Pathet Lao let communists compete in the 1958 election, promised them cabinet posts, and

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<sup>888</sup> Yost to Young, May 28, 1956, 216, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>889</sup> Southeast Asia Progress Report Jul. 1956, 2; Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, 231-32.

<sup>890</sup> Jacobs, *The Universe Unraveling*, 4.

<sup>891</sup> Rust, *Before the Quagmire*, Introduction.

<sup>892</sup> Phraxayavong, *History of Aid to Laos*, 41.

<sup>893</sup> Dommen, *The Indochinese Experience of the French and the Americans*, 425.

<sup>894</sup> Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, 158.

<sup>895</sup> Parsons to State Department, Aug. 28, 1956, 236-37, in FRUS, 1955-57, V. 21.

<sup>896</sup> Daily Intelligence Abstracts No. 503, Nov. 23, 1955, OCB 350.05 (File #2) (9), Box 111 A, OCB Central File, ENSC.

integrated two battalions of Pathet Lao troops into Laos' National Army. In the first election in Laos where they could freely participate, communists won 62 percent of the open seats in the election.<sup>897</sup>

In an NSC meeting, Eisenhower "commented that it would be a serious matter if any country such as Laos went Communist by the legal vote of its people."<sup>898</sup> Historian Seth Jacobs found that "the Eisenhower administration set the precedent for 'free' elections in South Vietnam by encouraging its Lao viceroys to stuff ballot boxes, intimidate voters, and otherwise rig the electoral process." Nevertheless, a rightist backlash forced Souvanna to resign. The US was pleased with<sup>899</sup> the new prime minister, Phoui Sananikone, who excluded communists from the cabinet, consented to US-military training in Laos, affirmed Laos' pro-West foreign policy,<sup>900</sup> sought SEATO support,<sup>901</sup> renounced the Geneva Accords,<sup>902</sup> and received emergency powers from Laos' National Assembly. This evidence of Phoui's pro-West and anticommunist positions challenges historian Damien Fenton's contention that Phoui sought neutrality and considered integrating communists politically.<sup>903</sup>

The SEATO council discussed how after Phoui's actions the Pathet Lao deserted the Laotian National Army and intensified military operations<sup>904</sup> because of SEATO support for Laos' government and the DRV's influence.<sup>905</sup> This initiated SEATO's main crisis during

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<sup>897</sup> OCB Southeast Asia Report, Feb. 10, 1960, 4, NSC 5809 – Policy in Southeast Asia (1), Box 25, Policy Papers, NSC, EOSA (hereafter, OCB Southeast Asia Report Feb. 1960).

<sup>898</sup> 367<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, May 29, 1958, 5, Box 10, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>899</sup> Jacobs, *The Universe Unraveling*, 3, 140.

<sup>900</sup> OCB Southeast Asia Report Feb. 1960, 4.

<sup>901</sup> SEATO Record, 10.

<sup>902</sup> Johnson to State Department, Feb. 16, 1959, 74, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16.

<sup>903</sup> SEATO Delegation to State Department, Apr. 8, 1959, 84, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16; Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, 161.

<sup>904</sup> SEATO Council Meeting, Sep. 28, 1959, 146, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16 (hereafter, SEATO Council Meeting Sep. 1959).

<sup>905</sup> Buszynski, *SEATO*, 73.

Eisenhower's presidency. Laos became a three-sided civil war where the Pathet Lao and neutralists challenged Phoui's regime, which the US and Thailand backed. Thailand was a SEATO member, had an authoritarian regime that the US backed, bordered Laos, and had recently seen the Vietminh have military success. The Thai's wanted Laos to be a buffer zone from North Vietnam and the PRC.<sup>906</sup>

In September 1959, foreign ministers from SEATO members convened in Washington,<sup>907</sup> and the SEATO Council met six times in Bangkok, to discuss the civil war in Laos.<sup>908</sup> SEATO Secretary General Sarasin argued that SEATO should be reserved for repelling overt foreign military aggression. This causes a rethinking of contentions by historians like Mark Pearson, Seth Jacobs, G. Wyn Rees, and Kevin Ruane who argue that SEATO was a "paper tiger." Although it never undertook counterinsurgency operations, it was prepared to use force against interstate aggression. Moreover, historian Donald Nuechterlein contends that the Thais thought SEATO would do anything to prevent communist influence in Laos, but Sarasin proclaiming that SEATO should only be used to resist interstate aggression contradicts that. In addition, Sarasin doubted that SEATO even had the ability to pacify the Pathet Lao insurgency.<sup>909</sup> When options for Laos were debated, the British and French favored negotiating with the Soviet bloc, which they had done at the Geneva Conference.<sup>910</sup>

The US and Thailand wanted SEATO to investigate the possibility of DRV intervention in Laos, but Laos appealed to the UN to investigate, which was the route other SEATO members

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<sup>906</sup> SEATO Record, 10-11; Hamilton-Merritt, *Tragic Mountains*, 69; Montgomery, *The Politics of Foreign Aid*, 27.

<sup>907</sup> SEATO Record, Annex M, p. 4.

<sup>908</sup> SEATO Council Meeting Sep. 1959, 146.

<sup>909</sup> Johnson to State Sep 1959, 111; Pearson, *Paper Tiger*; Jacobs, *The Universe Unraveling*, 69; Rees, *Anglo-American Approaches to Alliance Security, 1955-60*, 133; Ruane, "SEATO;" Nuechterlein, "Thailand and SEATO," 1176.

<sup>910</sup> OCB Meeting Oct. 1959, 2.

preferred. Yet, without any hard evidence, the UN Security Council could take no action.<sup>911</sup>

While the DRV would later overtly assist the Pathet Lao, this was not the case during Eisenhower's presidency. The US thought DRV troops had to be fighting in Laos because the US stereotyped Laotians as cowards since they halfheartedly fought for US-backed regimes, and now there was fierce resistance coming from communists and neutralists against pro-US forces. Overall, the Eisenhower administration expressed a higher degree of disdain for Laotians than Vietnamese. It criticized them for not caring about communism, viewed their nonassertive culture as a weakness, and associated their desire for neutrality with appeasement. Hence, the Lao character became the scapegoat for US policy failures. Their motive for neutrality mirrored Cambodia's. They did not want to be in the middle of a conflict with the DRV and PRC on one side and pro-West forces from Thailand, backed by the US and possibly SEATO, on the other.<sup>912</sup>

The only copy of a top-secret memo recorded Eisenhower's decisions from a special meeting in September 1959 about Laos. Eisenhower "expressly reaffirmed... our policy which provides for U.S. intervention if necessary but which requires that United States military action be taken only through or under the auspices of SEATO." The US "should institute consultations at once with our allies and insist that everyone in SEATO do his part. No excuses are to be allowed." Eisenhower "issued instructions that efforts be made immediately to find out what the other SEATO nations were prepared to do and how quickly they will be able to move. The United States will not be the first to make overt military moves," but "it appears that the Thais are ready to move immediately." Eisenhower ordered that "We should go forward with planning, and move immediately to prepare for a command arrangement."<sup>913</sup> Eisenhower preparing for US

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<sup>911</sup> State Department Conversation Memo, Sep. 4, 1959, 593-94, in FRUS, 1958-60, V.16.

<sup>912</sup> Jacobs, *The Universe Unraveling*, 6, 8, 15, 19-20.

<sup>913</sup> Gray to Lay, Sep. 14, 1959, 1, Meetings with the President—Jun. (3), Box 4, Presidential, Special Assistant, EOSA (hereafter, Gray to Lay).

military intervention through SEATO in Laos presents a different perspective than scholar Leszek Buszynski, who questioned the US' commitment without proof of DRV intervention.<sup>914</sup>

In planning for military intervention in Laos, Eisenhower thought “the field commander should not be an American” nor “French, but could be an Australian or a New Zealander.”<sup>915</sup> This differs from historian Mark Pearson's contention that the US wanted to command. The US had forces for counterinsurgency in Laos<sup>916</sup> and supplied Laotian forces by air, and road, through neighboring Thailand.<sup>917</sup> Still, Eisenhower explained, “We are to continue present efforts to train Laotians but will not send additional U.S. troops into Laos in uniform for this purpose.” Finally, “We may have to expect that this situation may develop into another Korea.”<sup>918</sup> Nevertheless, Laos was different than Korea because of its geography. Laos was a logistical nightmare since it was landlocked and had deep valleys, triple-canopy jungle, some of the highest mountains in Southeast Asia, and infrastructure that was much less developed than South Vietnam's. Meanwhile, since Laos bordered the PRC and DRV, their logistics were less challenging.<sup>919</sup>

The evidence that Eisenhower planned for SEATO intervention in Laos supports historian Frederick Marks' argument that Eisenhower “disingenuously” downplayed his consideration of intervening in Indochina in his memoirs and public statements.<sup>920</sup> In this example, Eisenhower considered using US troops in combat with the expectation that it could escalate into another Korean War. This diverged from the whole of government approach where the goal of the New Look was to set a high bar to deploy US troops, especially in peripheral areas. In this instance, the Laotian Civil War, Eisenhower prioritized maintaining the credibility

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<sup>914</sup> Buszynski, *SEATO*, 75, 221.

<sup>915</sup> Gray to Lay, 1.

<sup>916</sup> Pearson, *Paper Tiger*, 82-83.

<sup>917</sup> Castle, *At War in the Shadow of Vietnam*, 130.

<sup>918</sup> Gray to Lay, 2.

<sup>919</sup> Jacobs, *The Universe Unraveling*, 5.

<sup>920</sup> Marks, “The Real Hawk at Dienbienphu,” 311.

of SEATO to other SEATO members and communists.<sup>921</sup> The events in Laos did not reach the high bar to deploy US troops unilaterally because it was not a direct enough threat to US national security. This meant the most politically feasible option to intervene was through SEATO, and this was the type of scenario that SEATO was designed for.

However, maintaining SEATO's credibility proved challenging. The NSC's intent in the New Look was to have the US' regional allies do the ground fighting in peripheral areas. In SEATO, this would rely heavily on the Asian members. Yet, this assumption was problematic. Since the Philippines and Pakistan did not face a direct security risk from an insurgency in Indochina, it was doubtful that they would do much more than contribute token forces. Moreover, differences between SEATO members over the New Look's components of deterrence, economic development, propaganda, and collective security divided SEATO. Thus, the biggest challenge the NSC faced in implementing the New Look through SEATO was resistance to military intervention in Laos from SEATO members besides Thailand, and unanimous agreement was required. France prioritized quelling rebellion in its colony of Algeria over affairs in Indochina.<sup>922</sup> The UK argued for following the Geneva Accords,<sup>923</sup> and Western military intervention in a politically ambiguous conflict could destabilize the protocol states and wreck the Geneva Accords.<sup>924</sup> New Zealand advocated for promoting a neutral Laos. New Zealand and Pakistan favored strengthening Laos' economy and, along with the Philippines, even opposed a visit by SEATO's Secretary General Sarasin.<sup>925</sup>

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<sup>921</sup> Farrell, "Alphabet Soup and Nuclear War," 99.

<sup>922</sup> Logevall, *Embers of War*, 631.

<sup>923</sup> Whitney to State Department, Sep. 23, 1959, 132, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16.

<sup>924</sup> Farrell, "Alphabet Soup and Nuclear War," 94.

<sup>925</sup> SEATO Council Meeting Sep. 1959, 151-52.

In a SEATO council meeting about intervening in Laos' civil war, Australia, New Zealand, and the UK explained that they wanted to avoid another jungle counterinsurgency after what they experienced in Malaya. To defeat 5,000 insurgents without much popular or foreign support, it took 25,000 British troops, 570,000 Malayan security personnel, \$500 million in direct costs, and over ten years. This cost-benefit analysis about the counterinsurgency in Malaya calls into question the contentions of scholars like John Nagl, Max Boot, and Donald Hamilton who view Malaya as a model counterinsurgency. The Malayan insurgency was relatively minor to begin with, it took substantial resources to combat, and it was not clearly defeated. It temporarily quieted down after the UK granted Malaya independence, but it soon flared up again and lasted until there was a peace accord in 1989.<sup>926</sup>

SEATO members understanding the challenges of counterinsurgency, as they discussed intervening in Laos, differs from historian Ronald Nairn's argument that SEATO did not understand the guerrilla problem.<sup>927</sup> SEATO's Plan 5 for counterinsurgency called for sending 22,700 troops from SEATO members to Laos, and France and the Philippines would contribute none. Those troops would support 38,500 regular Lao troops and 40,800 Laotian auxiliaries. SEATO's counterinsurgency plan using troops differs from scholar Leszek Buszynski's account that it was limited to giving advice to Thailand and the Philippines.<sup>928</sup> Those forces under SEATO command would try to pacify 19,000 Pathet Lao with strong popular and outside support.<sup>929</sup> Even though SEATO had a counterinsurgency plan, insurgencies are inherently a

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<sup>926</sup> Kheng, "The Communist Insurgency in Malaysia, 1948-1989," 46-47, 49.

<sup>927</sup> SEATO Council Meeting Sep. 1959, 150-51, 153; Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, 191; Boot, *Invisible Armies*, 387; Hamilton, *The Art of Counterinsurgency*, 39; Nairn, "SEATO," 8.

<sup>928</sup> USVR, 4A1, 29; Buszynski, "SEATO," 287.

<sup>929</sup> Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, 174.

political problem. The US and SEATO backed a regime that the people did not support. While military action can mitigate risk, it does not address the underlying issue.

The US championed implementing SEATO's Plan 5 for counterinsurgency, and the Thais wanted to study the threat on their border more seriously. However, after SEATO considered it, they reframed their worst-case scenario from a massive PRC invasion to what was happening in Laos. While it would be easy to justify responding to overt interstate aggression, internal subversion that was covertly assisted by the DRV and PRC made it more difficult politically for SEATO to defend the protocol states. Without an open invasion, public opinion at home and abroad would be prone to condemn Western interference in domestic civil strife. Disagreement emerged if SEATO military intervention in Laos would do more harm than good. The British thought even deploying SEATO forces in Thailand would provoke the conflict in Laos.<sup>930</sup>

Minutes from an October 1959 ANZUS meeting revealed how perspectives of representatives from the US clashed with those of New Zealand Prime Minister Nash over the crisis in Laos. Americans revealed many concerns about Laos. Phoui, who was at an American hospital, struggled to unify Laos, but the US would continue to help him maintain control even though the Americans admitted a neutral Laos would be less provocative. US Secretary of State Herter feared the appearance of the US trying to "Americanize" Laos. Furthermore, Laotians did not support Laos' National Army, which did not fit the Western conception of an army but comprised small units better suited for policing. Meanwhile, Soviet-bloc radio supported the DRV's increased pressure. Even if the UN brokered a ceasefire, fighting could resume the day the UN left. The Australians wondered if Laos would remain a problem indefinitely.<sup>931</sup>

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<sup>930</sup> Farrell, "Alphabet Soup and Nuclear War," 94, 98-99.

<sup>931</sup> ANZUS Meeting Minutes Oct. 1959, 158-59, 165-66. This source contains the transcript from the meeting that reveals who said what and the opinion and agency of the US' allied states.

Considering all those negatives working against trying to influence the situation in Laos that US Secretary of State Herter freely admitted to, New Zealand Prime Minister Nash confronted the Americans with numerous challenging questions: what gave them the right to violate the Geneva Accords, meddle in Laos, control French facilities there, and advocate for Laos in the UN? Nash compared the US' interference to the DRV's and questioned if the US' goal was to maintain the government the US wanted, or the one Laotians wanted? Nash stated that Laos' government never asked SEATO for assistance, hence, the UN was responsible for resolving conflict there. US Secretary of State Herter justified those US actions as defending democracy to protect a "very backward country" from communism and the US not having signed the Geneva Accords.<sup>932</sup> Those were both valid points, but they did not address Nash's larger point of how much unwanted Western intervention was loathed during the age of decolonization in the developing world, and addressing the issue through the UN would have been viewed as the proper channel to the global community. The Australians sided with the US because they wanted to strengthen ties with the US and avoid any action that suggested a weakening of SEATO's prestige and resolve. The Eisenhower administration also viewed Laos as a domino that could fall in Indochina and start a chain reaction more than Nash did.<sup>933</sup>

Scholar Leszek Buszynski argues that SEATO failed to intervene because it did not have a NATO-like structure and tried to be multifaceted by undertaking deterrence, economic development, and countersubversion.<sup>934</sup> However, what appears to be more important was that some members had limited interests to protect, dreaded another costly counterinsurgency, and used SEATO to restrain US militarism that could have provoked general war and threatened their

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<sup>932</sup> ANZUS Meeting Minutes Oct. 1959, 159-60, 163-64.

<sup>933</sup> Edwards, *Crises and Commitments*, 213.

<sup>934</sup> Buszynski, *SEATO*, 222.

homelands. When the crisis in Laos intensified, Indochina was outside the French Union, and the UK's colony Malaya was independent.<sup>935</sup> SEATO members recognized from the time they were organizing the Manila Conference that insurgencies were the most likely military threat, but the organization never came close to having unanimous support to engage in Laos, which was required to undertake military operations. Still, SEATO did help facilitate a response. The US gave bilateral military aid to nations in the region. Although SEATO was not required for the US to distribute aid, doing so while participating in collective security made it more legitimate.

Until the US began supporting Phoui in 1959, the DRV was focused on domestic issues and reunification, and Laos was a peripheral concern to them.<sup>936</sup> In addition, until 1960, the Pathet Lao only wanted security in the two provinces the Geneva Accords awarded them until their inclusion in a coalition government.<sup>937</sup> But in May 1960, guards let thirteen high-ranking communists escape from a Laotian prison after the guards were bribed. One of the escapees was Laos' communist leader Souphanouvong, which was anticipated to spur antigovernment activity.<sup>938</sup> An OCB report identified the problem as Laotian leaders, because of their confidence in SEATO's backing, provoking the DRV and alienating US allies.<sup>939</sup> US support for Phoui's regime polarized elites in Laos and made Laotian youths reject compromise with the "American imperialists" and their Laotian "puppets." Laotians viewed the US' actions this way because Laos was a newly independent nation that did not want Westerners backing an unpopular pro-US regime.<sup>940</sup> The NSC understood that there would be resistance to the perception of Western interference in newly independent nations, but its staunch opposition to communism made it

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<sup>935</sup> SEATO Record, Annex M, p. 3.

<sup>936</sup> Jacobs, *The Universe Unraveling*, 15.

<sup>937</sup> Stevenson, *The End of Nowhere*, 11.

<sup>938</sup> 445<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, May 24, 1960, 4, Box 12, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>939</sup> OCB Southeast Asia Report Feb. 1960, 2.

<sup>940</sup> Karabell, *Architects of Intervention*, 214-15.

undertake policies that it knew would be counterproductive because the New Look presented limited options to effectively combat popular leftist movements in the developing world.

Without popular support or SEATO being willing to intervene, Phoui's regime was toppled. Laotian Army Captain Kong Le took control of Laos' political capital, Vientiane, in an August coup that returned the popular neutralist leader Souvanna to power. Ironically, Kong Le was trained by the US and had fought the Pathet Lao bravely. The divisions in SEATO were evident because, as described in an NSC meeting, the French supported Souvanna and, along with the British, acted surprised but "reflected a disturbing complacency" about his return to power.<sup>941</sup> The US did not think Kong Le was communist but an anti-US neutralist.<sup>942</sup> He believed that the conflicts and bloodshed in Laos were generated by outside interference, especially from the US. Kong Le also distrusted American and Thai claims that Laos was under serious threat from communist subversion that originated beyond Laos' borders.<sup>943</sup> Thailand tried to persuade the US that Souvanna was sympathetic to communism and had a "Sihanouk-type" ideology that paralleled the Cambodian leader's sympathy toward communism. As leader, Souvanna announced that Laos would take aid from anyone and criticized Thailand and South Vietnam for being the only holdouts against neutralism in the region. Thailand kept bringing up SEATO's counterinsurgency plan, but without the unanimous agreement SEATO needed to intervene, the US avoided the topic. Doing so would expose SEATO's unwillingness to undertake counterinsurgency and undermine its credibility to take military action.<sup>944</sup>

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<sup>941</sup> 455<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Aug. 12, 1960, 7-8, Box 13, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 455<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>942</sup> US Embassy in Bangkok to Herter, Aug. 10, 1960, 1, Item 13410116021, TEXT (hereafter, US Embassy in Bangkok to Herter Aug. 1960).

<sup>943</sup> Osornprasop, "Thailand and the Secret War in Laos," 173.

<sup>944</sup> US Embassy in Bangkok to Herter Aug. 1960.

CIA Director Allen Dulles summarized the situation in Laos at an August 1960 NSC meeting as “it would be almost a miracle if we can hold on.... He pointed to the threat from neighboring North Viet Nam and Communist China and from the Pathet Lao.”<sup>945</sup> The US embassy in Laos urged the US to switch sides and back Souvanna because he was the only one that could unite Laos and prevent more war, which could escalate.<sup>946</sup> Yet, NSC meeting minutes revealed that when Laotian General Phoumi Nosavan, the nephew of Thailand’s prime minister, fled to Bangkok after Kong Le’s coup, the US and Thailand supported his resistance movement to reinstall a pro-West regime in Laos<sup>947</sup> under Boun Oum’s political leadership.<sup>948</sup> Scholar Leszek Buszynski argues that no SEATO member was willing to intervene in Laos, but the US supplied aircraft, and crewmembers, and brought 500 Philippine “technicians” to Vientiane to reinforce the 800 Americans that were already there.<sup>949</sup> Phoumi wanted his safety guaranteed if he accepted Souvanna’s invitation to negotiate in Vientiane. However, the US could not do that without “force of arms,” and Thai involvement would be “unwise” because their desire for SEATO intervention could cause them to provoke conflict.<sup>950</sup> In addition, strong US support for Phoumi would alienate SEATO’s Western allies, and it could cause SEATO’s collapse.<sup>951</sup> Still, Eisenhower remarked that revolutions were won by enraged mobs, as had just happened in Cuba, and he allocated more aircraft when the CIA reported a need.<sup>952</sup> In response, Souvanna turned to the USSR, and the Pathet Lao joined Kong Le against Phoumi.<sup>953</sup> When Souvanna asked Phoumi

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<sup>945</sup> 455<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 9.

<sup>946</sup> Brown to State Department, Oct. 5, 1960, 877-78, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16.

<sup>947</sup> 455<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 7; Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, 170.

<sup>948</sup> 459<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Sep. 15, 1960, 9, Box 13, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 459<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>949</sup> 455<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 7-8; Buszynski, *SEATO*, 220.

<sup>950</sup> 458<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Sep. 7, 1960, 5, Box 13, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>951</sup> Dillion to US Embassy in Laos, Sep. 16, 1960, 848, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16.

<sup>952</sup> 459<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 10.

<sup>953</sup> 461<sup>st</sup> NSC Meeting, Sep. 29, 1960, 2, Box 13, NSC, EDDE.

to stop fighting and unify Laos,<sup>954</sup> Phoumi refused.<sup>955</sup> Then, Souvanna agreed to divide Vientiane Province with the Pathet Lao<sup>956</sup> and became more anti-American.<sup>957</sup> The risk for the US in Laos was that Souvanna would not have a pro-West regime and communist influence would increase.

In December, after a coup by Phoumi that the US supported brought Boun Oum to power, the CIA predicted that communists would denounce US interference. Secretary of State Herter added that evidence of Thai involvement on Phoumi's behalf could become a "serious problem." The French disliked Phoumi and had not recognized Boun Oum because they thought neutrality would be better for stabilizing Indochina. The UK wanted a coalition government. Still, the US would continue backing Phoumi although it acknowledged the new government needed extensive assistance to survive. When Eisenhower suggested sending aircraft carriers for their deterrent value or so he could order the use of US airpower if he thought it was necessary, Secretary of Defense Gates said they were already there, but the US was not supporting the mission with military airpower from aircraft carriers at that time.<sup>958</sup> Upon Eisenhower's request, the US authorized \$232,000 for bonuses to Lao government troops under Phoumi to boost their morale. The US' continued effort to support Laos' military differs from historian Damien Fenton and scholar Leszek Buszynski who contend that the US sought neutralization.<sup>959</sup>

The USSR minimized the importance of Indochina after the Geneva Accords to avoid impeding détente,<sup>960</sup> and the PRC's relations with the DRV cooled in 1960.<sup>961</sup> However, they reversed course after the Phoumi coup and airlifted supplies to anti-Phoumi forces. The CIA

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<sup>954</sup> 464<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Oct. 20, 1960, 15, Box 13, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>955</sup> 465<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Oct. 31, 1960, 21, Box 13, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>956</sup> 466<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Nov. 7, 1960, 10, Box 13, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>957</sup> 467<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 2.

<sup>958</sup> 470<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Dec. 20, 1960, 8-9, Box 13, NSC, EDDE (hereafter, 470<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting).

<sup>959</sup> State Department Memo, Jan. 13, 1961, Laos (1), Box 37, International Series, EDDE; Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon*, 173; Buszynski, *SEATO*, 76.

<sup>960</sup> Gaiduk, *Confronting Vietnam*, 207.

<sup>961</sup> Ang, *Vietnamese Communists' Relations with China and the Second Indochina Conflict, 1956-1962*, 232.

feared the Soviet bloc might intervene in Laos on a massive scale.<sup>962</sup> Laos' UN representative protested Soviet-bloc involvement to the Security Council. Soviet leader Khrushchev, speaking at the Cuban embassy, warned that "the dangerous hotbed of fire" in Laos must be "extinguished" and called for another Geneva Conference.<sup>963</sup> The Soviet bloc's criticism of the New Look and SEATO served as propaganda to discredit the West, enticed developing nations to veer toward neutrality or socialism, and provided justification for Soviet-bloc intervention and increased aid to insurgencies in Indochina that opposed US-backed dictators.

SEATO empowered the US-backed regimes in South Vietnam and Laos. This allowed those regimes to combat communist guerrillas and resist their indigenous societies' push for democratic reforms because it deterred direct largescale Soviet-bloc intervention. Nevertheless, even with this support, they could not defeat the insurgencies. The fundamental problem was that those regimes did not have enough popular support to stand on their own, and SEATO looming in the background made them appear as Western collaborators, which was unpopular in Indochina after their colonial experience. It also presented a threat that the Soviet bloc took measures to oppose. Consequently, the ensuing cycle of escalation increased the insurgencies' capabilities by rallying domestic and outside support for them. Moreover, France which had colonized Indochina for generations, and the US, which was interfering in Indochinese domestic affairs as the French left, were both SEATO members, and their actions were generally not popular in Indochina. Hence, SEATO helped push the domino it was intended to hold up because actions like emboldening unpopular pro-West authoritarian leaders and violating the neutral spirit of the Geneva Accords incited rebellion. In addition, it attracted outside communist

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<sup>962</sup> 470<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 8.

<sup>963</sup> Debevoise to OCB, 1-2.

intervention and SEATO would not intervene militarily to attempt to counter those negative effects.

Despite the US' provocative actions, in a message to Cambodian leader Sihanouk, Eisenhower commended Sihanouk on his support for a conference, and Eisenhower said he wanted peace, de-escalation, and independence for Laos.<sup>964</sup> Meanwhile, SEATO members, including the US, strategized to prevent Laos from appealing for SEATO intervention because it was clear that SEATO did not have unanimous support among its members for a military response. US Secretary of State Herter explained that if SEATO did not respond to the government of a protocol state's request for military support after they asked for help, it would "appear to be denigrating SEATO or its capabilities" and damage SEATO's credibility.<sup>965</sup> This primary source evidence extends findings by other scholars. Historian Donald Nuechterlein contends that Thailand's leaders concluded that SEATO had lost much of its meaning by 1960 as the "free world's" position in Southeast Asia began deteriorating.<sup>966</sup> Scholar Jack Quilico argues that SEATO was at best a consultive organization, and the US did not have the capacity to solve problems in the international arena, it could only hope to manage them.<sup>967</sup> Although SEATO never undertook military action, if Laos had been a SEATO member, it would have participated in meetings. Then, if it wanted SEATO military intervention, it likely would have had more success directly lobbying the other members in an official SEATO venue where it was present because the other members would expect SEATO to come to their defense if they requested it. Thus, the nations where the communist threat was the most prevalent, SEATO's protocol states, not being members may have undercut the organization.

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<sup>964</sup> Eisenhower to Sihanouk, Jan. 17, 1961, 1-2, Cambodia (1), Box 5, International Series, EDDE.

<sup>965</sup> Herter to SEATO Delegation, Dec. 19, 1960, 227, in FRUS, 1958-60, V. 16.

<sup>966</sup> Nuechterlein, "Thailand and SEATO," 1175.

<sup>967</sup> Quilico, "Interaction Among Some SEATO Powers," 2, 116.

In its final meeting during Eisenhower's presidency, the NSC conceded that it failed to stop communism in Laos.<sup>968</sup> At that time, the NSC and SEATO discussed Laos very frequently and much more often than Vietnam. This supports historian Seth Jacobs' contention that Laos became a greater worry than Vietnam for the US and one of the foremost global hotspots.<sup>969</sup> Like Indonesia and Burma, Laos under Souvanna, as well as Cambodia, had a natural equilibrium of neutrality. The Soviet bloc accepted this, but the US saw it as a threat and vehemently opposed it. Nations that desired neutrality would maintain good relations with the West if it did not try to interfere, but SEATO kept the US more engaged, and neutral nations became increasingly independent of the West and embraced Soviet bloc offers of friendship and aid to counterbalance Western overreach. Pro-West factions in Laos, as in South Vietnam, behaved more like SEATO's Asian members and expected US support in exchange for opposing communism. Yet, coups and a civil war hampered political stability, as well as economic viability, and led neutralists to unite with communists against US-backed factions. This supports historian Kathryn Statler's argument that under Eisenhower the US created a neocolonial informal empire that focused on helping pro-US regimes defeat resistance militarily rather than respond to the desires of the people. Thus, Statler contends, the US supported a regime, not a nation, in South Vietnam. What happened there, and was also evident in Laos, during Eisenhower's presidency after the creation of SEATO, supports this contention by Statler because the US-backed regimes met violent resistance from large numbers of citizens that had a different vision of national identity. When the Indochinese people could either accept Western support to resist communism or

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<sup>968</sup> 474<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 23.

<sup>969</sup> OCB Interest in Laos, Aug. 25, 1959, Southeast Asia (1), Box 7, OCB Secretariat, ENSC; Jacobs, *The Universe Unraveling*, 3.

embrace communist insurgents that opposed Western involvement, enough of them chose the latter to create strong insurgencies that the NSC was unable to use SEATO to subdue.<sup>970</sup>

Domestically, in a December 1960 NSC meeting, Eisenhower wanted to know what the State Department made of the actions of Senators Mike Mansfield and William Fulbright, future leading critics of the Vietnam War who, Eisenhower said, “seemed to be endeavoring to exert steady pressure on the State Department.” Concerning Mansfield’s statements on Laos that Eisenhower inquired about, the State Department representative was “shocked.” The transcript of the meeting did not reveal what the statements were, but they were apparently critical of US actions in Laos because they were described as “damaging statements.”<sup>971</sup> It happened the month before Eisenhower left office, and there was no indication in the NSC meeting that this domestic criticism led to the NSC changing policy.

In 1960, the DRV announced the creation of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF).<sup>972</sup> The NLF titled its manifesto “the aggressive war in Laos by the U.S. imperialists and their most reactionary satellites in the S.E.A.T.O. military bloc.” This clearly demonstrated the effect the creation of SEATO and the US meddling in Laos had on the DRV and the rise of the NLF insurgency in South Vietnam.<sup>973</sup> The NLF comprised primarily communist insurgents whose goal was for the South Vietnamese to overthrow Diem, eliminate American influence, and reunify Vietnam. However, the NLF included some non-communists and members who hoped for a type of federated relationship with the DRV after reunification.<sup>974</sup> The South Vietnamese government called NLF insurgents Vietcong, which was short for

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<sup>970</sup> Statler, *Replacing France*, 282, 286.

<sup>971</sup> 472<sup>nd</sup> NSC Meeting, 9.

<sup>972</sup> SEATO Record, 14.

<sup>973</sup> NLF Manifesto, Jan. 5, 1961, 1, Item 2390503003, TEXT.

<sup>974</sup> Thayer, *War by Other Means*, 193; Nguyen, *Hanoi’s War*.

“Vietnamese communists” in Vietnamese, to emphasize their communist credentials over the insurgents’ emphasis on their nationalist struggle, and the Americans adopted the Vietcong terminology. This reflected a problem with American policy in Indochina. The US viewed insurgencies as communist revolutions in part of a global Soviet-bloc plot when many non-Americans saw a nationalist movement to overthrow an unpopular American-backed authoritarian regime.<sup>975</sup> The DRV tried to present the conflict as a civil war in the South and had learned from North Korea’s 1950 invasion of South Korea with regular troops that overt military aggression made it easy to justify Western military intervention through the UN.<sup>976</sup>

With the Soviet bloc helping the Pathet Lao control eastern Laos, aid circumvented the demilitarized zone between the two Vietnams and reached the NLF<sup>977</sup> along what would become known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail.<sup>978</sup> The NLF also used Cambodia as a sanctuary and staging area,<sup>979</sup> and refugees from neighboring conflicts flooded into Cambodia.<sup>980</sup> Opposing communism in Indochina became largely a unilateral American project because SEATO would not undertake counterinsurgency, all of Indochina had exited the French Union,<sup>981</sup> and the Eisenhower administration invested \$1.5 billion in South Vietnam alone after 1954.<sup>982</sup> Nevertheless, US estimates reclassified guerrilla action from a long-term threat to South Vietnam’s “number one problem” by the end of Eisenhower’s presidency. The NLF completed 780 assassinations in the first five months of 1960, and insurgency in Indochina was its most widespread and active since 1954.<sup>983</sup> The NLF’s numbers doubled to 3,000 when fresh cadres

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<sup>975</sup> Logevall, *Embers of War*, 692.

<sup>976</sup> Farrell, “Alphabet Soup and Nuclear War,” 105.

<sup>977</sup> SEATO Record, 14.

<sup>978</sup> Logevall, *Embers of War*, 690.

<sup>979</sup> 452<sup>nd</sup> NSC Meeting, 2.

<sup>980</sup> Trimble to Herter, Jan. 3, 1961, 1, Cambodia (1), Box 5, International Series, EDDE.

<sup>981</sup> USVR, 4A3, Summary p. v.

<sup>982</sup> Carter, *Inventing Vietnam*, 6.

<sup>983</sup> USVR, 4A5, Tab 4, 43, 48.

arrived from Laos and Cambodia to overthrow the US-backed Diem regime, and the NLF began terrorizing villagers that were reluctant to support them. Any intervention would have to be counterinsurgency<sup>984</sup> in swamps, which South Vietnamese troops were ill-equipped to handle. Still, in May 1960, Eisenhower declared, “The U.S. ought to do everything possible to prevent the deterioration of the situation in South Vietnam. We had rescued this country from a fate worse than death,”<sup>985</sup> as he continued to prioritize the NSC’s vision for Indochina over the desires of many of its people that did not support US-backed authoritarian regimes.

Eisenhower directed the CIA to undertake a campaign of destabilization to create a noncommunist South Vietnam after Dulles encouraged him to do so. In the process, legendary CIA operator Edward Lansdale became CIA Director Allen Dulles’ “own representative” in Vietnam<sup>986</sup> after he succeeded in an earlier hearts and minds campaign in the Philippines. Yet, when Lansdale tried to repeat that strategy in South Vietnam, the US military and diplomats lobbied for using military force against communist insurgents and their arguments won.<sup>987</sup> A report from Lansdale at the very end of Eisenhower’s presidency explained the quandary the administration had left Vietnam in. The NLF was closer to seizing power than reports in Washington indicated, Diem could only postpone his fall, and current US efforts would fail unless it used “sensitive understanding and wisdom.” Lansdale’s assessment differs from historian Mark Moyar’s finding that a primary factor for the US’ struggles in aiding Diem was insufficient US resources after the US cut aid for Vietnamese militias.<sup>988</sup> Moyar’s perspective that the insurgency in South Vietnam was a military problem that could have been overcome

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<sup>984</sup> 437<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 2-3.

<sup>985</sup> 444<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, May 9, 1960, 12, Box 12, NSC, EDDE.

<sup>986</sup> Anderson, “J. Lawton Collins, John Foster Dulles, and the Eisenhower Administration’s ‘Point of No Return’ in Vietnam,” 140-41.

<sup>987</sup> Nashel, *Edward Lansdale’s Cold War*; Boot, *The Road Not Taken*; Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*.

<sup>988</sup> Lansdale to Defense Secretary, Jan. 17, 1961, 66-67, in USVR, 4A5, Tab 4; Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken*, xv.

with more military resources does not account for the underlying unpopularity of the Diem regime that an increased military commitment from the US only exacerbated. Relatedly, when the NSC tried to apply the anticommunist and militaristic New Look in Southeast Asia through SEATO, it did not properly account for the peoples' desire for neutrality and opposition to Western interference.

Despite his misgivings about Diem, Lansdale argued that Diem was the only plausible option for a Vietnamese leader to resist communism in Vietnam, although he was not confident that Diem would succeed. After Diem survived a November 1960 coup attempt by noncommunist Vietnamese who opposed his leadership, Lansdale prophesized that there would be another coup soon, unless the US clearly backed Diem, because most of the Vietnamese that opposed Diem thought the US wanted a successful coup. This shows a change in the South Vietnamese perception of US policy because early in Diem's presidency US officials openly warned dissident groups to not overthrow him or the US would end aid to South Vietnam.<sup>989</sup> Meanwhile, the Soviet bloc increased support for the DRV, but as a silver lining for the NSC, the competition that emerged exacerbated the Sino-Soviet split as the USSR and PRC vied to be the principal supporter of the DRV.<sup>990</sup>

If the pro-West authoritarian regimes in Laos and South Vietnam had tried to maintain power without US and SEATO backing, there likely would have been increased Soviet-bloc involvement. Thus, deterrence was temporarily useful to maintain US-backed regimes without popular support, which made SEATO more of a short-term tactic to delay communist gains than a long-term strategy to contain communism. Reflecting the popular Geneva Accords, the people of Indochina wanted to choose their own national leaders, which created a disparity with the US-

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<sup>989</sup> Lansdale to Defense Secretary, Jan. 17, 1961, 66-67, in USVR, 4A5, Tab 4; Logevall, *Embers of War*, 634.

<sup>990</sup> Olsen, *Soviet-Vietnam Relations and the Role of China, 1949-64*; Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*.

backed regimes that forwent and overturned elections. Deterrence premised on massive retaliation presented two options: do nothing or undertake total war. Thus, the absurdity of beginning World War III for a peripheral interest undercut the New Look's credibility to deal with crises in the developing world.<sup>991</sup> The US understood that there was an emerging "nuclear taboo," even for their tactical use.<sup>992</sup> Guerrillas did not need a nuclear arsenal to fight the New Look. In fact, if the level of conflict remained low, the New Look did not present viable military options. Hence, in Indochina, the US faced this paradox: the more resources it expended on opposing communism, the stronger communism became. The level of resistance increased proportionally to the US' level of interference. This reflected how the underlying problem the US faced was resistance to Western interference. In Indochina, it appeared that a pro-West regime was incompatible with stability and a free government, which made the NSC's regional objectives unrealistic. Furthermore, the fact that most SEATO members were reluctant to intervene undermined SEATO's threat to undertake an effective counterinsurgency. SEATO had the capacity but not the will. Since SEATO was premised on deterrence, it lost credibility when it did not respond militarily during the crisis in Laos and, as scholar Benedict Kim argues, it appeared as merely a forum for its members to consult.<sup>993</sup> SEATO members discussing the crisis in Laos extensively, but never deciding to intervene, supports Kim's argument.

Part of the NSC's objective for Southeast Asia was to have stable nations. However, SEATO played a role in destabilizing Indochina. The Cambodians viewing the Thais and South Vietnamese as more significant threats than communism was in part because they were proponents, and beneficiaries, of SEATO and used SEATO as a justification for potential

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<sup>991</sup> Brands, "The Age of Vulnerability," 972.

<sup>992</sup> Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo*, 363.

<sup>993</sup> Kim, "The United States and SEATO," ii.

military action. This, and the spillover from nearby instability that SEATO inflamed in Vietnam and Laos, turned Cambodians even more against the West and displayed the transnational aspect of insurgencies. This builds on research by historian Bruce Lockhart, who studied the effects the US' support for South Vietnam had on neutralism in Laos and Cambodia, and scholar Idean Salehyan, who argues that civil wars usually cluster in a tumultuous region and must be seen in an international context.<sup>994</sup>

A memo to president-elect John Kennedy's transition team explained that the UK, France, and New Zealand would not consider SEATO intervention in Laos without external aggression, but the Asian members and Australia were more sympathetic with the US' desire to intervene. Yet, if SEATO failed to act soon, it could dissolve. This assessment was "severe" but "realistic."<sup>995</sup> When Eisenhower, Kennedy, and their principal advisors met the day before the transition, Eisenhower cautioned against unilateral action in Laos. Kennedy asked Eisenhower if he thought the Soviet-bloc's response would outweigh the US and SEATO's if he intervened? The incoming secretary of defense, Robert McNamara, noted "Eisenhower's answer was not completely clear," but Eisenhower implied that the Soviet bloc had the potential to make a bigger impact than SEATO. In the meeting, Eisenhower concluded that a coalition government in Laos that included communists could avoid a complete communist takeover. After Eisenhower had come to accept neutrality in Indonesia after a disastrous attempt to back a pro-West faction with covert operations, the admission that a coalition government in Laos was the best option was another evolutionary step toward acknowledging the negative effects of opposing neutrality and communism in nations where those ideologies were more popular than the West. Then Eisenhower added, the loss of Laos would lead to communist domination of Southeast Asia.

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<sup>994</sup> Lockhart, "The Fate of Neutralism in Cambodia and Laos," 222-23; Salehyan, *Rebels Without Borders*, 165-69.

<sup>995</sup> Steeves to McGhee, Jan. 18, 1961, 1-2, in FRUS, 1961-63, V. 23.

When Kennedy asked Eisenhower how to keep communists out of Laos, Eisenhower did not answer. However, Secretary of Defense Gates interjected about how the US could handle numerous limited wars simultaneously.<sup>996</sup> Eisenhower argued, “The entire proceeding [the crisis in Laos] was extremely confused,” but the US was obligated to support Laos. France’s military-training program was inadequate, and the US should take over. According to Eisenhower, the fundamental problem was that communism produced more dedicated adherents than democracy. He warned that this problem needed to be taken into consideration in future Indochina policy decisions.<sup>997</sup> Eisenhower also said to not accept Fidel Castro’s regime in Cuba, which had recently seized power when a popular leftist insurgency toppled a US-backed dictator. This was another example of a communist threat in the developing world that massive retaliation was not designed to counter.<sup>998</sup>

Eisenhower’s reflections on Indochina right before he left office support historians like Kathryn Statler, Arthur Dommen, James Arnold, David Anderson, Richard Immerman, William Rust, and Seth Jacobs that argue that the Eisenhower administration’s interference left those nations in a difficult situation.<sup>999</sup> Eisenhower realized that the best possible solution in Laos to avoid the spread of communism was accepting a coalition government that included communists, which was exactly what the Geneva Accords had called for and the NSC had done so much to prevent. Still, the US was obligated to continue supporting anticommunist regimes even though communism was more popular with the people, and the real battle was winning hearts and minds. In addition, SEATO would not intervene militarily against an insurgency, which meant

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<sup>996</sup> McNamara to Kennedy, Jan. 24, 1961, 1-2, Item 0240101008, TEXT (hereafter, McNamara to Kennedy).

<sup>997</sup> Clifford to Johnson, Sep. 29, 1967, 1364-65, in USVR, 5B3D.

<sup>998</sup> McNamara to Kennedy, 2; Westad, *The Cold War*, 299-300.

<sup>999</sup> Statler, *Replacing France*, 288-89; Dommen, *The Indochinese Experience of the French and the Americans*, 426; Arnold, *The First Domino*, 240; Anderson, *Trapped by Success*, 206; Immerman, “The United States and the Geneva Conference of 1954,” 44; Rust, *Before the Quagmire*, 3-4; Jacobs, *The Universe Unraveling*, 1; Rust, *Eisenhower and Cambodia*, 251.

the US would have to change policy and undertake counterinsurgency outside of SEATO. Based upon what had happened up to that point, a counterinsurgency would not get very much substantive support from US allies and make the US' effort a virtually unilateral and conventional limited war, where there was no realistic path to victory, which was exactly what the New Look aimed to avoid. The New Look threatening massive retaliation with nuclear weapons to deter communist aggression, implemented through SEATO, was not a good policy for Southeast Asia because it did not have an answer for communist insurgencies, the US' allies were halfhearted about collective security, and enthusiasm for neutrality pervaded the greater region.

The New Look's shortcomings in Southeast Asia can be seen in earlier scholarship on grand strategies in US foreign policy. John Gaddis and Hal Brands have criticized the use of grand strategies by US presidential administrations in general because they limit flexibility in a complex world. Hence, trying to apply them universally, even if it is questionable whether they will be effective in a particular circumstance, is imprudent. Similarly, scholars as diverse as, Odd Arne Westad, Stephen Walt, John Mearsheimer, Gabriel Kolko, and Theodore von Laue have concluded that America's assertive and militarized approach to foreign policy has done more harm than good for the US and people around the world. This dissertation serves as a case study that supports those arguments by showing how Eisenhower's NSC using SEATO as part of the New Look grand strategy, with its assertive military-centric outlook and anticommunist ideology that was extreme for global norms at the time, was part of this larger trend, and it caused many problems for the US and throughout the greater Southeast Asia region.<sup>1000</sup>

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<sup>1000</sup> Gaddis, *On Grand Strategy*; Brands, *What Good is Grand Strategy?*; Westad, *The Global Cold War*; Walt, *The Hell of Good Intentions*; Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion*; Kolko, *Confronting the Third World*; Von Laue, *The World Revolution of Westernization*.

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To conclude this chapter, SEATO was designed to undertake countersubversion. This was different than other collective-security organizations and reflected conditions in the region. Since the start of Eisenhower's presidency, it was clear that subversion, especially in Indochina, was the most prevalent communist threat in Southeast Asia. Yet, when the Geneva Accords neutralized Indochina, communist insurgencies largely adhered to the ceasefire in anticipation of reunification elections that they could participate in and gain political influence within the system. Laos and Cambodia favored neutrality, and Vietnam generally supported the DRV. However, the NSC's inability to accept neutrality, and especially communism, caused it to interfere and try to make as much of Indochina as pro-West as possible. The US supported the Diem regime in South Vietnam because it saw Diem as the best option to prevent DRV control, but with US and SEATO backing, Diem refused to hold the scheduled reunification election. This, his background, and the authoritarian aspects of his regime, incited rebellion in South Vietnam that the DRV supported. The US' efforts to interfere in Cambodia, and Cambodia's SEATO-friendly neighbors of Thailand and South Vietnam menacing it, drove Cambodia closer to the Soviet bloc as its people, and its leader Sihanouk, were alienated by SEATO and the West. Under a US-backed regime, Laos disenfranchised the communist Pathet Lao after Laos received the US' urging and SEATO's backing, which reawakened its Pathet Lao communist insurgency. The US supported pro-West regimes in Laos when there was a neutral option in Souvanna that was popular with the people. This led to coups and a civil war where neutralists joined forces with communists to try to overthrow the US-backed regime militarily. The transnational effects from this conflict spread instability throughout Indochina and attracted Soviet-bloc intervention when it looked as if SEATO might engage militarily. Nevertheless, SEATO would not undertake

counterinsurgency because it required unanimous consent from its members and many of them, particularly the Western ones, thought the risk was not worth the reward. SEATO urged Laos to not appeal for SEATO military intervention because it was clear that SEATO would not intervene. This undermined SEATO's credibility to undertake military action without a clear external invasion. Afterward, SEATO's protocol states and Asian members could not rely on SEATO for counterinsurgency, and the Soviet bloc and communist insurgencies became more emboldened in Southeast Asia. Still, there was significant US and Thai involvement in Laos. That, and possible SEATO intervention, were prominent grievances in the manifesto that officially announced the existence of the NLF communist insurgency in South Vietnam to the world in 1960. When Eisenhower left office, there was a raging communist insurgency in Laos, and a rising one in South Vietnam, against US-backed dictators. The New Look, even after the creation of SEATO, did not have an effective response for insurgencies in Southeast Asia, and Eisenhower conceded on his last day in office that accepting a coalition government in Laos that included neutralists and communists was the best realistic option.

## Conclusion

The objective the NSC set for the nations of Southeast Asia at the beginning of the Eisenhower administration, which did not change significantly throughout Eisenhower's presidency, had three components. They were: 1) to prevent the countries of Southeast Asia from passing into the communist orbit, 2) to persuade those nations that their best interests lay in greater cooperation and stronger affiliations with the rest of the "free world," and 3) to assist those nations in developing toward stable and free governments that could resist communism from within and without and contribute to the strengthening of the "free world." Yet, in its quest to meet that objective, the NSC had to work within the framework of its New Look grand strategy that was focused on militarily deterring communist nations, particularly the USSR, with the threat of massive retaliation with nuclear weapons in its effort to contain communism at a reasonable cost. The New Look had other tools as well, but it placed less emphasis on them. For example, collective security shared costs and responsibilities, and fostering economic development and disseminating propaganda could entice nations to cooperate with the "free world." Nevertheless, the New Look's nuclear and Eurocentric emphasis was misaligned with conditions in Southeast Asia, and it presented three major contradictions for that region. First, the most prevalent communist threat was from insurgencies opposing regimes that the US supported, which massive retaliation deterring interstate aggression did not address. Thus, the NSC wanted the US' allies to contribute ground forces in collective security so US troops would not have to fight, especially in peripheral areas. Second, nations that were willing to cooperate with the US were halfhearted about making sacrifices for anticommunist regional collective security if an issue did not directly affect their national security. They were less concerned than the NSC about the domino theory in Southeast Asia, and their great fear was military action

escalating and threatening their homelands. And third, in the age of decolonization and wake of the devastation from World War II, anti-Westernism and neutrality were popular throughout the region. The New Look aimed to bring uncommitted nations closer to the West, but it threatened those who opposed the US with nuclear annihilation, pushed unwanted aid that had obvious strings attached, used blatant pro-West propaganda, and interfered with intrusive covert operations. Those factors alienated uncommitted nations further from the West.

To summarize the chapters, when the NSC could not form the coalition Congress required for the US to respond militarily during the Dien Bien Phu crisis, and communists and neutrality made gains in the Geneva Accords, the NSC aggressively pursued a regional collective-security pact for Southeast Asia. The Manila Conference produced SEATO, but SEATO was built on a shaky foundation because it was founded on compromises between members that were not united behind the NSC's regional objective, and most of the nations in the greater region did not join. While SEATO gave the NSC more legitimacy to deter aggression against nations in the entire treaty area because it based its authority on the UN charter, the most prevalent communist threat was still from insurgencies, and there were signs that SEATO members would be reluctant to make a significant military contribution or would have limited effectiveness if they engaged. The NSC wanted to use SEATO's nonmilitary components to help establish a regional anticommunist identity. A key reason why Asian members joined SEATO was for its economic development provision, but SEATO's projects were limited, which caused conflict between the Western members that were expected to pay for them and the Asian members that would have benefited from them. Aid also entrenched authoritarian or corrupt regimes in SEATO's Asian members, and the US paid for almost everything in SEATO. The NSC also tried to use SEATO propaganda to make the organization more popular throughout the

greater region and unify its members, but the New Look's anticommunist emphasis that was conveyed did not resonate. Hence, collective security through SEATO was undermined because of disunity among its members and SEATO's inability to attract new members. A reason for the struggles was that the NSC strongly opposed neutrality even though it was popular in the region. Ultimately, a crisis occurred at the end of Eisenhower's presidency when during a civil war in Laos the Pathet Lao communist insurgency joined with neutral forces against a US-backed regime, but SEATO's divided members would not unanimously agree to intervene, which was a requirement for military intervention. SEATO's inaction in Laos undermined its credibility to engage in counterinsurgency. Therefore, SEATO helped the NSC implement the New Look in Southeast Asia, but it was not the right strategy for that region because of the three major contradictions.

Overall, at the end of Eisenhower's presidency, the NSC had limited success accomplishing its objective with the eleven nations studied. The Soviet bloc gained influence, the "free world" lost influence, the region became more unstable, and authoritarian regimes were more widespread. North Vietnam was the NSC's only complete failure: the country had a communist government and was in the Soviet bloc. The NSC had varying degrees of partial successes in the other ten nations that split into two groups. First, Thailand, the Philippines, Pakistan, South Vietnam, and Laos often presented themselves as US allies. They remained outside the communist orbit, and generally cooperated with the "free world," but they were not stable and free. The greatest success was the Philippines, which was the most democratic, although its regime was corrupt and asserted independence from the US. The other four "allies" had authoritarian regimes, which caused domestic discontent, and there were seemingly uncontrollable communist insurgencies in South Vietnam, and especially Laos. Because of their

immediate security concerns, they were more cooperative with the US. The second group had varying degrees of democracy, but they distanced themselves from the US. Indonesia, Burma, and Cambodia were staunchly neutral, had to contend with US-supported rightwing rebels that caused instability, and maintained open relations with the Soviet bloc. Meanwhile, Malaya and Singapore were in the British Commonwealth, but they exhibited authoritarian tendencies and rejected SEATO membership.

Categorizing the eleven nations by their relationship with SEATO unveils patterns. The NSC was most successful achieving its objective with SEATO's Asian members, which were Thailand, the Philippines, and Pakistan. Yet, they were all partial successes. Although they remained halfhearted allies throughout Eisenhower's presidency, they were never in danger of being controlled by the Soviet bloc or a communist insurgency. However, that success must be qualified because when Eisenhower's presidency began in 1953, they faced few internal, or external, threats from communists. Moreover, throughout Eisenhower's presidency, they were closer to the West than the Soviet bloc, but by 1961, they were more freely engaging with the Soviet bloc economically and diplomatically after they did not feel adequately supported by the US and SEATO. The US' military emphasis, and desire to control spending, limited economic development programs, and propaganda could not unify SEATO's divide on racial lines. The greatest failures were the rise of military dictatorships in Thailand and Pakistan. Similarly, the Philippines' new regime reverted to inefficiency and corruption. Despite the democratic setbacks, continued US aid helped entrench those regimes. Relatedly, they became more threatened by domestic communist subversion when the people protested their governments and SEATO. Externally, Thailand faced pressure from growing transnational conflict in Indochina, the Philippines felt threatened by tensions caused by possible escalation between the US and

PRC over Taiwan, and Pakistan's hostilities with India and Afghanistan continued as the USSR supported Pakistan's neighbors more to offset SEATO. Many of the trends the NSC hoped to reverse by creating SEATO got worse. Distrust grew with more interaction, overseas bases and supporting foreign ground troops turned into liabilities, a regional anticommunist identity became increasingly elusive, divisions between SEATO's Asian and Western members widened, and the US' regional allies looked more like puppets that said they opposed communism to get US aid to secure their regimes.

The NSC had limited success achieving its objective with the noncommunist Southeast Asian nations that were unaffiliated with SEATO, which were Indonesia, Burma, Malaya, and Singapore. By 1961, these unaffiliated nations remained outside the Soviet orbit, but they were not aligned with the US, and they either lacked truly free institutions, exhibited some degree of instability, or did not resist communism. Overall, compared to the "free world," the Soviet bloc made relative gains. With the popularity of neutrality, the NSC's efforts to gain their allegiance with economic development aid and propaganda had limited effectiveness. The root problem was, as newly independent nations, their people wanted to disassociate from the West. The NSC strongly opposed neutrality and was unable to use SEATO to make them adopt a regional anticommunist identity. They declined invitations to join SEATO, and SEATO caused anti-West hostility among their people and served as a scapegoat for politicians. Still, SEATO had to account for security in their territory because it was part of the treaty area. The dispute over control of New Guinea between the Indonesians and Dutch turned Indonesia into a potential military threat, Burma could not support SEATO because it feared antagonizing its neighbors, the PRC and India, and independence for Malaya and Singapore caused them to dissociate with SEATO after being British territory. Moreover, there were growing tendencies toward

authoritarianism, but when they exercised democracy, they moved left politically, which was away from what the NSC wanted and reflected a trend in the greater region. With SEATO's limited effectiveness, the NSC relied on unilateral covert operations to influence events, but they were largely counterproductive. When the US backed rightwing factions and armed anticommunist rebel groups, it damaged relations with the governments most people in those nations preferred. Finally, North Vietnam was also an unaffiliated nation, and it was communist.

The NSC also had limited success achieving its objective with SEATO's protocol states, which were South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. The protocol states were covered by the SEATO treaty but did not join officially because of restrictions from the Geneva Accords about participation in military alliances. By 1961, Cambodia had fraught relations with the West and leaned toward the Soviet bloc. While it had elections, the people chose neutralist leaders that tolerated communism. This led to US support for opposition movements in Cambodia, which caused instability. South Vietnam and Laos had US-backed authoritarian regimes. This incited communist insurgencies, which welcomed Soviet-bloc assistance. When the US supported anticommunist forces militarily, the popular backlash made those efforts counterproductive as sympathy for communism became stronger. Consequently, when the US supported authoritarian regimes in the protocol states, it appeared to only postpone their collapse for as long as the US was willing to expend enough resources to continue propping them up. There was no clear long-term solution to this dilemma, and US efforts did little to win the peoples' support. The Geneva Accords intended to neutralize the protocol states, and that was the preferred solution for nearly everyone except the NSC and the regimes that it supported in Indochina. The NSC's staunch anticommunism and antineutrality were way outside global norms, and it met strong resistance when it tried to subvert popular will. This manifested in SEATO's general unpopularity in its

protocol states. Another issue was the protocol states faced a level of exclusion from not being official members that undermined their confidence in SEATO and ability to work with it.

Although SEATO deterred direct largescale Soviet-bloc intervention in support of insurgencies, the threat of massive retaliation could not defeat insurgencies, and SEATO would not undertake military action unless there was overt interstate aggression. Thus, SEATO was not the NSC's solution to have ground troops from US allies fight in peripheral areas, and future US administrations inherited a difficult situation.

Viewing the New Look more holistically reveals how it had limited success apart from deterring a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. The root cause of the NSC's failures in Southeast Asia was that it applied the New Look universally, but it did not adequately account for complexities in places like Southeast Asia where insurgencies, decolonization, anti-Westernism, and neutrality were more relevant forces and did not fit into a rigid bipolar Cold War paradigm. Eisenhower was a former US general that oversaw Europe, and his administration viewed international relations through an American, militaristic, and Eurocentric lens that resulted in military solutions for the US to defend Western Europe. However, Southeast Asia did not face a Hitler-like leader that was bent on militarily overrunning the entire region and had the capabilities to be successful. Its dynamics were much more nuanced. The real contest was to get the region's peoples to support the NSC's objective, but the New Look struggled to do that when it was implemented through SEATO because the region's peoples saw militarism and Western interference as bigger threats than communism, which was more associated with opposing the West. Ultimately, the NSC pursuing its anticommunist policies and actions caused many problems in the greater region and created more hostility than sympathy for the US.

SEATO played a significant role in the development of the greater Southeast Asia region during Eisenhower's presidency and in the NSC's ability to achieve its regional objective. SEATO kept the US more engaged, and its lack of economic development caused rifts between SEATO's Western and Asian members that SEATO propaganda could not overcome. Putting Asians in positions of leadership in SEATO did not remedy the lingering distrust either. SEATO could not bridge the chasm between the NSC's anticommunist worldview that focused on geopolitics and Southeast Asians' focus on local and ethnic identity, as well as nationalism during decolonization. There was demand for largescale transnational projects that could have begun to realign identities, but SEATO's Western members would not finance them. This made the US' public support for SEATO appear insincere. Furthermore, the Southeast Asian nations that never joined SEATO were outspoken critics against what they perceived as a Western-led military alliance. The lack of membership within the region undercut the effectiveness of regional collective security and the NSC's hope to form a regional anticommunist identity through SEATO. Their leaders' rants against SEATO became a popular way for them to gain domestic political support, which made the West even more unpopular. Moreover, SEATO contributed to destabilizing its protocol states because it contravened the spirit of neutrality from the Geneva Accords and emboldened unpopular authoritarian regimes that did not allow free elections. The scheduled reunification election in Vietnam would have almost certainly led to a DRV-controlled parliament. Subverting democracy increased indigenous support for communist insurgencies that the Soviet bloc gave more assistance to.

In addition, India and the PRC were fierce opponents of SEATO. They viewed SEATO as unnecessarily provocative but for different reasons. India wanted to minimize Cold War tensions by promoting neutrality, and the PRC saw SEATO as an aggressive and existential

threat to its security. The NSC creating SEATO undoubtedly hindered its relations with those important Asian nations. Moreover, the general dislike of SEATO throughout the greater region of Southeast Asia encouraged the region's people to further reject the West and look to India and the PRC for leadership and alternative models to follow during the decolonization process. In this struggle to gain influence, SEATO also presented a dilemma where it incentivized Asian members to join, and stay in, SEATO with the prospect of aid; but simultaneously, the US primarily relied on bilateral aid as a tool to maintain good relations with nations in the greater Southeast Asia region. Hence, the Asian members did not need to be in SEATO to get aid, and nations not in SEATO did not have to join to get aid. The US' preference for bilateral aid undercut incentives for SEATO membership and support for the organization.

Consequently, there was much more to SEATO's impact on the greater Southeast Asia region than deterring a Soviet-bloc interstate invasion or not taking military action against communist insurgents in Indochina. Furthermore, after viewing SEATO from the perspective of Eisenhower's NSC, a new interpretation for SEATO's struggles was that it reflected the New Look, and the New Look had major contradictions when it was applied to Southeast Asia. This meant that if SEATO maintained a military and anticommunist focus, it did not have much of a chance to influence the region favorably for the NSC. Nevertheless, the NSC created SEATO anyway because of its grand strategy, the New Look. This approach brought about similar results in the Middle East and Latin America, where the US also participated in collective security.

SEATO was also ineffective because of its internal divisions and absence of a unifying principle. The NSC saw SEATO as an anticommunist organization that allowed it to implement the New Look in Southeast Asia. SEATO's Asian members expected economic development in return for Asian membership, which was hard to find but necessary to make SEATO look less

like a guise for Western imperialism. Since they faced minimal external, and internal, threats from communists, security was less important. The UK and France wanted regional stability to prevent conflict from escalating and threatening their interests in Asia or even their homelands. Australia and New Zealand wanted a forward defense on the continent backed by the major Western powers, but their remote, and island, geography made the Soviet bloc less threatening. On numerous occasions, New Zealand Prime Minister Walter Nash openly challenged US positions in a SEATO forum, and he condemned the lack of democracy in SEATO's Asian members. Thus, the NSC's extreme views on communism made the US a divider within SEATO, not a uniter, even though it was the member with preponderant military and economic power. This was cancerous to collective security helping the NSC achieve its regional objective.

While most of the scholarship and popular interest about the US' involvement in Vietnam is about President Johnson's decision to escalate in 1965 and the aftermath of that decision, what happened during Eisenhower's presidency was also important. In his first year, the NSC was aware that there was no clear path to defeat communist insurgents, and most Vietnamese would oppose any government that appeared to be controlled by a Western power. Hence, it is hard to imagine any scenario that involved the US backing the French or a Vietnamese leader where the outcome would have been anything other than a stalemate to prevent a communist takeover for as long as the US was willing to commit enough resources to postpone the collapse of the regime it supported. What this dissertation also adds, which has been overlooked, is SEATO's role in destabilizing all of Indochina, which was a factor leading to the insurgency in South Vietnam. A primary grievance in the National Liberation Front's manifesto to announce its official existence was the US and its SEATO allies backing a regime in Laos that the people did not support. In addition, SEATO was the treaty commitment the US used to justify backing South Vietnam.

Two key examples demonstrate how the NSC's inability to use SEATO to achieve its objective for the nations of Southeast Asia caused Eisenhower to completely reverse course and question the NSC's regional policy, even though it did not significantly change officially. First, in 1959, the NSC switched positions on Indonesia from supporting rightwing rebels to the left-leaning neutralist government under Sukarno that the rebels had opposed. This occurred after SEATO could not forge a regional anticommunist identity and get support from Indonesia, which meant the NSC had to turn to unilateral covert operations to try to achieve its regional objective with Indonesia. Second, SEATO would not unanimously consent to undertake counterinsurgency in Laos, and on Eisenhower's last day as president, he acknowledged the merit of what the NSC had been resisting, a freely chosen coalition government could be the best option even if it was led by neutralists and included communists. Thus, with SEATO's limited effectiveness, Eisenhower's thinking evolved. The examples of Indonesia and Laos suggest that Eisenhower seriously questioned the NSC's regional objective to have pro-West nations late in his presidency after he saw the results of trying to override the will of the people in nations in Southeast Asia where neutralism was popular and there was sympathy for communism.

In the final analysis, the main problem was that the NSC set an unrealistic objective for the nations of Southeast Asia if it was going to implement the New Look universally, and Europe was clearly its priority. It would have been a serious challenge for the NSC to completely achieve its objective with any nation in the region and nearly impossible in every nation. The NSC's desire for pro-West nations clashed with the popularity of anti-Westernism, neutrality, and communism in Southeast Asia during the era of decolonization. Anticommunist, pro-West regimes were supported by the US, and in practice, they were authoritarian or corrupt, which was a trend that accelerated after the creation of SEATO. This meant they were not free, and that

caused support for communism and instability. The NSC did not properly account for the desires of the people in the region because they were inconsistent with the New Look's focus on having pro-West nations and the NSC's vision for preventing the domino theory. When the NSC tried to implement its regional policy anyway, it could not overcome the resistance from people who had their own objectives and agency.

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EABT	White House Social Office (A.B. Tolly): Records, 1952-61
ECAH	Herter, Christian A., Under Secretary of State, 1957-59; Secretary of State, 1959-61, Papers, 1957-61
ECWM	McCardle, Carl W.: Papers, 1953-1957
EDAF	Fitzgerald, Dennis A.: Papers, 1945-69
EDDE	Eisenhower, Dwight D.: Papers as President of the United States, 1953-1961 (Ann Whitman File)
EDER	Eisenhower, Dwight D.: Records as President, White House Central Files, 1953-1961
EELD	Dulles, Eleanor Lansing: Papers, 1880-1973
EJCH	Hagerty, James C., Press Secretary to the President: Papers, 1953-61
EJFD	Papers of John Foster Dulles
ENSC	White House Office, National Security Council Staff: Papers, 1953-61
EOMG	Gale, Oliver M.: Papers, 1957-60, 1971, 1974
EOSA	White House Office: Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs: Records
EOSS	White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary: Records, 1952-61
ERNC	Republican National Committee Additional Files of News Clippings

#### *Published Documents*

CHHO	Chatham House, Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, UK.
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States. Documents are identified by the year(s) and volume.
SDPU	State Department Publications. US Government Printing Office, Washington DC.
SETO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, Bangkok, Thailand.

- USSE United States Senate. US Government Printing Office, Washington DC.
- USVR United States – Vietnam Relations, 1945 – 1967. Material is identified by the book and the document if it is applicable.

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