IN SEARCH OF SUPER ASIA
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Examinations of regional politics typically proceed on the assumption that the regional level of analysis is compelling because most actors confine much of their behavior to their immediate geographical niche. Many actors may interact only with adjacent states, but since they usually have multiple proximate states, the resulting clusters of interaction can quickly become more complex and multilateral than a simple pair of states with overlapping borders. Furthermore, those complex interactions are characterized by complementary and competing security and economic interests, alongside varying degrees of hierarchy amongst engaged actors. These regional niches constitute the areas within which most states' politics occur,[1] so given the potential importance of regional niches, how are we to know which clusters are most appropriate and how they might change over time? Where does one region begin and another end? What should we do with states that participate in more than one regional cluster? What should we do with groups of states that are called regions by practically everyone but fail to cluster?

Determining the proper contours of regions is, in itself a challenge, and no clear consensus appears to exist.[2] However, even more potentially challenging is determining how regional spaces change over time, and how the evolution of space affects our understanding of both the international politics of that space as well as comparative regionalist research more broadly. It is on this last question that we focus in this paper, although it clearly overlaps with the questions of identifying subsystems and problems surrounding states that participate in multiple regions. Contrary to most regional lists that fix regional boundaries,[3] there appears in fact to be a far greater degree of flexibility and movement. In constructivist parlance, regions are intersubjective creations (Ruggie 1999, 225): while physical geography changes only slowly, political and economic behavior and the strategies of states can override locational realities.

We explore the evolution of a "Super Asia" region, which we designate as those sovereign states from the contemporary "stans" east. This selection is based on the traditional discussion of a possible Super Asia, originating in British economic and strategic interests in the 19th century, but also consistent with contemporary dialogue surrounding the American "pivot" toward a single Super Asia as the space that "spans two oceans – the Pacific and the Indian" (Clinton 2011). To evaluate the evolution of this region, we use two complementary tools: a review of the historical foreign policy activity in the space for the past two hundred years, and then, using available data from the Cold War onward, we illustrate the decline and rise in regional cohesion using network analysis of foreign policy behaviors to identify politically relevant subgroups (Rhamey 2012, Volgy et al. 2017b). Underlying this development are global and regional shifts in hierarchy, which we identify descriptively as being an important factor driving the cohesion of all states in the Super Asia space. Global major powers and rising major powers interests may nudge foreign policies into more ecumenical behavior within the space during some periods, while creating deep fragmentation and localization of politics during others.

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[1] See for example the importance of regional engagement to identifying regional powers in Cline et al. (2011).
[2] For the large variety of regional categorizations but with no emerging "gold standard" in empirical analyses of international political phenomena, see Volgy et al. 2017a.
[3] For some of the most frequently used, see those by the Correlates of War, the United States State Department, or the World Bank.

Some suggest that the internal politics of regions are significantly impacted by the extent to which a space is "porous", or penetrated by the interference of external powers' engagement with regional powers and their neighborhoods (Katzenstein 2005). We offer in this paper the possibility that the effects of penetration in a space by external powers extend to the evolving geographic contours of the politically relevant region itself. Furthermore, through this initial exploration, we develop a preliminary evaluation of regional transition over time that might be employed more broadly toward developing theories of regional change applicable globally. As such, this paper is but one preliminary step in a broader comparative regionalist endeavor that seeks to generate theoretically interesting findings surrounding regions as substantively relevant to our understanding of the international system.[4]

Whither Super Asia?

How many regions are there in the eastern half of Eurasia? An uninformed student might hazard the guess that there was something called Asia. A better-informed student might rattle off the following candidates: Northwest Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia, with an ambiguous South Pacific grouping including Australia and New Zealand lurking over the southern horizon. One or as many as six, that is the question. Surprisingly, the uninformed student might be closer to the truth. There are certainly many references in the literature to the six, and there are certainly many scholars who have built their careers around understanding these entities as significantly different "areas" for inquiry. But, history and geopolitics suggest otherwise at the international politics level. The compartmentalization of the eastern half of Eurasia into separate regions, we will argue, was a momentary Cold War blip in time. Before the Cold War and afterwards, a super Asia stretching from the Pacific to India appears to be the more accurate way to envision the geographical arena in which east Eurasian states have interacted. It has not always been that way: coalescing in the early 19th century, it disappeared for a few decades during the Cold War, and now seems to be re-emerging.

While changes in regional compensation are perhaps descriptively interesting, understanding what regions exist and how they evolve has important implications for the applicability of regions broadly in international relations research. First, regions have been shown to empirically matter in studies of international politics (Lemke 2003; Volgy et al. 2017b), and thereby their proper delineation is essential for the future of regions as a substantively useful variable. Regions are perhaps increasingly substantively relevant because, while the United States may remain the sole global power, the tools by which states manage international interactions by and large originate at the regional level, granting a diversity in approaches across regions and from which systemic order may originate. Identifying the relevant geographic arenas for the creation of those orders is an important first step. Secondly, pertaining specifically to Asia, is whether the region is doomed to repeat past mistakes or might preserve or improve upon existing levels of stability. The dynamics by which a Super Asia

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[4] It is worth noting, however, that while this approach to understanding clustering in international politics may have important consequences for comparative regionalist analysis, as well as international relations research seeking to substantively understand the impact of regions, it is certainly not the only approach to understanding regions. Others, such as cultural designations in area studies, may be of greater relevance to certain types of research questions. Our own inquiry, however, is motivated by a desire to understand how and to what extent international politics operates in regional niches.

coalesces and is stable are important for uncovering how stability or instability may develop into the 21st century.

Fundamentally, a region in international politics is a cluster of states whose characteristics and interactions with one another are somehow unique from the broader international system. To identify such clusters in a way usable to an analysis of regional cohesion and change, we assess both descriptively and analytically the on and off again presence of a super-Asian region by evaluating the behaviors of states within the potential regional space along two dimensions: (1) to what extent do states in the potential Super Asian space engage one another, creating increasing regional cohesion, and how does such cohesion change over time? and (2) to the extent there are changes in regional cohesion, what possible causes may relate to these changes?

Regions are neither fixed structures nor ontological truths "out there" in world politics (Lewis and Wigen, 1997). While cultural cohesion is slow moving and may provide the backdrop to some foreign policy behaviors, politically relevant regions should be thought of as processes that emerge as a consequence of the "interaction capacity" of the states concerned, whether economic or security centric (or perhaps both).[5] While it is widely accepted that a cultural Asia and an economic Asia have a deep historical presence in the region,[6] we contend that for much of the last two centuries a strategic Asia has been in place as well because a sequence of policy decisions constructed to achieve decision-maker goals.

In the ideal, whether arrived at descriptively or analytically, a clear, unquestionable identification of Super Asia would be a group of states that actively engage one another, with significant foreign policy activity (cooperative or conflictual) mutually flowing from one state to another, but not engaging any other outside group (see Figure 1, where each node represents a state). Likewise, there is clearly an absence of Super Asia if there are multiple clusters of states that exist which lack ties with one another, or if some number of states lack clear ties altogether with potential Super Asia region members (Figure 2). Reality is of course far more fluid than these simple characterizations, but the extent to which the group of possible Super Asian states more closely resembles Figure 1 than Figure 2 over time may provide some barometer of its evolution.

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[5] On the interaction capacity in international systems, see Buzan and Little (2000: 91-96).

[6] For example, Buddhism created a cultural Asia that remained in place for nearly a millennia-and-a-half, while an economic Asia existed both before and during the period of European domination.

Figure 1: The Ideal Region
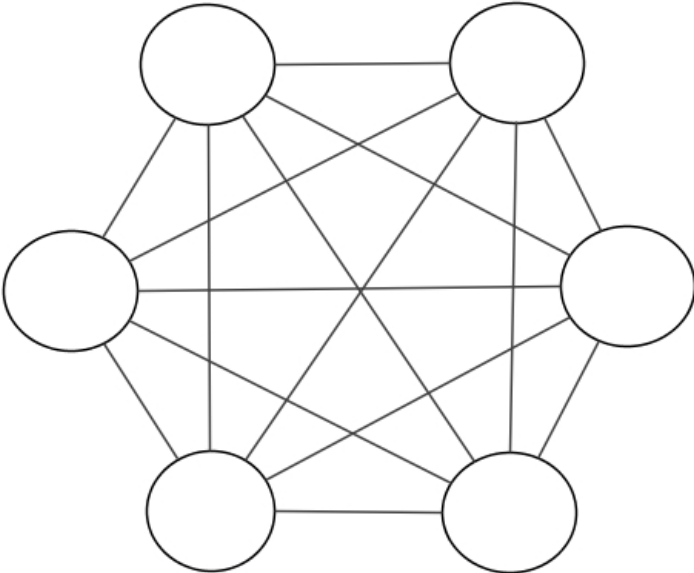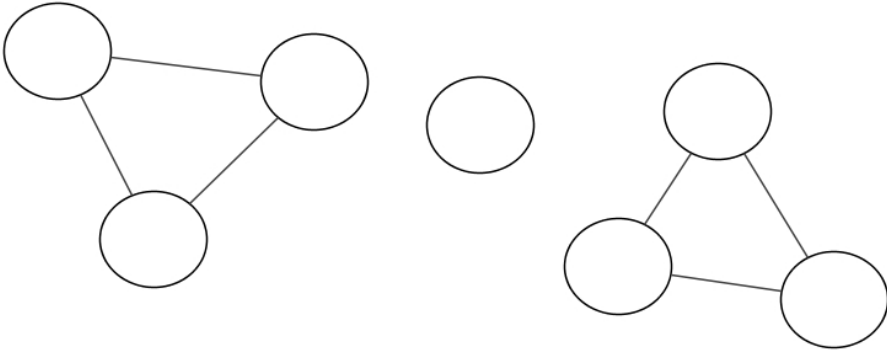
Single Regional Space

Figure 2: A Fragmented Region with Border State

Two Regional Spaces with Border State

We will argue that the 1960s more closely resembles Figure 2 as a space comprised of distinct groupings of Northeast, Southeast, and South Asia, but those groups in the post-Cold War era are merging into a single geopolitical unit more consistent with Figure 1. Contributing to this process are both the strategic interests of the United States, like Britain in the 19th century, as well as internal interactions of region members and Super Asia's emerging regional powers, China and India. At the same time, these factors pulling Super Asia together are not entirely new: British strategic interests and engagement with India and China during the nineteenth century similarly defined a relatively singular geopolitical space.

The story of the rise, decline, and recent resurgence of "Super Asia's" contours is one of external interference by major powers alongside the emergence of regional powers – a process of creation from within and without. As a general trend, the unchallenged strategic engagement of Britain (through British India) and more recently the United States grant the geographic space a broader cohesion, whereas the conflictual divisions developed with the defeat of the Japanese Empire and the segmenting of the space into spheres of influence managed by regional actors and the engagement in the porous region by competing external major powers divided the region into more localized camps. Now that the power asymmetry within the region has declined with China and India's rise, will the cohesiveness of a possible Super Asia continue to solidify, or will internal security challenges, along with the interference of external actors, create new fault lines in the 21st century?

British India, Qing China, and Strategic Asia

While scholars have long-recognized the "East Indies" stretching from "Calcutta to Canton" and including "the Indian Ocean and the East Asian littoral, fading into the South China Seas somewhere over what we would call the Western Pacific," as a single economic unit (Fichter, 2010:3), the extant literature has ignored the fact that this region also constituted an integrated strategic unit. The origin of this strategic system has its roots in the command that Britain wielded over India's finances (through taxation) and manpower (in the British Indian army).[7] Recent scholarship on Britain's global empire (Darwin, 2009:1,4) has recognized the crucial role played by the "sub-empire" of India that served to maintain the region's porousness "as the main base from which British interests in Asia could be advanced and defended. Indian soldiers and a British garrison paid for by Indian revenues were the 'strategic reserve' of the British system in Asia."

The pivotal nature of India in maintaining British military and economic influence in the strategically important super Asian space is reflected in crucial nature of India in British power projection. While British India managed its own foreign affairs, especially as they pertained to Southeast Asia and China, it remained subordinate to the interests of Britain and was the locus of British control extending into Southeast Asia.[8] From 1808 onwards, Indian soldiers participated

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[7] In contrast, the Ming naval expeditions did not create a single strategic unit here for there was no meaningful interaction between the Ming Empire and the Delhi Sultanate, the most important power on the subcontinent. Even the later Portuguese thrust into this part of Asia did not create a single strategic system as Portuguese (and European) power remained marginal to Asian strategic affairs until 1750. See Lach (1965:, xiii).

[8] British India also had another "sub-empire" in the Middle East and East Africa. However, this system constituted a distinct strategic region from the one in Asia. Regions are relational and emerge out of mutual interaction. There is no evidence that the polities in the Middle East or East Africa thought or behaved as if their security was interlinked with that of the polities in East Asia or vice versa.

in every Anglo-Chinese military encounter until the Second World War (Hartfield, 1990), providing roughly half (10,000) of the troops during the First Opium War (Matzke 2011:41).

Later, with a total of 18,000 troops, India (as a part of the British expeditionary forces) provided the second-largest number of allied troops after Japan for the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion in 1898-1901 (Hartfield, 1990). Indians also worked in all of Britain's treaty ports in China as policemen, watchmen, and security guards (see Thampi, 2005: 140-178). In fact, by the 1930s, Indians were the "fourth largest foreign community" in China behind the Japanese, the Russians, and the British (Markovits, 2000: 59). So crucial was the role of India in British strategy towards China that the noted French Sinologist Louis Dermigny (1964: 781) has argued that Britain dominated India simply to use its resources against China.

As evidence for the relative strategic unity of the region, Qing China realized that the threat that the empire faced along all three of its major frontiers - on land in Xinjiang and Tibet, and on the maritime frontier in the South China Sea - emanated from British India (Mosca, 2013). Writing immediately after the First Opium War, Hsü Chi-Yü, the foremost Qing "barbarian expert", noted that Britain, which consisted merely "of three islands, simply a handful of stones", had suddenly become "rich and strong" because Britain's "power … lies in the five Indias."[9] In fact, Wei Yuan, another notable Qing "barbarian expert", even conceived of a grand alliance with the western powers in Asia (Russia, America, and France) and with Qing tributaries in Nepal, Burma, Siam, and Annam to destroy the British power in India by land and at sea (Mosca, 2013: 287-288). While this alliance remained in the realm of wishful thinking, prominent Chinese leaders continued to think of this region as a single strategic unit even in the early 20th century.[10]

Rise of Japan and World War II

Maintaining the preliminary cohesiveness of the region, Japan managed its own rise as a regional and then major power through an alliance with Britain. While Russian expansionism was certainly one of the motivators for the Anglo-Japanese alliance that was signed in 1902, it had clear implications for the regional space: recognition of the "independence" of China and Britain's position in India. In fact, between 1905 and 1911, Japan even agreed to come to the defense of British India if its security was threatened (Best, 2004: 236-248).

By 1923, however, the Anglo-Japanese alliance was terminated, ushering in Japanese expansion into China and Southeast Asia, creating the coming strategic theater of the Second World War.[11] A day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, British India declared war on Japan. Notably, Japanese grand strategy in the Second World War was conceived at the Indo-Pacific level and included the separation of India and Australia from Britain as well as assisting Indian independence.[12] By the end of that month, the Indian soldiers of Raj, stationed in Hong Kong and fighting against an expanding Japan, surrendered. Later, Japanese soldiers continued to fight the Indian troops of the Raj in Southeast Asia as well. Japan

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[9] Quoted in Ssu-Yu Teng and Fairbank (1965:42-43). Since ancient times, the Chinese had divided India into five regions - north, south, east, west, and central India.

[10] See, for example, Sun Zhongshan argument of the centrality of India to British power (Sun Yat-sen 1994: 161-162).

[11] While India and Australia were never a part of the Japanese Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere (even as India featured prominently in the cultural "pan-Asia" of Japanese thought – see Bharucha, 2006), the Indo-Pacific was the strategic theater of the Second World War in Asia

[12] On this Imperial Conference decision of 15 November 1941, see Lebra (2008: 64).

even helped establish the Indian National Army that was initially composed of British Indian prisoners of war in Southeast Asia as a consequence of this strategic goal. While India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands were captured, Japan was finally defeated in Burma (and in Imphal and Kohima in northeastern India) with Indian resources as it "was Indian soldiers, civilian laborers and businessmen who made possible the victory of 1945" in Southeast Asia (Bayly and Harper, 2005).

The porousness of the region from external major powers also began to experience a transition from British economic and security interests toward those of the United States. However, much like Britain, the U.S. continued to view Super Asian space as a relatively singular geopolitical unit. For example, the Indian Agent-General in Washington stressed during the war the strategic importance of India in the context of the developments in the "Far East" and as a supply base to China in his conversations with American government officials (as opposed to the British who saw a bigger role for India in the Middle East, see US. Department of State, 1942: 593-598). Furthermore, between 1942 and 1945, American soldiers trained up to 66,000 Nationalist Chinese troops in Ramgarh, India, who re-entered China by air over "the hump" (across the Himalayas) or via the Ledo/Stillwell Road (from northeastern India into southwestern China via Burma) to fight the Japanese (White, 1972: 136-137). The cost of training and supplying these soldiers was underwritten by British India in return for America's defense-industrial assistance.

Evaluating Region-ness in the Post-World War II Era

Beginning in the 1950s, data on the capabilities and foreign policy interactions of independent states emerges, allowing for an analytical assessment of relative "region-ness" of Super Asia in addition to a historical account. In so doing, we evaluate regional cohesion in the potential super Asia space using network measures to descriptively identify the extent of mutual engagement in the foreign policy behaviors of potential Super Asia members and external major powers, consistent with previous evaluations of regions (Cline et al. 2011; Rhamey et al. 2014). To identify this engagement, we follow the approach of the Regions of Opportunity and Willingness data (Rhamey 2012; Volgy et al. 2017b) and use scaled events data from the Conflict and Peace Data Bank (COPDAB) (Azar 1980) and the Integrated Data for Events Analysis (IDEA) dataset (Bond et al. 2003)[13] for the time periods 1950-1978 and 1990-2010. Two states receive a "tie" between them if they surpass the minimal threshold of foreign policy activity flowing from one to another totaling an above average proportion of their total, global foreign policy activity within each year. While some comparative regionalist research restricts identification of regions by either conflictual (Buzan and Waever 2003) or cooperative interactions (Powers and Goertz 2011), following Rhamey (2012) and Volgy et al. (2017b) we remain ambivalent as to the type of the foreign policy engagement being a necessary prerequisite to regional formation, but instead contend that there may be regional spaces that are predominantly cooperative and others that are predominantly conflictual, and that variance both across regions and over time is potentially of substantive interest. Table 1 provides the total number of clusters, or regions, identified by this method as well as Super Asia's "region cohesion", defined as the proportion of non-isolate states that are members of the largest region in the "stans" east, denoting the extent to which a cohesive, unbroken Super Asian space may

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[13] We use the 0 to 14 scale from most conflictual to most cooperative for COPDAB, and the 20 point -10 to 10 scale from Goldstein (1992) for IDEA.

exist or if the space is alternatively fragmented across separate unique clusters.[14] Note, the process of rapid post-colonialization in the region dramatically expands the number of micro-states in the area during the latter time periods, creating a number of isolates, or states with no ties to any other state as shown in Appendix B.[15] In order to prevent these isolates from driving down our assessment of regional cohesion, we drop them from our calculations, with the expectation that the inability of Palau or Nauru to actively engage their most proximate neighbors is not necessarily representative of the extent to which a strategically relevant Super Asia exists to active region members.

In addition to assessing cohesiveness for each period, we determine the centrality of prominent regional actors, constituting rising or potential regional powers given their capabilities to determine the extent to which some regional actors may be playing a role in Super Asia's development (Table 2). Further, we also include the foreign policy engagement of the United States, across both cooperation and conflictual foreign policy, flowing toward states within Super Asian to determine the role of the external major power in its development (Table 3). These analytical findings, alongside our historical account, demonstrates that a relatively more even distribution of ties between key regional actors (reminiscent of the conceptual diagram in figure 1) alongside increased cooperative foreign policy engagement by the United States appears to coincide with a more cohesive Super Asian space.

Table 1: Regional Cohesion in Super Asia across Five Time Periods

Time Period	Isolates	Regions	Region Cohesion
1950-1960	4	2	.82
1961-1972	6	3	.40
1973-1978	10	2	.53
1990-2000	13	3	.60
2001-2010	21	2	.71

Table 2: Centrality of Prominent Regional Actors, # of 1ˢᵗ Degree Ties

	1950-1960	1961-1972	1973-1978	1990-2000	2001-2010
Australia	3	7	7	15	9
China	8	10	9	15	12
India	7	8	10	11	11
Indonesia	8	8	6	11	11
Japan	9	12	5	16	10

Table 3: Proportion of American Foreign Policy Activity Directed at Super Asian Space

	Conflict	Cooperation	Total
1950-1960	.35	.27	.28
1961-1972	.63	.33	.43
1973-1978	.40	.19	.24
1990-2000	.26	.30	.29
2001-2010	.31	.36	.34

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[14]A list and maps of these regional spaces are provided in Appendix A.

[15] Note, there are some important non-micro-state exception, specifically Australia, discussed further below.

The Early Cold War (until the mid-1960s)

All of the major powers continued to treat Asia as a single strategic unit from the early postwar years until the 1960s, though the divisions that would characterize the latter half of the Cold War, including decolonization and external military intervention, began to develop as post-World War security concerns gave way to the challenges of global bipolarity. This was also true of Britain, which had created the Southeast Asia Command (SEAC) during the Second World War.[16] British-Indian soldiers (including those from SEAC) were involved in British efforts to restore Indo-China to French colonial rule and the East Indies to the Dutch in 1945-46. At the same time, they were also involved with disarming Japanese soldiers in these regions and in Thailand, and in the repatriation of the Japanese prisoners of war (Prasad, 1958). Furthermore, the Indian soldiers of the Raj constituted almost a third of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan itself along with another third from Australia/New Zealand (Prasad, 1958:57). Given the important role that it had played in Second World War, the soon-to-be independent India thought of itself as the "policeman and arsenal of the East" in early 1946 in the words of the senior Congress leader Asaf Ali who was appointed as independent India's first ambassador to the United States later that year. Soon after independence and long before America's recent "pivot" to Asia, Nehru asserted that "the future of Asia will be powerfully determined by the future of India. India becomes more and more the *pivot* of Asia (Gopal, 1979: 59). Nehru (1950:329) not only thought of India as the "pivotal centre … in terms of [the] defence" of South and Southeast Asia, but also believed (Nehru, 1985: 536) that India "would inevitably exercise an important influence" in the Pacific. Importantly, early independent India tried to play a role commensurate with that idea.

The fault lines of Super Asia that would later emerge have some precedence immediately following the War. After the interim government of India assumed power in September 1946 in the run-up to Indian independence, Jawaharlal Nehru, who headed this government, issued orders to the Indian troops to return home (by the end of 1947). Even after India's independence in 1947, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Burma, Nepal, Tibet, and Sri Lanka were added in the "South-East Asia" section of the British Foreign Office along with Thailand, Indo-China, and the Dutch East Indies (Nong Van Dan, 2010: 29).

However, in January 1949, India's strategic view of a unified Asia remained consistent, organizing the first conference of Asian states to deal with a specific Asian issue - Indonesian independence. India not only played a leading diplomatic role along with Australia for Indonesia's independence but Indian aircraft also made several sorties in the late 1940s in defiance of the Dutch air blockade to supply the Indonesians fighting the Dutch "police action". In fact, Biju Patnaik, a prominent leader of the Indian National Congress personally flew to Indonesia to fly out the Indonesian leaders Sutan Syahrir and Muhammad Hatta to India where they were given temporary refuge (Ton, 1963: 85-118). A month after the Conference on Indonesia, India organized a Conference of Commonwealth countries on Burma to discuss that country's internal security and economic issues, which suffered from similarly limited to a small portion of what would be construed as Super Asia. Following this, Burma became the first

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[16] The SEAC was headquartered in Sri Lanka and included India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Australia's Christmas Island, the not-yet-independent Maldives, and all of the states that comprise "Southeast Asia" today with the exception of the Philippines. In fact, the Philippines was sometimes included as a part of Latin America because of its orientation towards Spanish-America and then towards the United States. This example further illustrates that regions (in this case Southeast Asia) are not "natural" as is oftentimes implicitly assumed.

country to receive arms, ammunition, and transport planes from India, and New Delhi also cancelled all the debts owed by Burma to India incurred during its separation from British India in 1937 (Ton, 1963: 150-184).

Furthermore, India became the first country in postwar/postcolonial Asia to have its own protectorates after signing treaties with Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikkim in 1949-50 that made the foreign and security policies of these states subordinate to India's. While New Delhi rejected Burma's request of an alliance of Southeast Asian countries to be led by India in 1947 and 1949, India continued to counsel Burma in its foreign affairs (Gopal, 1992: 505). By 1951, the American government (CIA, 1951) speculated about India's military intervention in Burma in the event of an open intervention by Communist Chinese forces in that country (as many Nationalist troops had fled into Burma during the final days of the Chinese Civil War). In 1951, India signed friendship treaties with Burma and Indonesia that had security-related undertones, and the friendship treaty signed with the Philippines in 1952 was tantamount to a non-aggression pact. Not surprisingly, China believed that India was in the process of creating an "Asiatic Military Alliance" to check the spread of Communism in Asia (no author, 1949: 13).

Notably, Britain and the United States were even willing to consider an Indian, in lieu of an American, role in Laos and Cambodia to prevent against Communist domination, especially because Nehru felt that these states belonged "to the sphere of Indian culture" in the mid-1950s (Nong, 2010:172). As a result of India's active diplomatic role in Indo-China, all three International Commissions of Supervision and Control that were created in 1954 in Geneva were headed by an Indian chairman. That Asia represented a single strategic unit at this point was also apparent during the creation of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) by the United States in 1954 to check Chinese Communism in Asia (Fenton, 2012). Apart from the United States, Britain (in Malaya), and France (in Indo-China), the rest of the member states of SEATO were the Indo-Pacific states of Pakistan, Australia, and New Zealand along with only two states from what we consider Southeast Asia today - Thailand and the Philippines.

The Korean War (1950-53) continued to highlight the porous and unified nature of a strategic Super Asia. Given that China and the United States did not have formal diplomatic links at this time, India played the role of an interlocutor between these states during the war. New Delhi also played a leading role at the United Nations during the postwar Korean settlement. Notably, 6,000 Indian troops and administrative personnel led by Indian officers landed in South Korea and implemented the exchange of some 23,000 prisoners of war (Heimsath, 1956). At the same time, India also signed a separate peace treaty with Japan in 1952 after rejecting the "unequal" San Francisco Peace Treaty (SFPT). New Delhi not only waived all wartime reparations owed by Tokyo but India also granted Japan the most-favored-nation status which was refused to Tokyo by the signatories of the SFPT. This treaty heralded Japan's "return to Asia" after the war as it helped Japan in its negotiations with Burma, Indonesia, and the Philippines which were then underway (Sato, 2005).

Under Nehru's leadership, Japan was also invited to the 1955 Bandung Conference even as Japan became a member of the United Nations only in 1956. Nehru also introduced Communist China, and its Premier Zhou Enlai, to Asia and the world at Bandung (as Beijing had emerged as a pariah in large parts of Asia after 1949). In fact, the United States feared that that an "Eastern Bloc" led by India and China was emerging at Bandung that would be inimical to America's Cold War priorities (Parker, 2006). While Sino-Indian tensions that were apparent at Bandung itself as well as anti-communism in Southeast Asia prevented the emergence of this "Eastern Bloc," Asia was conceived as a single strategic unit until the early 1960s.

Regional Fragmentation and the Cold War

On the eve of the 1962 Sino-Indian War, the divisions that would characterize the remainder of the Cold War became apparent. India informed China that the eight-year long 1954 Sino-Indian agreement on Tibet would not be renewed until status quo ante (as perceived by India) was restored along the Sino/Tibetan-Indian border after arguing that this agreement was meant to maintain peace not only between China and India, "but also … [in] South East Asia" (Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 1961-1962). As shown in Table 3, American conflictual behavior in the region spikes, mostly due to the Vietnam War, but also due to heterogeneous engagement with important regional players. During the 1962 Sino-Indian War, for example, the United States not only provided military assistance to India, but even informed the Chinese that it was sending an aircraft carrier to the Bay of Bengal. (Hoffman, 1990: 196-210). However, India's disastrous defeat in 1962 meant that India could no longer provide military leadership in Southeast Asia as New Delhi itself needed external assistance to meet the challenge from Beijing. As such, India was eliminated from the ranks of an Asian regional power, resulting in a deterioration of regional engagement in Southeast Asia. At the same time, Washington was getting seriously involved with the Vietnam War while becoming disinterested in South Asia due to New Delhi's strong objections against American intervention in Vietnam, further exacerbating rising fragmentation as American strategic interests became more narrowly focused on smaller regional subgroups in contradiction to the broader articulation of singular regional space during the 1950s and the British era.

Internally, the emergence of the Association of Southeast Asia in 1961 and then the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967 meant that Asia was finally being "split" into distinct strategic theaters of South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Northeast Asia for the rest of the Cold War that we are all too familiar with today.[17] By the 1970s, following American withdrawal from Vietnam, American engagement reaches a low point in the post-Cold War era (Table 3). Internally, while India and China remain strongly engaged (Table 2), other key players experience a rapid decline in their interconnectedness within the Super Asian space. Divisions that developed between sub-groups were accentuated by the economic stagnation in South and Southeast Asia, while the economies of Northeast and Southeast Asia took off and Australia and New Zealand focused their activity extra-regionally. Finally, the division of Asia (and the world) into distinct sub-regions according to America's Cold War priorities and the consequent emergence of area studies programs in American academia consolidated the boundaries of these sub-regions of Asia (Lewis and Wigen, 1997: 157-188).

While strategic links between Asia's distinct sub-regions continued after the 1960s (for instance the Sino-Pakistani nuclear and missile nexus), these links are quite limited, and this larger strategic Asia did not form a single geopolitical unit for the great powers for the remainder of the Cold War except for during moments of crises such as the 1971 Bangladesh War when an America-China-Pakistan alignment emerged against the Indo-Soviet entente. However, by the end of the Cold War, Asia was in the midst of fundamental economic transformation. China was

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[17] However, this split emerged only gradually and the boundaries of the regions that thus formed were fuzzy in the beginning. Sri Lanka (in contemporary South Asia) and Papua New Guinea (in contemporary Oceania) were both viable candidates for ASEAN membership in its early years. In the mid-1960s, Singapore encouraged India to respond with its own nuclear test in the aftermath of China's 1964 nuclear explosion. Singapore not only asked for Indian military assistance to help train the new state's armed forces after 1965 but was even open to an Indian naval presence in the region.

more than a decade into its dramatic economic reforms when the Cold War ended, while India had just begun the process of embracing the market after shedding its socialist shibboleths. This economic transformation of Asia that began the process of blurring the sub-regional boundaries and is heralding the re-emergence of the Indo-Pacific-Asia.

Re-Emergence of Super Asia Following the Cold War

In 1991-92, India launched its "Look East" policy to promote greater economic and strategic integration with its eastern neighbors (Saint-Mezard, 2006). At the same time, given its growing dependence on the sea-lanes in the Indian Ocean region for energy resources from the Persian Gulf to fuel its rapidly growing economy, General Zhao Nanqi, the director of the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences asserted in 1993 that China "was not prepared to let the Indian Ocean become India's Ocean" (quoted in Roy, 1998:170). By the end of the 1990s, the Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto was arguing that Japan did not want to see "China and India … struggle for hegemony in Asia … in the 21st century" (quoted in Togo, 2007: 89). It is these nascent processes led by Asia's leading powers - India, China, and Japan - that laid the foundations of the re-emergent Super Asia.

Asia's strategic geography will not be limited to the maritime realm alone. After all, even the historical strategic Asia had both maritime and continental dimensions seen in the British India-Qing China relations or in the Burma-India-China theater of the Second World War, where the Japanese forces were being supplied and maintained by Japan's naval power. There is no doubt that the rise of China and India is gradually transforming them into important naval powers in the region. However, Asia's giants will continue to remain continental powers too. Notably, scholars of geopolitics have long recognized the interdependence of land and sea power.

China and India's maritime interests are already well-known in the literature on the Indo-Pacific (and will not be discussed at length here in the interests of space, see, for instance, Mohan 2012). For example, China worries about its "Malacca Dilemma" in the context of its vulnerability in the Malacca Strait through which more than 80% of China's oil imports pass. More recently, China announced (Krishnan, 2014) a $1.6 billion fund in support of its "maritime silk route" project to build commercial ports and enhance connectivity with Southeast Asia and the countries of the Indian Ocean Region. Similarly, more than half of India's total foreign trade passes through the Strait of Malacca. India's largest overseas offshore oil and gas fields in Russia's Sakhalin region have to travel through the South China Sea before passing through the Strait of Malacca to supply India (Dutta, 2006). At the same time, India is also engaged in hydrocarbon exploration along with Vietnam in the South China Sea in a region disputed with China (Bhaumik, 2013). It is natural that Asia's rising giants will invest in their naval (and air) power capabilities in tandem with their growing commercial and energy interests like all other great powers have in the past.

However, many of Asia's emerging trade and energy corridors are not purely maritime routes. China has cultivated ties with Myanmar and Pakistan in an attempt to reduce its Malacca Dilemma.[18] A natural gas pipeline connecting Yunnan and other parts of southwestern China with Kyaukpyu on the western coast of Myanmar became fully operational in late 2013 (BBC News, 2013). Similarly, the Karakoram Highway already connects China's Xinjiang with

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[18] While ameliorating China's Malacca Dilemma, China's approach towards Myanmar and Pakistan does not decrease the importance of the Indian Ocean as oil and gas will still need to be shipped via the (greater) Indian Ocean sea lanes to the ports of these countries before being transported overland to China.

Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa regions, and plans are underway to connect the highway to the Pakistani port city of Gwadar at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. Work has also begun on connecting southern China with Singapore via several countries in Southeast Asia by a high-speed rail network to ease the flow of goods and people between these countries by 2020 (People's Daily, 2011). China is also planning on connecting Xinjiang with Gwadar via a rail link (Ng, 2013).

On its part, India is also promoting land-connectivity with Southeast Asia. A highway linking northeast India with Thailand via Myanmar is expected to be ready by 2016 (Reddy, 2013). Initial plans are also underway to extend this highway to Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam (Livemint, 2014). Another ambitious project (Mohan, 2012) includes the combination of a maritime corridor from southern India to Dawei in Myanmar and a land corridor from there into Thailand (and beyond). Both Japan and United States are also promoting better connectivity between India and Southeast Asia (Bagchi, 2014). In a significant recent development (Krishnan, 2013), India and China have also begun to explore overland connectivity through Myanmar and Bangladesh through an initiative that will have a major impact on all of their economies if successfully implemented.

Given their emerging land-based connections, the integration of economic interests drives the importance of the security of these routes as significant concerns for China and India. For example, the Chinese army has been undergoing intense training near the Myanmar-China border since 2013 as a result of the ongoing ethnic conflict between Myanmar's government and the Kachin state. While the possibility of the ethnic conflict spilling over into China is real, the gas pipeline to China also passes through this state (Xin and Li, 2012; Wong, 2013). China is already believed (Harrison, 2010) to have anywhere between 4,000-11,000 soldiers of the People's Liberation Army - presumably from the engineering corps - in Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan region working on road and railway projects.

But trade and energy networks are not the only factors that highlight the continental dimensions of strategic Asia, but also territorial confrontations. Much as 19th century territorial issues with the British Empire facilitated the view of a broad Asian strategic space, so ongoing territorial and resource issues may create a unified, albeit conflictual, focus around which regional players in a politically relevant region may coalesce. There are at least three other important features: the Sino-Indian border dispute, the status of Tibet, and water security in Asia. The Chinese military incursion into Ladakh in Indian-Kashmir in 2013 highlighted the continued strategic salience of the world's longest unmarked border. Indian strategists (Joshi, 2013) have already begun to debate whether it is in their interests to respond to China's intrusions along their common land frontiers by bolstering India's naval presence on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, given that India enjoys an edge over China around the Malacca Strait. With India's only tri-services military base at Port Blair on the Andamans, and the United States able to blockade the Malacca Strait along with the littoral states, China's Second Artillery Force is investing in long-range precision-strike capabilities to be able to target this region from China's interior provinces in order to reduce its vulnerability there (Stokes, 2012). These developments along the Malacca Strait are arguably the most dramatic example of the interconnectedness of land power and seapower in strategic Asia.

The Tibet-factor also affects the contours of strategic Asia and highlights the continental dimensions of military power. China's growing rail and air connectivity with Tibet has strategic consequences for not just India but also for Southeast Asia (Lin, 2011). Any Chinese military activity in Tibet has consequences for Sino-Indian relations given that the China-India border is

essentially the Tibet-India border and because the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government-in-exile reside in India along with thousands of Tibetan refugees. However, given that most of South and Southeast Asia's major rivers (such as the Brahmaputra, Mekong, and Salween) originate in Tibet, and that China has plans to build dams and divert these water resources, it has been argued that China's growing military infrastructure in Tibet "complicate[s] the planning of other water claimants downstream, in much the same way as more robust PLA [People's Liberation Army] presence in the disputed areas of the East and South China Sea raise concerns by other disputants" (Kamphausen, 2013). So even without factoring in the India-Pakistan relations (and China's role in that triangle) or China's response to the developments on the Korean peninsula, Asia's (re)emergent strategic reality is continental as well as maritime.

We have argued that with the exception of the last three decades of the Cold War, Asia's three sub-regions (South, Southeast, and Northeast Asia) and two oceans (Indian and Western Pacific) have constituted a single strategic unit for close to two centuries. This broader strategic Asia that emerged as a consequence of sustained politico-military interactions between its constituent units was a continental as well as a maritime system. Similarly, the Super Asia that has been reconstituting itself since the end of the Cold War is re-emerging due to the growing politico-military processes in this region. As such, Super Asia is hardly "new" or "unnatural"; in fact, it represents the return of history.

While the United States plays an important role in maintaining the process of coalescence in Super Asia, just as it played a pivotal role in the fragmentation of the 1960s and 70s, it cannot alone define the strategic contours of Asia. Competition between prominent regional actors in the extent to which the states are relatively central to the broader network is key to defining the space.[19] Japan dominated the position of centrality in both the early time periods (Table 2), in part due to the backing of the United States but also in terms of its overall economic development status at the end of the Cold War. China, however, gained the spot of most central state in the 2001-2010 time period, albeit with a relatively evenly distributed engagement with Japan, India, Indonesia, and Australia.

Rising regional and major powers China and India are at the forefront of the processes that are redefining strategic Asia, albeit remaining within their distinct areas of influence for the time being, as Japan, Asia's other leading power, is already thinking in Super Asia terms as it tries to emerge as a "normal" military power. Furthermore, consistent with previous discussion of the rising economic and security integration both over land and sea, this Chinese-Japanese cluster is making in-roads into key historical neighbors of India – Nepal, Myanmar, and Bangladesh. The reorientation of Japan toward the region is a departure from its previous, extra-regional focus during the Cold War, and it will be interesting to see if Australia likewise follows suit.[20] In particular, Japanese policymakers (Abe, 2012) have shown an interest in developing strategic links with other regional democracies - the United States, Australia, and India - in the form of a "democratic security diamond" to hedge against the rise of China. Asia's medium

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[19] Obviously, China and Japan are not the only important players in the space, though they are most consistently at the core of the space across all time periods. During most of the Cold War, Australia is completely disengaged, and only tangentially engaged in the latter period (and even so, not consistently, see Volgy et al. 2015). Indonesia experiences similar peripheral behaviors, albeit less detached, and India, while important, emerges at the head of a separate South Asian subgroup in the post-Cold War period as depicted in Appendix A, and identified in the clique analysis.

[20] A recent analysis of regional foreign policy engagement by regional and major powers found that Japan was unique as a major power in not also engaging in significant activity toward its regional space apart from the international system (Cline et al. 2011).

powers such as Australia (Australian Department of Defense, 2013) and Indonesia (Natalegawa, 2013) are either already making official statements using the term "Indo-Pacific," or are thinking in terms of a broader strategic Super Asia even when not using this term. For example, Singapore has brought India into its idea of strategic Asia out of balance-of-power considerations (Goh, 2005), while South Korea had also begun to think in terms of a larger Asia because of its growing energy needs, the North Korea-Pakistan nuclear axis, and because it plans to play a more proactive international role (Chung, 2011).

Conclusions: Looking Forward

As we have demonstrated, an important contributing factor to regional development appears to be the rise of regional powers and the relative porousness of the region(s) to external major power interference. Rather than taking the region as fixed and looking at state or dyadic behavior (for instance, Solingen 2007), we can evaluate the impact of the broader multilateral behaviors described here on the overall stability, conflict, organization, and architecture that may emerge within the regional space. Applying similar criteria to other regions, whether the Middle East or Europe, and then comparing them to the super Asian development described here may provide insights into the requisite causal factors necessary for the attainment of certain regional outcomes. As with super Asia, those implications may be due either to its coalescence or fragmentation. While comparison of regions, independent of identification method, has been of rising interest in IR research, greater attention to the formation of multilateral behaviors over time – or how regions rise and fall – is likely to be a fruitful avenue for future research and, possibly, of great import to the future of the international system.

To the extent a super Asia is emerging, the evolutionary process still has some way to go. The descriptive rise and fall of cohesion in what may constitute a Super Asia coincides with the rising importance of certain regional players and the ways in which external major powers engage the space, as described previously. While during no time period does a single Super Asia perfectly exist, the closest periods to the ideal are in the 1950s and 2000s (Table 1), where the number of regions is limited to only 2, and the proportion of active states in the largest region is at its peak. Though the levels of regional cohesion have not returned to those observed in the first full decade of the Cold War, the latest time period shows significantly higher levels of regional cohesion than any point since, with 71% of all region members falling within the largest regional cluster, which includes China and Japan. However, the remaining 29% of actively engaged states appear within a separate South Asian region that includes India, the most notable difference from the more encompassing regional space from the 1950s which included all non-isolates with the exception of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Interesting is the behavior of Australia. While loosely involved in the most recent time period in a very peripheral sense, it fails to engage the proximate clique including China and Japan. While Australia does have ties to other states in the area, as illustrated in Figure 7, it does not have ties uniquely apart from others in the international system, given the relatively dramatic degree of Australian extra-regional foreign policy activity. The result is that Australia remains somewhat torn between the local space and the broader system, not residing within the identified East Asian clique in a majority of years in the ten year period.

While local actors within Super Asia may continue to operate mostly within relevant "neighborhoods" of South Asia, Southeast Asia, or Northeast Asia, the relevant region seems to be increasingly defined by developing issues involving regional powers and the United States. Overall, American conflict appears to correspond with a decrease in the observed levels of

regional cohesion. Notably, the most fragmented periods correspond with American military intervention in Southeast Asia. Following the Cold War, where on balance American foreign policy takes on a relatively more cooperative nature, the levels of regional cohesion appear to be somewhat less than the peak of the Cold War, with the 2001-2010 period reaching a cooperative maximum. As Japan "normalizes" and the United States remains not only the foremost military power in the region but also the primary economic player, no regional order (whether a balance-of-power system, a concert of powers, an institutional arrangement, or some combination thereof) will be stable without the active participation of these two states along with China and India. Given the interdependence of maritime and continental powers discussed above and the fact that China and India are more active in only one of Southeast Asia's two interconnected maritime theaters (China in the South China Sea and India in the Malacca Strait), the Indo-Pacific-Asia is the region's new strategic reality, especially because it is also acceptable to region's medium powers. Finally, it is important to note the politico-economic roots of this Indo-Pacific-Asia. This region first emerged as a single strategic unit around the time of the "great divergence" between the west and the rest (including Asia) almost two centuries ago. It was the rising power of Britain (through its Indian base) that initially created this region. After a hiatus of three decades or so during the Cold War, this region is now re-emerging as a single strategic unit in the context of an emerging "convergence" between Asia and the West which has just begun (Wolf, 2011). Its re-emergence is being led by the rise of China and India, joined perhaps by a re-engaged Japan.[21]

Although the current disputes in the South and East China Seas make the region seem uniquely maritime in its strategic orientation, Asia's strategic reality will combine continental as well as maritime power. Furthermore, while a full-fledged continental system already exists, a full-fledged maritime system is still emerging. The United States is the only naval power capable of roaming the Western Pacific and the Indian Oceans at will. While China remains a growing naval force in the South and East China Seas, it remains a limited power in the Malacca Strait and the Indian Ocean. Similarly, while Indian naval power is growing in the Indian Ocean and along the Malacca Strait, it remains a limited force in the South China Sea. The current economic trends point toward an early sustained Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean before a regular Indian presence in the South China Sea. However, political and technological developments may reverse this trend. As India develops an assured second-strike nuclear platform vis-à-vis China in the form of a nuclear submarine, New Delhi may feel the need to deploy its nuclear submarine(s) in the South China Sea because the limited range of India's nuclear-tipped submarine-launched missiles will not allow India to target Shanghai or Beijing from the Bay of Bengal.[22]

Region-making is an avowedly subjective enterprise. Discerning the contours of the regions that have been made and that are in the process of emerging (or re-emerging), however, need not be equally subjective. We have made a case for the existence of a Super Asian region for most of the last 200 years. Simultaneously, this initial attempt at describing the behaviors of states in the Super Asian geographic space illustrates both the potential of broad regional organization led by a rising China and India and the complexity of parsing out subgroup behaviors and their potential causes. As a substantively interesting level of analysis unto itself,

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[21] India overtook Japan as the world's third-largest global economy in 2011, while China will displace the United States as the largest economy by the end of this year (Ranasinghe, 2014)

[22] India's submarine based missiles under development have a range of 750 - 3,000km, but need to have a range of 5,000km to hit Beijing or Shanghai (Thapar, 2014).

regional coalescence and disintegration has many possible implications for international politics, from the stability and conflict behavior of states (Volgy et al. 2017b), to the development of regional architecture (Powers and Goertz 2011), to the rise and fall of major powers (Volgy et al. 2014). Identifying these subgroups and analyzing their change over time has the potential to supplement existing dyadic and systemic analyses while also more appropriately accounting for the inherent geographic clustering present in international politics.

As for confirming empirically Super Asia's emergence, our verdict is a qualified "maybe". While the initial 1950's description of a unique, large, unfragmented space acting uniquely from the broader international system does appear to be present, and the re-emergence of such a space is occurring to a greater extent than in the 1990's or most of the Cold War, it still has some way to go before being a clear, unqualified reality. First, the most obvious division in the space is between India and China, and if it continues, may expand regional fragmentation into the Southeast Asian space as India seeks a more global role. While China's rise is perhaps the most likely driving force behind regional coalescence, challenges from within (Japan) and without (India, United States), as well as continued local hesitance (Australia), may continue to hinder super Asia's development in the near future.

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Appendix A: Maps of Cliques in Super Asia[23]

Note: States that actively engage one another by the ROW method are listed in numbered groups. States that do not interact with a group uniquely, but are only contiguous to a single group, are listed as peripheral members. States that do not interact with a group uniquely and are torn located between groups are listed in the Border States group. Only states in the "stans" east are provided. Isolates, or states not actively engaging others, are depicted in white in each map.

1950-1960
Group 1: Afghanistan, Pakistan
Group 2: China, Taiwan, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, India, Burma, Philippines, Indonesia,
    Group 2 Periphery: Sri Lanka, Nepal, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand
Border States: Mongolia
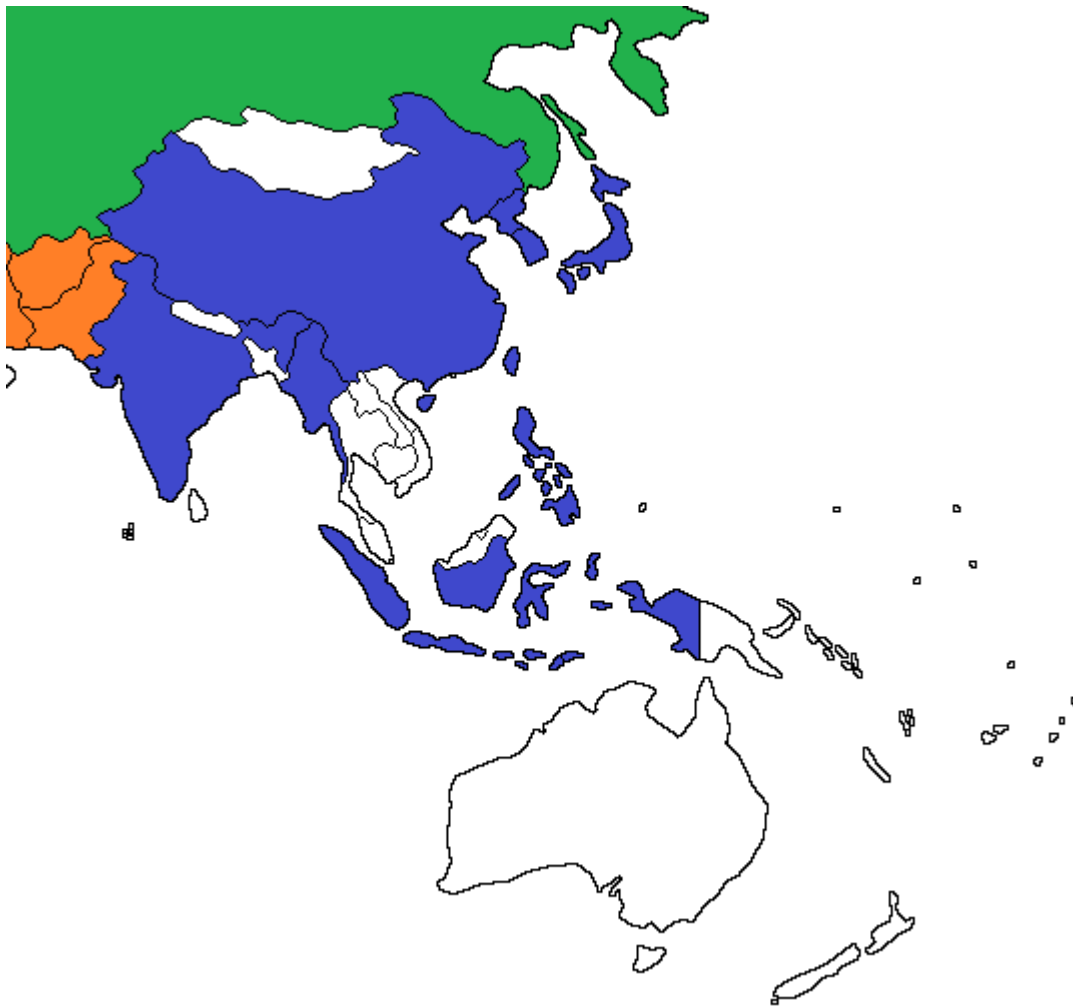
1961-1972

Group 1: Afghanistan, China, India, Pakistan, Nepal,
   Group 1 Periphery: Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives
Group 2: Taiwan, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia
   Group 2 Periphery: Australia, New Zealand, Fiji
Group 3: North Korea, South Korea, Japan
Border States: Mongolia, Bangladesh, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, North Vietnam, South Vietnam
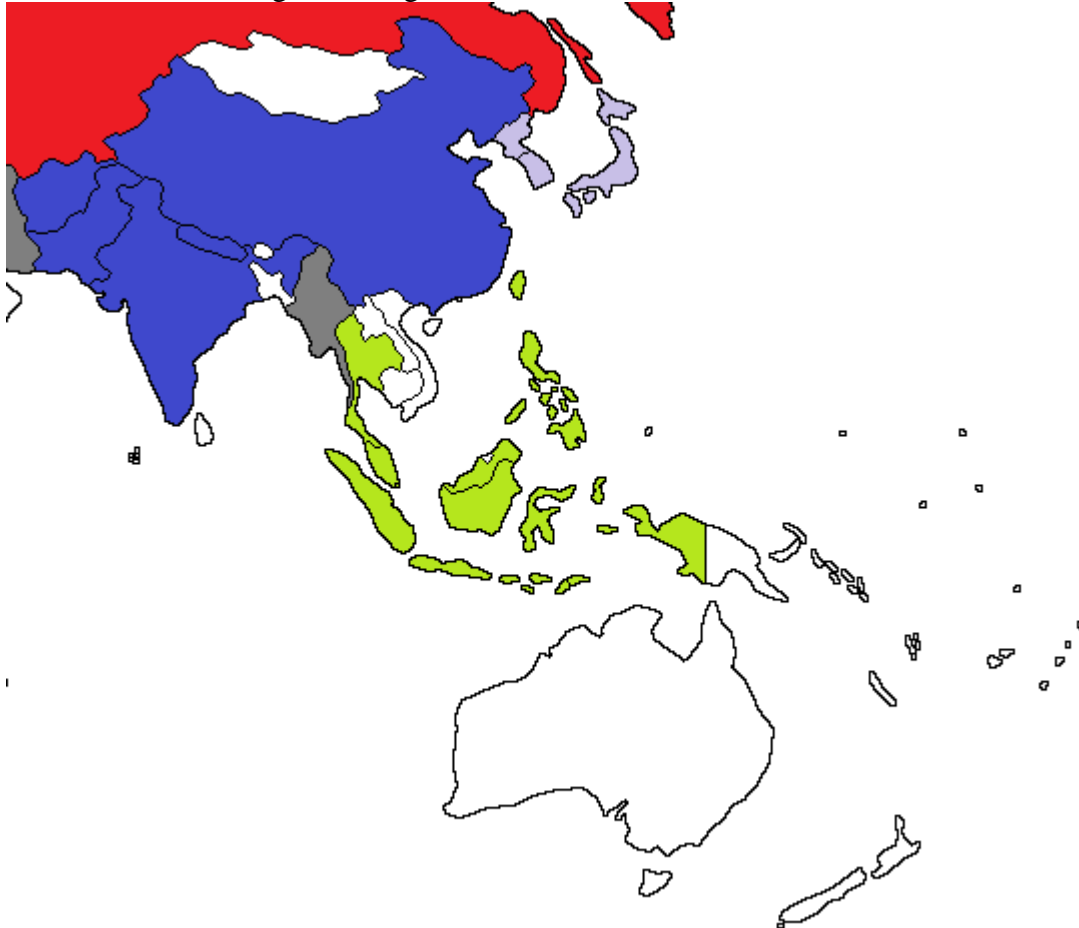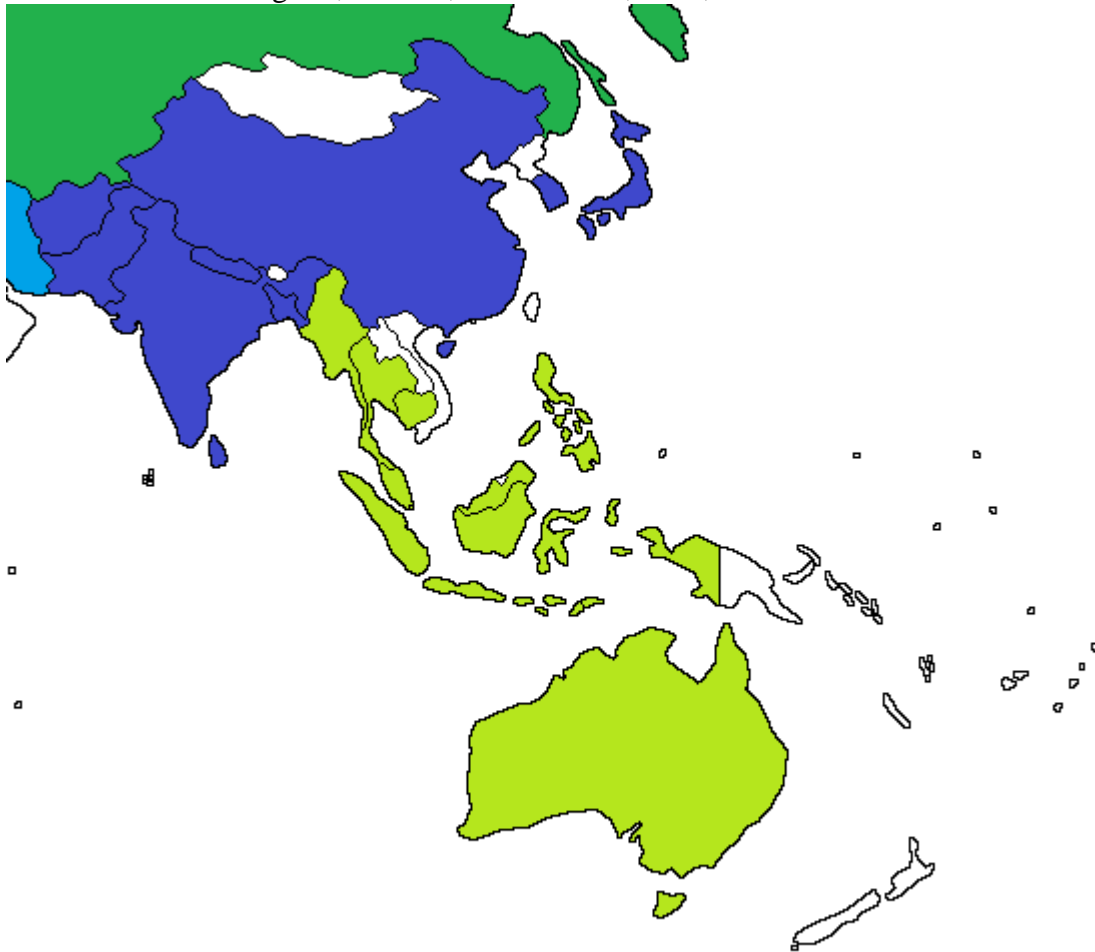
1973-1978

Group 1: Afghanistan, China, South Korea, Japan, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal

    Group 1 Periphery: Bhutan, Maldives

Group 2: Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia, Australia

    Group 2 Periphery: Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Western Samoa

Border States: Mongolia, Taiwan, North Korea, Laos, Vietnam

1990-2000

Group 1: Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan

Group 2: China, Taiwan, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Philippines, Indonesia

    Group 2 Periphery: Australia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Fiji, Tonga, Nauru, Marshal Islands, Palau, Micronesia, Western Samoa

Group 3: India, Bhutan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal

Border States: Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia
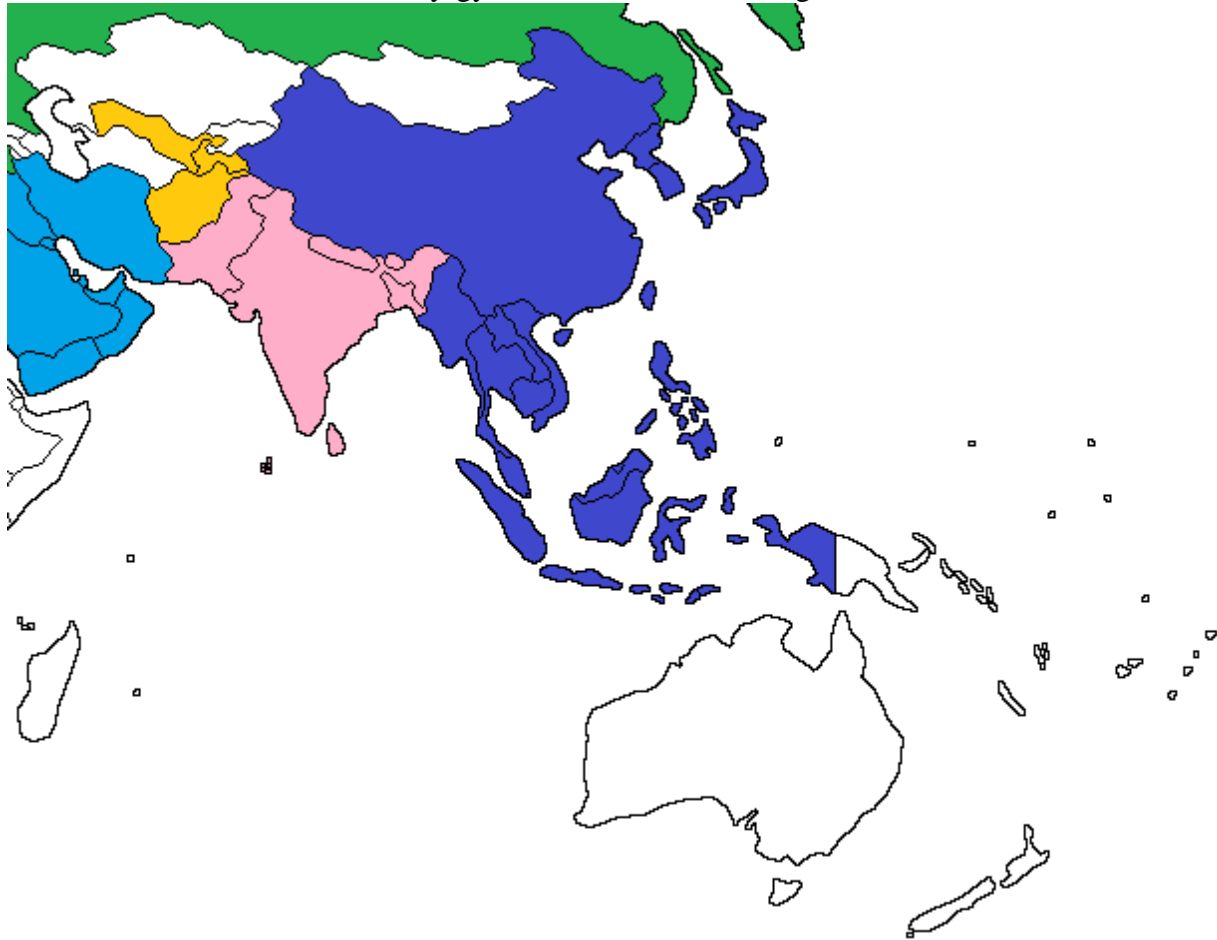
2001-2010
Group 1: Afghanistan, Tajikistan, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka
Group 1 Periphery: Maldives
Group 2: China, Taiwan, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia, East Timor
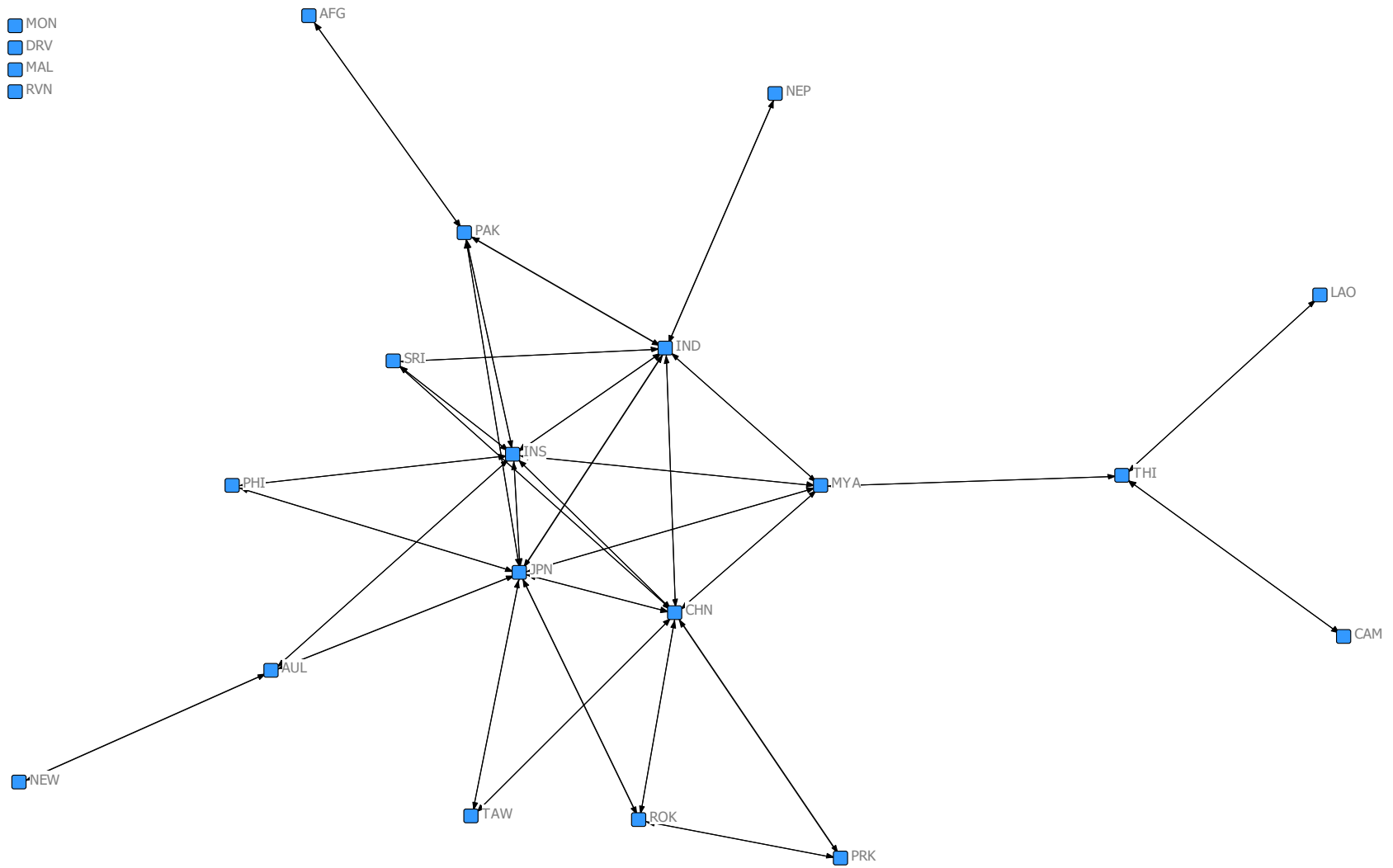**Group 2 Periphery:** Brunei, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Fiji, Tonga, Nauru, Marshall Islands, Palau, Micronesia, Western Samoa
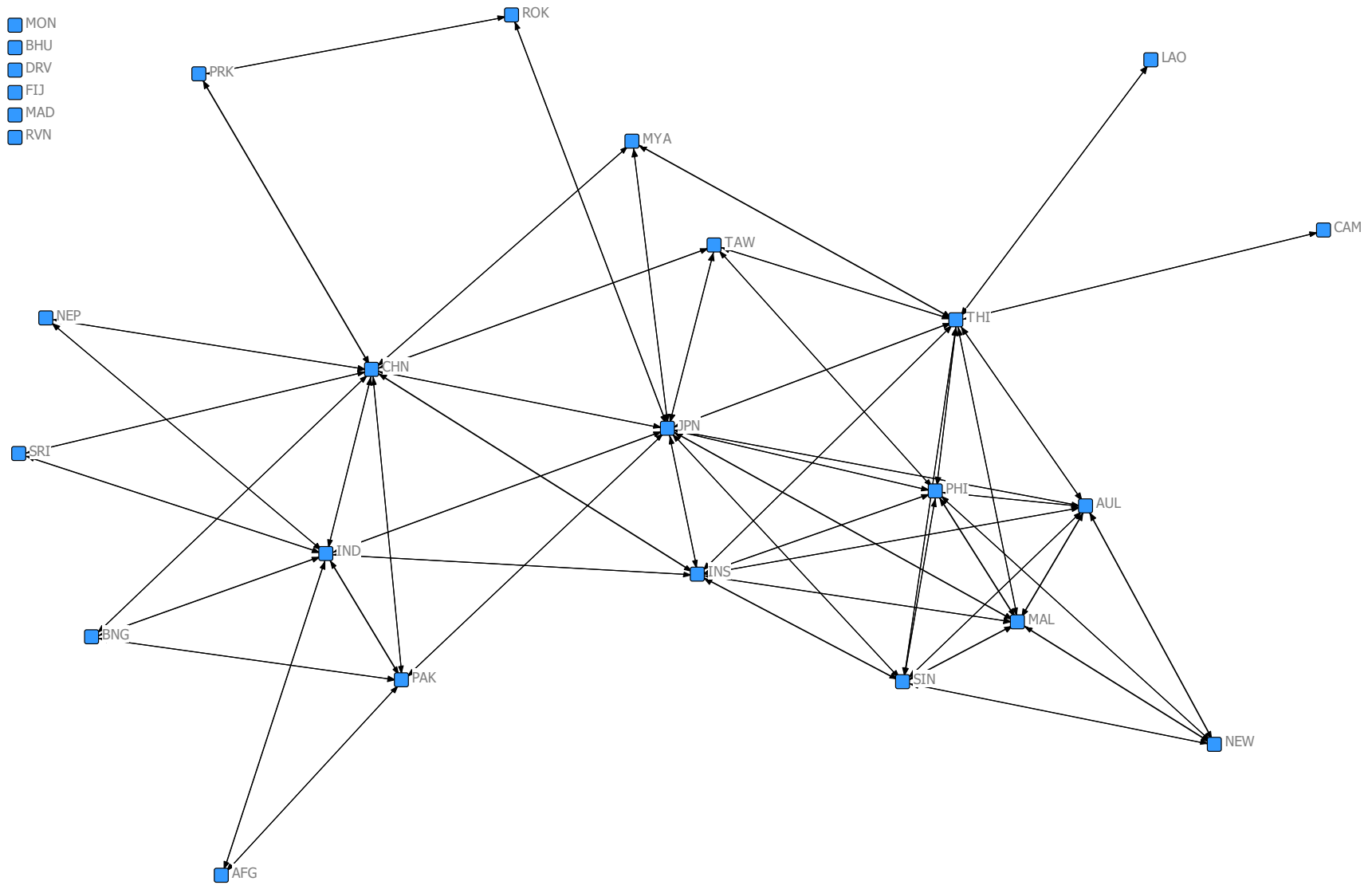**Border State:** Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Bhutan
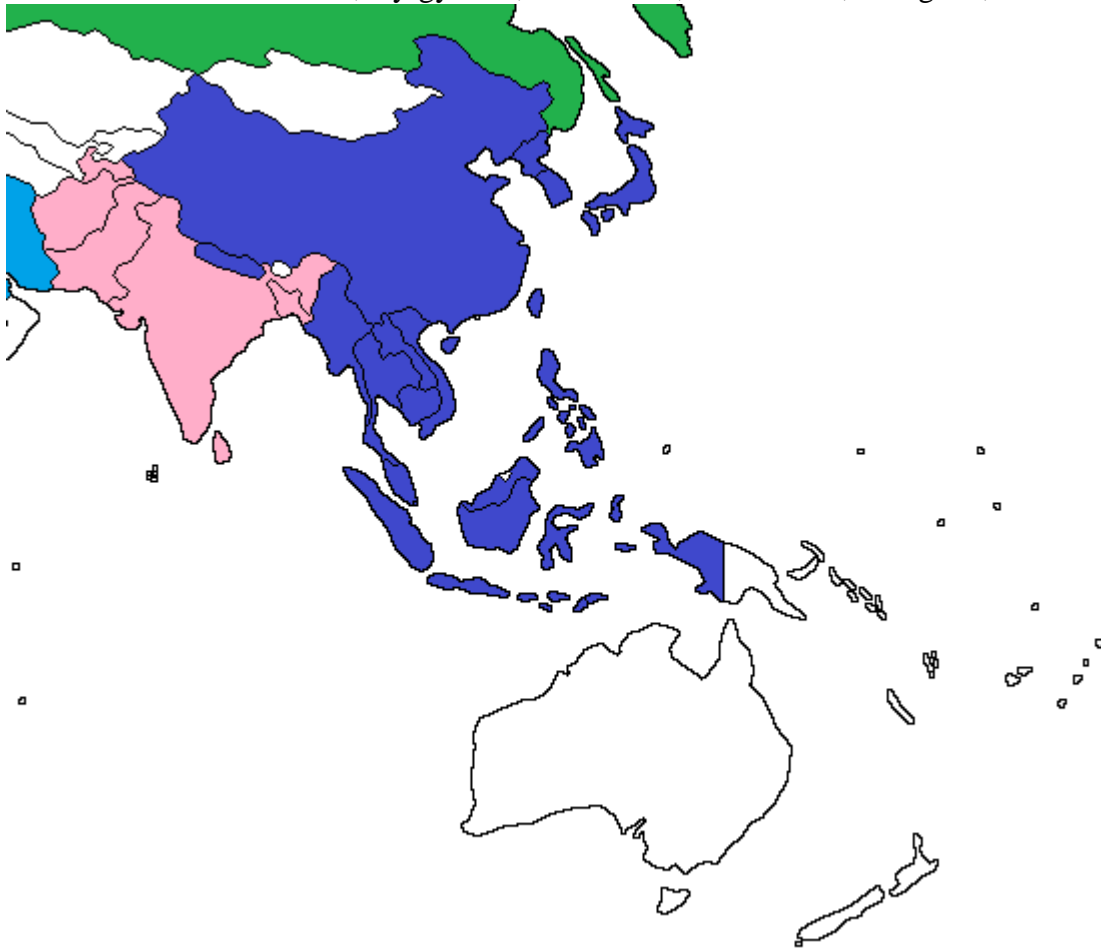
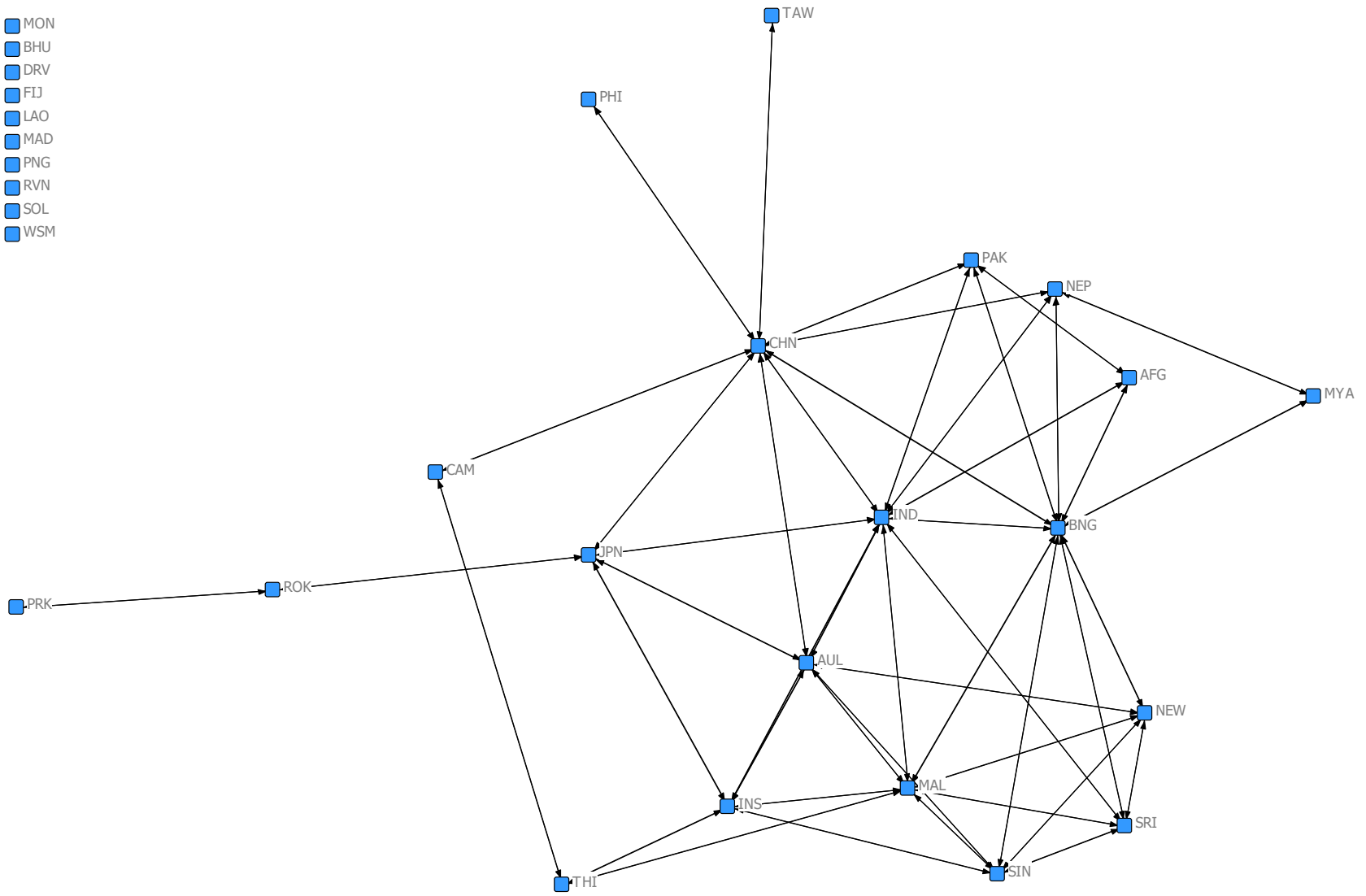Appendix B: Network Diagrams

Super Asia Network, 1950-1960
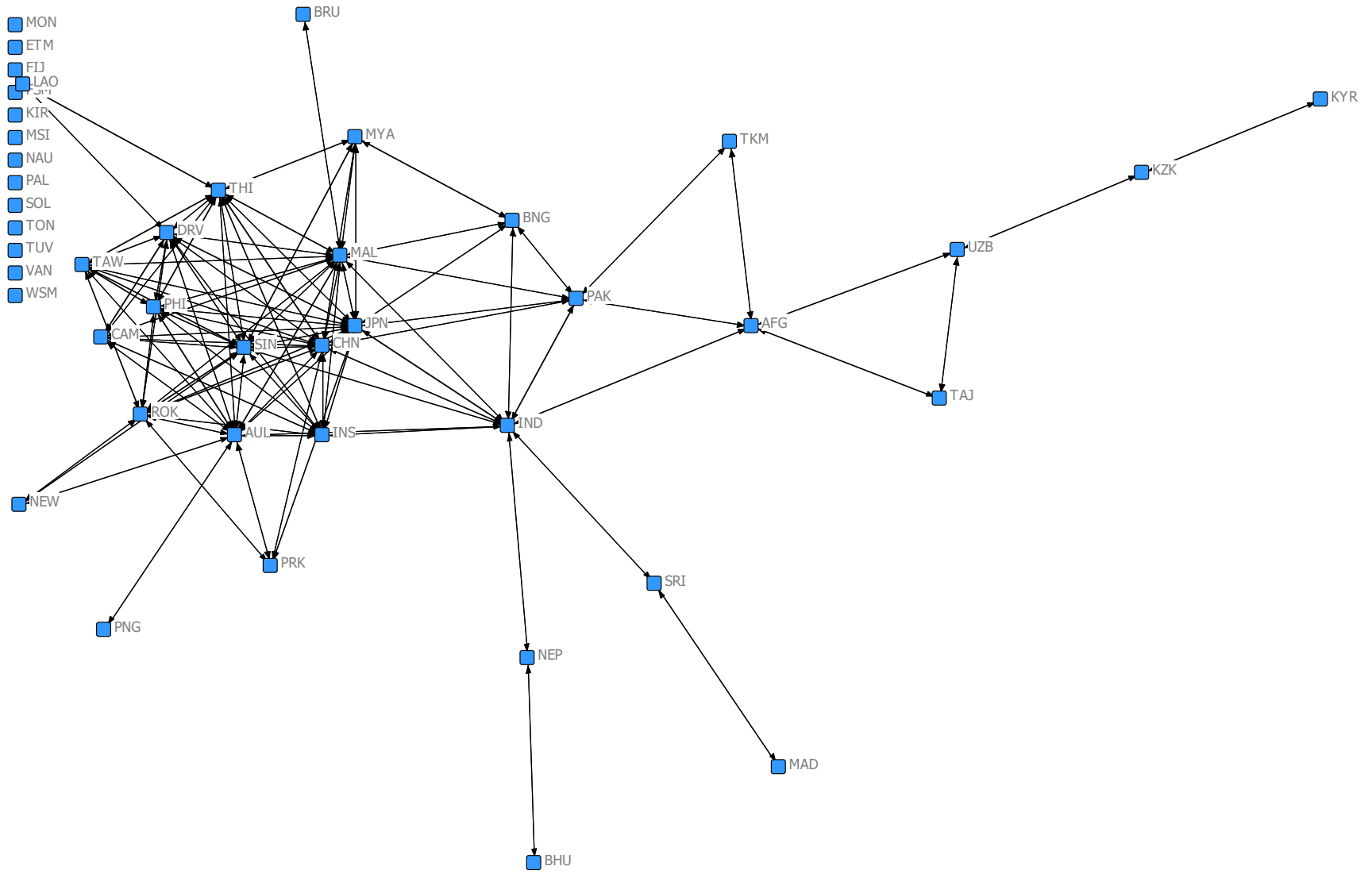
Super Asia Network, 1961-1972

Super Asia Network, 1973-1978

MON
BHU
DRV
FIJ
LAO
MAD
PNG
RVN
SOL
WSM

TAW

PHI

PAK

NEP

CHN

AFG

MYA

CAM

IND

BNG

JPN

ROK

PRK

AUL

NEW

MAL

INS

SRI

THI

SIN

Super Asia Network, 1990-2000

Super Asia Network, 2001-2010