From Ilustrado Visions to Neocolonial Politics

Filipinos' Role in Regional (Re)integration, 1880s to 1960s[1]

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ABSTRACT

Conventional geography and historiography have constantly defined Southeast Asia in relation to the outside, thus implying that the construction of the Southeast Asian regional identity has seemed to be inextricably linked to how external actors have perceived the region. But even prior to the formal founding of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967, prominent historical figures from the Philippines already had an active role in envisioning and espousing regional (re)integration in the eight-decade period stretching from the Propaganda Movement until the Third Philippine Republic. I use the term "(re)integration" because, as this paper will strive to show, one aspect of the historical process of Filipino regional conceptualization during this eight-decade period was that Filipino historical figures saw themselves as part of a wider transnational sphere, which was already existing as a region even before the coming of the Western colonizers. But what exactly was the basis for the region which these Filipino figures believed that the Philippines belonged to was fluid; ranging from the anthropological and ethnocultural "Malay world," to the Pan-Asianist and propagandistic "Greater East Asia," to the ambiguous and realpolitik "Southeast Asia."

KEYWORDS

anti-colonialism | pan-Malayanism | pan-Asianism | Southeast Asia | regional integration

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Conventional geography and historiography have constantly defined Southeast Asia in relation to the outside; in fact, our region's name has gone through many incarnations throughout history, and they have all been exonyms, which implies that the construction of the Southeast Asian regional identity has seemed to be inextricably linked to how external actors have perceived our region. The Chinese have called us *Nanyang*, from which the Japanese derived their own terminology for us—*Nan-yo*. Both meaning "South Seas," the terms *Nanyang* and *Nan-yo* correspond to the geographical fact that our region lies to the south of both China and Japan.[2] The Chinese, particularly, owing to their ethnocentric worldview of living in the "Middle Kingdom," saw the marginal South Seas as a world of barbarians wherein the Chinese cultural sway could be extended through the tribute system.[3] Our Indian neighbors, meanwhile, have labeled us as *Suvarnabhumi*, which roughly translates to "land of gold."[4] Whether deliberately or not, they injected a degree of mythical imagining into their characterization because, as archaeological evidence shows, our ancestors seemingly took gold for granted because of its natural abundance in our lands.[5] Owing to existing networks of trade and commerce, the Indian imaginative geography of Southeast Asia as a "land of gold" reached Europe, with its people eventually harboring Orientalist imaginations fantasizing our region. Then, when Western colonialism was implanted in our land, the practice of labeling persisted as the imperial powers arbitrarily carved the boundaries of their colonial possessions. Among the famous terms for our region during this time was "Farther India," which French scholar George Coedes and British colonial administrator Hugh Clifford popularized in their works.[6] As can be deduced from the name itself, "Farther India" connoted that the cultural sway of India extended over the traditional states of Southeast Asia. Finally, with our region becoming entangled into the events of the Second World War, Allied strategists christened the term "Southeast Asia" to organize their regional base of operations situated within our area.[7] Following the Second World War and the subsequently ensuing Cold War, the now-independent Southeast Asian nations strove to overcome their particularistic differences by committing to work together for shared prosperity, as they formed the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967, in what is usually seen as the first time that Southeast Asians actively and concretely contributed in the regional identity discourse.[8]

But even prior to the formal founding of ASEAN in 1967, there had already been efforts among entities from within the Southeast Asian region to formulate a regional identity that transcended colonial and, later on, national borders. In particular, prominent historical figures from the Philippines had an active role in envisioning and espousing regional (re)integration in the eight-decade period stretching from the period of the Propaganda Movement until the Third Philippine Republic. I use the term "(re)integration" because, as this paper will strive to show, one aspect of the historical

[2] Aboitiz, *Asian Place, Filipino Nation: A Global Intellectual History of the Philippine Revolution*, 1887-1912, 4.

[3] Charles Holcombe, *A History of East Asia: From the Origins of Civilization to the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 8-9. Donald K. Emmerson, "'Southeast Asia': What's in a Name?," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 15, no. 1 (March 1984): 4, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463400012182. For an excellent study on early Philippine and Maritime Southeast Asian relations with Dynastic China, see William Henry Scott, "Filipinos in China Before 1500," Asian Studies Journal 21 (1983): 1–19.

[4] Emmerson, 4.

[5] Anna T. N. Bennett, "Gold in Early Southeast Asia," *ArcheoSciences, Revue d'archéométrie,* no. 33 (December 31, 2009): 99–107, https://doi.org/10.4000/archeosciences.2072.

[6] George Coedes, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, ed. `Walter F. Vella, trans. Susan Brown Cowning, Third Edition (Canberra, Australia: Australian National University Press, 1975), https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/115019/2/b11055005.pdf; Hugh Clifford, Further India (London: Lawrence and Bullen, Ltd., 1904), http://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.106887; Emmerson, 1, 4.

[7] Seung Woo Park and Victor T. King, *The Historical Construction of Southeast Asian Studies: Korea and Beyond* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013); Emmerson, 7-9.

[8] Aboitiz, 4. To read more about the interesting historical development of the construction of the geographical term "Southeast Asia," see Emmerson, 1–21.

process of Filipino regional conceptualization during this eight-decade period was that Filipino historical figures saw themselves as part of a wider transnational sphere which was already existing as a region even before the coming of the Western colonizers. Colonial rule needed to be overthrown so that this preexisting region, which these Filipino figures believed that the Philippines belonged to could be reintegrated and incorporated into the modern world. But during this eight-decade period, what exactly was the basis for the region which these Filipino figures believed that the Philippines belonged to was fluid; mainly owing to the changing political developments which the Philippines faced? Thus, the conceptual basis for political integration in the region ranged from the anthropological and ethnocultural "Malay world," to the Pan-Asianist and propagandistic "Greater East Asia," to the ambiguous and realpolitik "Southeast Asia." Thus, it would be interesting to look at how Filipino figures navigated through the dynamic and tumultuous eight-decade period of the formation of a regional identity that transcended colonial, and, later, national borders, not least because Filipino figures were active players in this historical process. Following a linear tracing of the historical development of Filipinos' role in the construction of a Southeast Asian identity, this paper will then synthesize the historical information presented by taking a comparative approach as a concluding analysis. Such an approach would positively substantiate the notion that Filipino figures remained persistent in their efforts to concretize the sense of region that they had for the Philippines despite the changing contexts, which enveloped the country in a span of eight decades.

THE ILUSTRADOS' THRUST OF MALAYAN REVIVAL AND VISIONS OF MALAYAN REUNITY

The ilustrados extensively utilized history to legitimize their nationalist agitations. Building upon their advanced level of education, which they attained from their exposure to modern epistemological methods and approaches during their time, the ilustrados rediscovered and reoriented the understanding of Philippine history. During the pre-Hispanic period, they wrote of how the communities of the Philippine archipelago had a thriving culture closely related to its neighboring maritime states, the so-called "Malay world."[9] In doing so, they not only provided a nationalist counter-narrative against Spanish skepticism toward the native Filipino civilization, they situated the Filipinos as part of a wider regional identity that transcended colonially created boundaries. Pedro Paterno rooted the "Tagalog civilization" to the arrival of the Malay peoples.[10] Trinidad Pardo de Tavera illustrated how the Tagalog language was linguistically linked to the Malay language through their common Sanskrit lexicon.[11] Isabelo de los Reyes postulated

[9] This view of the Filipino intellectuals that the "Malays" (i.e., Filipinos, Indonesians, Malaysians) are the ones who comprise the people of the wider region which they belong to should not be taken as exclusivist toward those living in present-day Mainland Southeast Asia (i.e., Vietnamese, Thais, Lao, Cambodians, Myanmar). Rather, this "narrow" view of what and who comprises the region should be seen as being a product of pre-World War II and pre-ASEAN geographical discourses of the region which saw present-day Southeast Asia as two (2) distinct regions; (1) Indochina, which denoted the mainland section, and (2) the Malay Archipelago, which denoted the maritime section. Since the Philippines is considered or grouped as a part of the latter, it thus follows that it has greater cultural affinity with the maritime peoples of present-day Southeast Asia, who were then called the "Malay race" in line with the dominant Western practice of placing people into racial categories. Among the works which is said to be influential in amplifying the distinctiveness of the maritime section is Alfred Russel Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago*, Third Edition, 2 vols. (London and New York: Macmillan and Company Limited, 1872).

[10] Resil B. Mojares, *Brains of the Nation: Pedro Paterno, T.H. Pardo de Tavera, Isabelo de Los Reyes, and the Production of Modern Knowledge* (Ateneo University Press, 2006), 1-118; Portia L. Reyes, "A 'Treasonous' History of Filipino Historiography: The Life and Times of Pedro Paterno, 1858–1911," *South East Asia Research* 14, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 87–121, https://doi.org/10.5367/000000006776563686 both of which are cited in Rommel A. Curaming, "Filipinos as Malay: Historicizing an Identity," in *Melayu: The Politics, Poetics and Paradoxes of Malayness*, ed. Maznah Mohamad and Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied (National University of Singapore Press, 2012), 246, 247, 268, 269, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1qv383; Aboitiz, 39, 45.

[11] Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera, *Contribucion Para El Estudio de Los Antiguos Alfabetos Filipinos* (Losana: Imprenta de Jaunin Hermanos, 1884), https://www.gutenberg.org/files/15421/15421-h/15421-h.htm; Ibid., *El sanscrito en la lengua tagalog* (Paris: Imprenta de la Faculte de medecine, 1887) both of which are cited in Mojares, 119-252 and Curaming, 246, 247, 268, 269; Aboitiz, 39, 41.

that the Malays who settled in the Philippine archipelago initially spoke a proto-Malay language common to everyone in the "Malay Archipelago," but as time went by, the proto-Malay language spoken by these Malay settlers in the Philippines supposedly splintered into numerous "dialects," thus explaining the presence of various regional languages spoken by different Filipino ethnolinguistic groups.[12] Among all the ilustrados, it was Jose Rizal who had the most significant vision of how the Filipinos' Malayan roots factored into the interconnectedness of the precolonial past, the colonial present, and the postcolonial future.[13] While unlike his fellow ilustrados, who concluded that Filipinos indeed descended from an "original" proto-Malayan race, Rizal nonetheless argued that the Filipinos shared with all the other people of the Malay race the trait of resiliency, wherein despite having gone through much brutality and oppression because of colonial subjugation, they have survived and would continue to survive. Moreover, he pioneered in debunking the commonly held belief among European colonizers that the subjugated natives were indolent by nature, citing historical evidence that prior to foreign rule, pre-colonial Filipinos lived prosperous lives in their traditional communities.[14]

Cultural revival founded on scholarly work would then translate into sentiments of political irredentism that necessitated political action. Most notably, one of the subgroups of the *Indios Bravos*, the organization Rizal founded, aimed to reunite the Malay peoples scattered throughout the Malay Archipelago who have long been separated by colonially created borders.[15] At the end of the Philippine-American War, which the Filipino revolutionaries who kept fighting saw as a continuation of the struggle for independence that started in the Revolution of 1896, Apolinario Mabini continued to share this dream of reuniting all of the Malay peoples into a confederacy to resist the colonial powers in the region.[16]

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[12] Isabelo de los Reyes, *Prehistoria de Filipinas* (Manila: Imprenta de D.E. Balbas, 1889), 9-10; Ibid., *Las islas Visayas en la epoca de la conquista* (Manila: Tipo-Litografia de Chofre y ca., 1889), 68, http://archive.org/details/lasislasvisayaseooreye; both of which are cited in Mojares, 299 and Curaming, 246, 247, 260, 268, 269; Aboitiz, 39.

[13] For more information on Rizal as well as his fellow propagandists' "tripartite view" of history, see Zeus Salazar, "A Legacy of the Propaganda: The Tripartite View of Philippine History," in *Mga Babasahin sa Agham Panlipunang Pilipino: Sikolohiyang Pilipino, Pilipinolohiya, at Pantayong Pananaw,* ed. Atoy Navarro and Flordeliza Lagbao-Bolante (Quezon City, Philippines: CandE Publishing, 2007), 81–101, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1V1FMAzV72w97OWmSb-OAxdfiVo3jAJRs/view?usp=sharing.

[14] José Rizal, *The Philippines a Century Hence*, ed. Austin Craig, Noli Me Tangere Quarter-Centennial Series (Manila: Philippine Education Company, 1912), https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/35899/pg35899-images.html.utf8; Ibid., "Annotations to Morga's 1609 Philippine History," accessed March 10, 2023, https://drive.google.com/file/d/12zQ5tmvRWBoDO43elpNd7OEbS92josNF/view?usp=sharing; both are cited in Curaming, 248-49, 269; Rizal, The Indolence of the Filipino, 1913, https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/6885/pg6885.html.utf8; Aboitiz, 40, 50-2, 56-57, 59-60. For a sociological treatment of Rizal's myth of the "lazy native" and his wider sociopolitical thought, see Syed Farid Alatas, "On Eurocentrism and Laziness: The Thought of Jose Rizal," *Global Asia* 6, no. 1 (March 2011), https://www.globalasia.org/v6no1/book/on-eurocentrism-and-laziness-the-thought-of-jose-rizal_syed-farid-alatas and Ibid., "Jose Rizal (1861-1896)," in Sociological Theory Beyond the Canon, by Syed Farid Alatas and Vineeta Sinha (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 143–70.

[15] Curaming, 249; Aboitiz, 59. I share the same sentiment with what Curaming expressed in "Filipinos as Malay," wherein he posited that the fact that such a revolutionary goal had existed as early as 1889, which was the year when Rizal founded the Indios Bravos, potentially implies the need to further set back the onset of revolutionary ideas in the late Spanish colonial period, of course pending additional evidence and studies.

[16] Cesar Adib Majul, *Apolinario Mabini: Revolutionary* (Manila: National Historical Commission of the Philippines, 1970), 204 as cited in Curaming, 249, 270; Ferdinand Philip F. Victoria, "Notes on Tan Malaka's Pan-Malayan Views in His Letter to Manuel Quezon," Jurnal Sejarah 3, no. 1 (May 16, 2020): 65; Augusto V. de Viana, "The Dream of Malayan Unity: President Diosdado Macapagal and the MAPHILINDO," *SEJARAH: Journal of the Department of History* 24, no. 1 (2015), 44, https://doi.org/10.22452/sejarah.vol24no1.4; Aboitiz, 109.

Despite a new imperial power, the United States, possessing control of the Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century, nationalist figures were not deterred from continuing irredentist visions. For instance, renowned student leader Wenceslao Q. Vinzons of the University of the Philippines, inspired by the Pan-Malayan views of Rizal and Mabini, founded the *Perhimpoenan Orang Melayoe* (Pan-Malayan Union), whose aim was to academically and culturally bring together "peoples of Malay descent."[17] Vinzons' Perhimpoenan admitted members who were of other nationalities, such as youth from Siam, Malaya, and even Polynesia. Vinzons also delivered an impassioned speech entitled *Malaysia Irredenta*, wherein he advocated the "reunion" of all the Malays scattered from Madagascar in the west to Polynesia in the east. This, according to Vinzons, must be done not just to form an effective bulwark against the already-existing Western imperial occupation of "Malay territories," but to counter Japan's already-manifesting expansionist tendencies, which he foresaw would lead to a major war that would collectively affect the Malays.[18]

When Vinzons finished his studies in UP and became a lawyer-politician, he turned the *Perhimpoenan Orang Melayoe* to the "Young Philippines" movement, which eventually became a political party. Vinzons' renaming of the organization, however, did not mean that Filipino nationalism now occupied greater importance; on the contrary, he maintained that Filipino nationalism and Pan-Malay irredentism were inseparable causes. As a political party, the Young Philippines made it its mission to reclaim Philippine independence through legislative means, as seen in their support for the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act. Once the campaign for independence was accomplished, the Young Philippines would endeavor to realize Vinzons' vision of a united Malayan confederacy. Famous Filipino political figures of this period, such as Manuel A. Roxas, Jose P. Laurel, Rafael Palma, and Maximo Kalaw, supported the Young Philippines. A notable member of the Young Philippines was Diosdado Macapagal, who would later on play a role in the Philippines' efforts in "reintegrating" Filipinos with their fellow Malays in Malaysia and Indonesia.[19]

The anti-colonial ideas first propagated by the Filipino revolutionaries spread outside Philippine borders, and they resonated among other fellow Asians who were also under the shackles of colonial rule, such as the Indonesian communist revolutionary, Tan Malaka. Malaka greatly idolized Rizal and Andres Bonifacio, as well as the masses of Filipinos who partook in the Revolution, for being valiant trailblazers in the struggle for independence. In fact, when he conceptualized a Taman Manusia (Garden of Humanity) monument for Indonesia, he placed Rizal and Bonifacio at the summit of homegrown heroes from whom his Indonesian compatriots must take inspiration.[20]

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[17] While at present we use "Austronesian" or "Malayo-Polynesian" as umbrella terms to denote the ethnic groups of maritime peoples stretching from Madagascar to Polynesia, at that time "Malay" was the more popular term because the Malays were considered as constituting of a particular race, in line with the dominant Western practice of grouping people into races. An example of a colonial era textbook which popularized the notion of Filipinos as belonging to the so-called "Malay race" is David Prescott Barrows, *A History of the Philippines* (American Book Company, 1905), https://www.gutenberg.org/files/38269/38269-h/38269-h.htm as cited in Curaming, 249. To read a more accurate theorization of the Filipinos' ethnocultural connection with Malays, see F. Landa Jocano, *Questions and Challenges in Philippine Prehistory* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1975), 49-50, as cited in Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, Eighth (Quezon City, Philippines: Garotech Publishing, 1990), 21-22. For more recent and updated discussions tackling the topic of Filipinos' perception as belonging to the Malay domain, see Zeus A. Salazar, *The Malayan Connection: Ang Pilipinas sa Dunia Melayu* (Quezon City, Philippines: Palimbagan ng Lahi, 1998); Curaming, 241-73; and Aboitiz, *Asian Place, Filipino Nation: A Global Intellectual History of the Philippine Revolution*, 1887-1912.

[18] Caroline S. Hau, "Transregional Southeast Asia: Perspectives from an Outlier," *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints 68*, no. 1 (March 16, 2020): 11; de Viana, 46-47; Aboitiz, 178, 180.

[19] de Viana, 46-47; Aboitiz, 178, 180.

[20] Ramon Guillermo, "Andres Bonifacio: Proletarian Hero of the Philippines and Indonesia," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies 18*, no. 3 (July 3, 2017): 338–46, https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2017.1350498; Aboitiz, 152-53.

Owing to his affinity with Filipino nationalism, as well as his assignment as Communist International's emissary for Southeast Asia in 1923, which provided him an opportunity to establish contacts with people who were all under the yoke of colonial rule, Malaka then developed pan-Malayan views of his own, linking it to the international communist cause of anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism.[21] At one point, in one of his visits to the Philippines, he mentioned that a pan-Malayan confederation should be established, and he suggested that Davao be assigned as its capital. According to Malaka, the concrete step to transforming this vision into reality was that Filipinos ought to enlist the help of their fellow Malays "from the South" in their continuing struggle for national independence.[22] His rapport with Filipinos had earned him the respect and support from other prominent Filipino political figures of this time, such as Former President Emilio Aguinaldo, House Speaker Manuel A. Roxas, Jose Abad Santos, and Senate President Manuel L. Quezon.[23] In fact, it could be even inferred that Malaka influenced Quezon, since the two corresponded with each other, albeit very briefly, after the former was deported from the Philippines.[24] Quezon, upon his election as President of the Philippine Commonwealth, is said to have also entertained the prospect of a Pan-Malayan union, the composition of which greatly mirrored that of Malaka's final version of his envisioned Pan-Malayan confederation, the *Federasi Aslia* (Aslia Federation).[25] Both Quezon and Malaka's proposals involved confederating Annam, Siam, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, and the Philippines. However, because not much is written about Quezon's plan, we will need to relegate this to the realm of tentativeness for now.[26]

WARTIME AND POSTWAR: THE CHALLENGE TO TRANSLATE REGIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS INTO REALITY

At the dawn of the 1940s, Japan swiftly supplanted the Western imperial powers in the wider Asia Pacific region, thereby effectively rendering the region as a major theater in the Second World War. Amidst the brutality of their occupation towards their Asian brethren, the Japanese strove to groom themselves not as fascists who stifled the development of those who they subjugated just as the preceding Westerners did; but as "saviors" who would lead their fellow Asians on the road to shared prosperity. The Japanese were possibly aware of the preconceptions of many Asian nationalists who looked up to Japan as an exemplar of economic progress and technological advancement,[27] so they tried to

[21] Aboitiz, 152. Some scholars label Malaka's pan-Malayan views as "pan-Indonesian" owing to the obvious fact that Malaka's frame of reference was his being an Indonesian. To read more about the development of his pan-Malayan/pan-Indonesian views, see Ahmat Adam, *Melayu, Nasionalisme Radikal dan Pembinaan Bangsa* (Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 2013); Rudolf Mrázek, "Tan Malaka: A Political Personality's Structure of Experience" 14 (October 1972): 1–48; both of which are cited in Victoria, "Notes on Tan Malaka's Pan-Malayan Views in His Letter to Manuel Quezon," 66.

[22] "Tan Malacca's Two-Faced Views," *Philippines Free Press*, September 10, 1927 as cited in Victoria, 69.

[23] de Viana, 48-49; Victoria, 66-72.

[24] Victoria, 73-78.

[25] Helen Jarvis, trans., From Jail to Jail, vol. I (Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1991), xcvi-xcvii; Harry A. Poeze, *Tan Malaka: Pergulatan Menuju Republik*, 1925-1945 (Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1999), 385; Mrazek, 33, 34, 35; all of which are cited in Victoria, 66, 69-70. The term *Aslia* is a portmanteau of "Asia" and "Australia." Interestingly, *asli* in Bahasa Indonesia means "native"; but whether Malaka meant this to have an implied or deeper meaning is not known.

[26] Only one reference cites Quezon's vision of a pan-Malayan union, which is that of Eduardo L. Martelino, *Someday Malaysia* (New York: Pageant Press, 1959).

[27] To read more about how Filipino nationalists perceived Japan during the period that the Philippines was still a Western colony, see Elpidio R. Sta. Romana and Ricardo T. Jose, "'Never Imagine Yourself to Be Otherwise...': Filipino Image of Japan Over the Centuries," *Asian Studies Journal* 29 (1991): 71-73, 76-78; and Jose, "Reformists and Revolutionaries: Filipinos View Meiji Japan, 1880s–1980s," in *Revisiting Japan's Restoration: New Approaches to the Study of the Meiji Transformation*, ed. Timothy D. Amos and Akiko Ishii, Routledge Studies in the Modern History of Asia (Routledge, 2021), Chapter 7.

meet these expectations to mask the brutality they inflicted and to hasten popular support for their regime. One way they did this was through the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, an umbrella paradigm that envisaged economic and cultural unity among Asians. Pan-Asianism, which was confined to the circles of the learned beforehand,[28] was now being practiced at a wider scale because of the dictations of the Japanese Empire. Notwithstanding the evidence that reveals that the Japanese propped up the Co-prosperity Sphere as a propaganda tool to placate Asian nationalist sentiments while slyly exploiting the resources of their occupied territories,[29] the Co-prosperity Sphere nonetheless provided an avenue for inter-Asian exchanges that proved formative to a wider Asian regional consciousness, as particularly exemplified in the Greater East Asia Conference held in Tokyo in November 1943, wherein the delegations of Asian countries displayed, at least rhetorically, a united front versus Western imperialism and support for the Japanese cause of winning the "War of Greater East Asia."[30] It is also worth mentioning that Burma and the Philippines strove to forge closer ties through the Co-prosperity Sphere when Ba Maw briefly visited the Philippines after attending the Greater East Asia Conference, and more significantly, when the Burmese Research Commission visited the Philippines in June 1944 to learn from the latter's experience in developing a relatively more sophisticated political system.[31]

In the case of the Philippines, which was *de facto* headed by the Japanese-sponsored Second Republic,[32] its participation in the Co-prosperity Sphere had the effect of unanchoring Filipino officials from their pro-American, pro-Western tendencies, as most exemplified in the personae of President Jose P. Laurel and Minister of Foreign Affairs Claro M. Recto. As figures who held important positions during the Second Republic primarily because of their crucial roles in handling the country's diplomacy, Laurel and Recto were the ones who were most exposed to these ideas of Pan-Asianism. Despite their disapproval of the Japanese imperialists' oppressive methods of governance, they nonetheless realized and recognized the significance of reorienting the Philippines away from the orbit of the United States, and instead towards its more proximate Asian neighbors whose experiences and psyches mirrored that of the Filipinos.[33] It was also this same exposure that shaped Laurel and Recto's more nationalist views, which they amplified following the war and were further bolstered by their disillusionment with the

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[28] As Aboitiz, *Asian Place, Filipino Nation: A Global Intellectual History of the Philippine Revolution, 1887-1912*, has made clear, Pan-Asianism is a wide-ranging, complex concept not confined to Japan and/or the Japanese Empire. To read more about Pan-Asianism in Japan, see Sven Saaler and J. Victor Koschmann, *Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History: Colonialism, Regionalism and Borders* (Routledge, 2007), as cited in Aboitiz, 15.

[29] To read more about the Co-prosperity sphere, see "The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" (Research and Analysis Branch, Office of Strategic Services, Central Intelligence Agency, August 10, 1945), https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000710366.pdf; John W Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

[30] To access a copy of the conference's joint resolution, see "Joint Declaration of the Greater East Asia Conference," November 6, 1943, World War II Database, https://ww2db.com/doc.php?q=492.

[31] Jeremy A. Yellen, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: When Total Empire Met Total War,* The Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute of Columbia University (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2019), 178, 194.

[32] Two governments were administering Philippine affairs during the Second World War; the de jure Commonwealth government which was in exile in the United States, and the *de facto* Second Republic, also known as the "Laurel Republic," which was directly governing the Philippines.

[33] Aboitiz, 164-71. See Claro M. Recto, "Letter to Lieutenant-General T. Wati," June 13, 1944, for a source which belies the claim that the officials of the Second Republic were mere "puppets" to the Japanese Empire. To know more about the Second Republic's diplomatic efforts despite operating within the political constraints of the Japanese empire, see Ricardo T. Jose, "Test of Wills: Diplomacy between Japan and the Laurel Government," in *Philippines-Japan Relations*, ed. Setsuho Ikehata and Lydia N. Yu-Jose (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2003), 185–222.

US' presumptuous attitude towards the Philippines on the issue of collaboration and the US' neocolonial meddling in Philippine affairs, despite the Filipinos having already reclaimed independence in 1946.[34]

The end of the Second World War ushered in the worldwide process of decolonization and provided an opportunity to finally realize desires for regional integration. However, the newly independent nation-states struggled with charting their own trajectories, having to contend with the persistent influence of both old and new imperial powers, especially amidst the backdrop of the Cold War. Consequently, the trend in the decades of the Cold War found military and security matters, rather than historical-cultural reasons, as the more potent motivation for regional integration. The emergent region of Southeast Asia, which had been initially named for Allied military strategists' convenience during the Second World War, was not exempt from this.

Immediately after the war, the Philippines regained its independence, thereby ushering in the period of the Third Republic. But because the national economy was in tatters, it had to rely greatly on the assistance of more affluent countries. However, following the war, there was no other affluent country which the Philippines could turn to for aid other than its wartime ally, the US, which emerged from the Second World War in an unprecedentedly stronger position than ever before.[35] Thus, the administration of Manuel A. Roxas, the first President of the Third Republic, initiated the policy of maintaining close relations with the United States. Roxas' exceptionally favorable view of the US constituted a reversal of the Philippines' nascent reorientation towards its Asian neighbors in the preceding Japanese occupation. While the Roxas administration did send a delegation to the Asian Relations Conference in Delhi in 1947 that allowed Filipino representatives to come into contact with the many Asian nationalist movements during this time, nothing really concrete came out of this attempt to forge a regional organization that sought to be independent from both Western and Soviet influences. Apart from this, any more attempts from the Roxas administration at forwarding regional cohesion would be eclipsed by the country's very active participation in establishing the United Nations (UN), as well as the government's preoccupation in securing military agreements with the US.[36]

When Roxas suddenly died midway into his term in 1948, his Vice President and concurrent Secretary of Foreign Affairs (SFA) Elpidio R. Quirino succeeded him in the presidency. Although Quirino continued his predecessor's policy of siding with the US on key international issues, as most evidently seen in his sending of a Philippine contingent to the Korean War to assist the side of the American-backed Republic of Korea, as well as depending heavily on American support in postwar rehabilitation and quelling insurgencies particularly the Huk rebellion, he nonetheless was more open to establishing closer ties with other nations in the region that the Philippines belonged to, perhaps realizing the significance of diversifying relations to further strengthen the Philippine position in the international arena during his stint as SFA. In particular, Quirino seemed keen in cultivating friendlier ties with newly independent Indonesia, as seen

[34] On the Philippine side, Laurel was the proponent of the 1955 Laurel-Langley agreement, which amended the rather "extreme" parity rights given to Americans as stipulated in the previous 1946 Bell Trade Act. Meanwhile, Recto is known for his incisive commentaries critical of American meddling in Philippine affairs, such as Ibid., "Three Years of Enemy Occupation, The Issue of Political Collaboration in the Philippines," in *Philippine History Source Book: Annotated Compilation of Selected Philippine History Primary Sources and Secondary Works* in *Electronic Format*, by Earl Jude Paul Cleope et al. (National Commission for Culture and the Arts-National Committee on Historical Research, 2021), 298–304; and Ibid., "Our Mendicant Foreign Policy," 1951.

[35] Ricardo T. Jose, "The Philippines During the Cold War: Searching for Security Guarantees and Appropriate Foreign Policies, 1946-1986," in *Cold War Southeast Asia*, ed. Malcolm H. Murfett (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2012), 50–4.

[36] Milton Walter Meyer, *A Diplomatic History of the Philippine Republic* (University of Hawaii Press, 1965), 29-82; Jose, "The Philippines During the Cold War: Searching for Security Guarantees and Appropriate Foreign Policies, 1946-1986," 50-8.

in his support for the Indonesian independence movement, which was in line with the Philippines' diplomatic stance of advocating national self-determination of former colonies. Later on, Quirino also provided humanitarian assistance to Indonesia when the country was hit by a natural calamity.[37]

In an attempt to show that the Philippines was at the forefront in diplomacy amidst deepening Cold War tensions, Quirino met with President Chiang Kai-shek of the Republic of China in Baguio in 1949 to lay the foundation for a "Pacific Pact" to counter communism and concurrently promote economic and cultural cooperation among its member states.[38] The following year, Quirino convened representatives from India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Thailand, Indonesia, and Australia in Baguio to establish the regional bloc. Moreover, Quirino invited the US to join the bloc, but the US did not approve of it because it saw that the bloc's prospective member states, with the exception of Australia, were not ideologically aligned with the US. This, coupled with the fact that the Quirino administration found itself preoccupied in salvaging its tarnished domestic image amidst allegations of corruption, made Quirino's Pacific Pact fail to further materialize.[39]

Quirino's former Secretary of National Defense, Ramon Magsaysay, succeeded him in the presidency upon winning the 1953 election. Magsaysay was known for his staunchly pro-US stance, not least because of his reliance on American support during his election campaign and putting an end to the Huk rebellion.[40] While Magsaysay did attempt to prove that the Philippines had a sense of community with its Southeast Asian neighbors, he nonetheless still struggled in getting out of the American shadow. The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), which Magsaysay had a role in organizing, was seen as an organization that had a shallow ideological basis, merely fixating itself on anti-communism as a collective security issue and nothing more.[41] Only two Southeast Asian countries, Thailand and the Philippines, joined SEATO because they saw communism as a genuine threat to national security. The other non-communist Southeast Asian countries, such as Indonesia, Burma, and Malaya, did not join because they felt that joining SEATO would belie their neutral stance during the Cold War, especially in light of their commitment to neutrality following their participation in the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung. These setbacks to regional unity notwithstanding, Magsaysay still believed that the Philippines had a responsibility to its fellow Southeast Asians, as seen when he sent medical assistance to the South Vietnamese side in the Vietnam War through Operation Brotherhood.[42]

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[37] Meyer, 83-140, 142-43, 146-47; Jose, "The Philippines During the Cold War: Searching for Security Guarantees and Appropriate Foreign Policies, 1946-1986," 58, 60.

[38] "Joint Statement of President Quirino and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek," July 11, 1949, Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines, https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1949/07/11/joint-statement-of-president-quirino-and-generalissimo-chiang-kai-shek/.

[39] Meyer, 141-162; Jose, "The Philippines During the Cold War: Searching for Security Guarantees and Appropriate Foreign Policies, 1946-1986," 60-1.

[40] Jose, "The Philippines During the Cold War: Searching for Security Guarantees and Appropriate Foreign Policies, 1946-1986," 68-69. To read more about the manifestations of neocolonialism during the Magsaysay administration, see Lewis E. Gleeck, Jr., *The Third Philippine Republic, 1946-1972* (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers, 1993), 149-50, 168-69, 183; Stephen Rosskam Shalom, *The United States and the Philippines: A Study of Neocolonialism* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981), 92-93, 98-99, 103-109, 117-119, 134-13; and Stanley Karnow, *In Our Image : America's Empire in the Philippines* (New York, NY: Random House, 1989), 355.

[41] Meyer, 163-248; Jose, "The Philippines During the Cold War: Searching for Security Guarantees and Appropriate Foreign Policies, 1946-1986," 69. For a criticism on the "ineffectualness" of SEATO as an organization, see John K Franklin, *The Hollow Pact: Pacific Security and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization*, 2006.

[42] Jose, "The Philippines During the Cold War: Searching for Security Guarantees and Appropriate Foreign Policies, 1946-1986," 70.

Magsaysay's unexpected death in a plane crash in 1957 propelled his Vice President and concurrent SFA Carlos P. Garcia to the presidency. Garcia, who possibly took offense at other countries' accusations that the Philippines was nothing more than a puppet of the US, made it his administration's agenda to prove that Philippine independence was real and ought to be respected. Thus, Garcia's "Respectable Independence" foreign policy meant that the Philippines would be more diplomatically assertive on pertinent issues, and that the country would unequivocally prioritize its own interests rather than those of other countries. While Garcia never intended to ultimately sever ties with the US because he recognized the importance of continuing American assistance, his "Respectable Independence" policy nonetheless strained Philippine-American relations. Lukewarm relations with the US under Garcia's administration provided an opportunity for the Philippines to actuate regional integration out of its own initiative,[43] as seen when the country co-founded with Thailand and the Federation of Malaya the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) in 1961. ASA was meant to focus more on harnessing cultural relations among its members, in contrast to the security-fixated SEATO. ASA, however, met its immediate demise when Garcia's Vice President and political rival, Diosdado Macapagal, won the 1961 Philippine election, as Macapagal ignored ASA and sought to flex his own diplomatic abilities through his "The Philippines Turns East" policy.[44]

Importantly, Macapagal's "Turns East" policy did not really depart from what the Garcia administration had already started, which was to balance the Philippines' diversification of diplomatic ties with that of its traditionally close relations with the US. Because of this, the Americans were also not fond of Macapagal as they were of Garcia.[45] Macapagal paid no attention to the Americans' opinion of him, and he set out to implement his "Turns East" policy. Taking inspiration from his earlier participation in Wenceslao Vinzons' "Young Philippines" movement that espoused Pan-Malayanism, from June to July 1963 Macapagal convened Indonesian President Sukarno and Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman in a series of conferences that paved the way for the establishment of the Greater Malayan Confederation, better known as MAPHILINDO (Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia). The more overt rationale for MAPHILINDO's formation was to provide an avenue wherein the three countries could resolve together the interconnected problems plaguing the region, which mainly centered on the fate of North Borneo, also known as Sabah, vis-a-vis Malaysia's plan to include Sabah in its newly-formed federation, the Philippines' territorial claim to Sabah, and Indonesia's fears of British encroachment. Nonetheless, MAPHILINDO still gave the impression that it represented a pivotal step in finally realizing the longtime dream of "reuniting" the peoples of the Malay Archipelago.[46]

However, it soon became apparent that the Philippines and Indonesia's intentions in being active proponents of the confederation were less motivated by historical-cultural considerations than the preservation of their respective countries' territorial integrity. In

[43] H. Bradford Westerfield, *The Instruments of America's Foreign Policy* (New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1963), 420; Gleeck, 236, 252; Meyer, 247-70; Jose, "The Philippines During the Cold War: Searching for Security Guarantees and Appropriate Foreign Policies, 1946-1986," 72-75. For a more in-depth survey of Garcia's foreign policy, see Severo Canete 1981- Madrona, "Respectable Independence: The Foreign Policy of Carlos P. Garcia, 1957-1961" (University of the Philippines, 2003).

[44] See Diosdado Macapagal, *The Philippines Turns East* (Quezon City, Philippines: Mac Publishing House, 1966) for an explanation of this diplomatic policy from Macapagal himself.

[45] Raymond Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator: The Marcoses and the Making of American Policy* (New York: Times Books, 1987), 43; Jose, "The Philippines During the Cold War: Searching for Security Guarantees and Appropriate Foreign Policies, 1946-1986," 75; Gleeck, 273.

[46] Jose, "The Philippines During the Cold War: Searching for Security Guarantees and Appropriate Foreign Policies, 1946-1986," 75; de Viana, 49-54; Aboitiz, 179-80. To read primary sources pertaining to MAPHILINDO and its related issues, see "Philippines, Federation of Malaya and Indonesia: Manila Accord" (United Nations Treaty Series, December 30, 1965), https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20550/volume-550-I-8029-English.pdf; and *Philippine Claim to North Borneo (Sabah)*, First Reprint, vol. II (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1968).

particular, the two countries feared that British supervision in the formation of Malaysia constituted a threat to their territorial integrity and national sovereignty. Philippine and Indonesian antagonism toward Malaysia would only worsen when the UN, the entity which the three countries assigned as a neutral arbiter on Sabah's fate, ruled that the decision of the people of Sabah to join the Federation of Malaysia must be respected by both Indonesia and the Philippines. Consequently, just a month after the formation of the confederation, MAPHILINDO was eventually dissolved as Indonesia adopted the *Konfrontasi* ("Confrontation") policy toward Malaysia, and Malaysia severed ties with Indonesia and the Philippines.[47]

In 1965, then-Senate President Ferdinand Marcos Sr. defeated Macapagal in the race to the Philippine presidency. While the Marcos Sr. administration maintained that the Philippines' Sabah claim remained, he eventually did not pursue the claim any further especially after the failure of Operation Merdeka[48] that resulted into the highly controversial 1968 Jabidah massacre, as well as his preoccupation to preserve the integrity of the ASEAN, which had just been formed in 1967, in which the Philippines and Malaysia were founding members.[49] Since then, ASEAN has striven to become the successful embodiment of hopes of regional integration to its member states, which are not only restricted to the maritime countries, but also to those on the mainland subregion.[50] For the Philippines, the founding of ASEAN represents a culminating point in its historical figures' decades-long efforts of finally (re)integrating a region, which they saw as the rightful place of the mother country.

SYNTHESIS / CONCLUDING ANALYSIS

A Comparative Look into the Filipino View of a Wider Regional Identity in Three Time Periods

From this historical survey of Filipino historical figures' efforts in integrating the Philippines to wider collective imaginaries, comparisons will now be drawn in the evolving Filipino conceptualization of a regional identity. The fluidity surrounding what Filipino figures thought of as comprising of the region which the Philippines belonged to reflects shifting perspectives given the constantly changing context throughout the eight-decade periodization of this study.

From the given periodization, three distinct periods of Filipino regional conceptualization can be observed. The first is the period coinciding between the Propaganda Movement until the American occupation of the Philippines, wherein Filipino intellectuals, such as Rizal, Mabini, and Vinzons, thought of the Philippines as belonging to the supranational "Malay world." They framed the Malay world

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[47] Gerald Sussman, "Macapagal, the Sabah Claim and Maphilindo: The Politics of Penetration," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 13, no. 2 (January 1, 1983): 210–28, https://doi.org/10.1080/00472338380000141; Jose, "The Philippines During the Cold War: Searching for Security Guarantees and Appropriate Foreign Policies, 1946-1986," 75; de Viana, 54-62.

[48] Operation Merdeka was a secret plan commissioned by the Philippine government to train Muslim Filipino soldiers so that they could infiltrate Sabah and cause instability there so as to provide a pretext for a Philippine-led invasion of Sabah which would supposedly lead to the Philippines reclaiming the said territory. This group of soldiers was then named "Jabidah." However, when the Muslim Filipino soldiers, who had an affinity with their fellow Muslims in Sabah, found out the real purpose of their plan, they rebelled, and the higher military command of the Philippine government decided to kill them and conceal all evidence of the secret plan and the massacre of the Muslim soldiers. The control of information which surrounded this issue has thus sparked immense controversy.

[49] To view a copy of the document which formally established ASEAN, see "The ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration)," August 8, 1967, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, https://agreement.asean.org/media/download/20140117154159.pdf.

[50] In recent times, however, ASEAN has faced criticism over its non-unity on the issue of Chinese incursions to its member states, as well as its member states' incoherent stance on the 2021 Myanmar coup which unseated the democratically elected government there. To read a recent editorial article critiquing the recent "ineffectualness" of ASEAN, see David Hutt, "Has the ASEAN Chair Become Too Powerful?," *The Diplomat*, January 14, 2022, https://thediplomat.com/2022/01/has-the-asean-chair-become-too-powerful/.

as a manifestation of regional cohesion or unity already existing even before the coming of the Western colonizers. Western colonialism, however, would interrupt this idyllic state of things and plunge the natives of the region into misery and an ignorance of the tranquil past. For these pan-Malayan Filipino figures, rekindling the kinship ties with their "fellow Malays" would lead to a collective struggle against colonial oppression; the success of the overthrow of colonial rule would mark the return of prosperity for the peoples of the Malay world. However, with the continuance of the colonial-imperial order until the end of the Second World War, fully realizing this idealistic vision remained unattainable.

Filipino regional conceptualization would widen in scope during the Japanese occupation. As a result of the Japanese imperial ideology of Pan-Asianism, the basis for the Filipino sense of region was not anymore confined to Malay ethnocultural affinity, but to every Asian nationality belonging under "Greater East Asia." Anti-Western sentiments flared up by Japanese imperial propaganda proved to be a galvanizing force for a Pan-Asian regional consciousness positively received and appropriated by Asian leaders, who, despite still being under a brutal imperial power, were made to feel that they were finally charting their own destinies, not just as individual "independent" nations, but also as a fledgling region emerging from years of bondage to oppressive Western colonialism. The Pan-Asianist convictions of Laurel and Recto, and the diplomacy between the Second Philippine Republic and Burma concretely exemplified the shift in the Filipino regional conceptualization from Pan-Malayanism to Pan-Asianism during this time.

As the Second World War ended, the contemporary region of Southeast Asia then came into being as decolonization ensued. With neighboring states finally becoming independent nations, Filipino leaders remained persistent in their attempts to finally integrate the Philippines with its neighbors. However, with the shadow of superpower rivalry of the Cold War also falling upon the region, there would be an observable shift in motivations for regional integration. While there would still be pronouncements of harkening back to shared cultural roots and a common resolve to overcome problems inherited from preceding colonial experiences parallel to the earlier two periods of Filipino regional conceptualization, regional security and stability seemed to be the more potent overriding justification for the organization of these postwar regional groupings, as was the case of Quirino's stillborn Pacific Pact, Macapagal's short-lived MAPHILINDO, and even the successful ASEAN. Of note as well on the side of the Philippines is its struggle to get out of the American neocolonial shadow through its leaders' aforementioned initiatives in concretizing regional integration, in a bid to show that the country valued its place in Asia, particularly Southeast Asia.

Notwithstanding seemingly apparent discontinuities, divergences, and shifts in the historical development of Filipino conceptualization of a wider regional identity, it is clear that, in the eight-decade period examined in this study, Filipino historical figures believed, in varying ways, that the Philippines has always belonged to Asia. This was not just by virtue of geographical location, but also of commonalities conditioned by history; pre-colonial ethnocultural unity; shared experiences of colonialism; and a post-colonial vision of wanting to be free from dictation from outside forces. Amidst the constraints of Western colonialism, Japanese imperialism, and neocolonial Cold War politics, Filipinos have navigated their way through the tumultuous world of an increasingly anti-colonial Asia from the late 19th to the mid-20th century, and have consistently endeavored to be active participants in the dynamic discourse of regional integration. As Nicole CuUnjieng Aboitiz has comprehensively and excellently shown in her work, the significance of Filipino-led efforts in the construction of an Asian identity cannot be underestimated because of their role in mobilizing peoples in different places and times throughout Asian

history;[51] as in the case of the aforementioned example of Indonesian revolutionary figure Tan Malaka, who also shared the ilustrado desire of turning into reality a Pan-Malayan union.[52] Such an appreciation of these efforts not just proves that the Philippines and its inhabitants are neither outliers nor outsiders to the Southeast Asia and wider Asian region,[53] but also, leads us to better identify with native and more organic conceptualizations of our home region because these efforts are nearer to our collective experience.[54]

[51] Aboitiz, Asian Place, *Filipino Nation: A Global Intellectual History of the Philippine Revolution*, 1887-1912.

[52] Apart from Tan Malaka, other non-Filipino Southeast Asians who also espoused Pan-Malayanism were Muhammad Yamin of Indonesia, as well as Ibrahim Ya'acob of Malaya, as cited in de Viana, 49. While not explicitly advocating the political union of the Malay Archipelago, Malaysian scholar Syed Hussein Alatas nonetheless placed the Malay, Filipino, and Javanese natives in an equal cultural footing with each other in his seminal work, which is Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th Century and Its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism* (London: Frank Cass, 2006).

[53] To read about the way the Philippines is positioned often ambivalently in relation to wider Southeast Asia, see Hau, "Transregional Southeast Asia."

[54] For an introductory survey of the way the region of Maritime Southeast Asia has been intellectually constructed in various ways, see Guat Peng Ngoi, "Editorial Introduction: The Pluralistic Thoughts and Imagined Boundaries in Nusantara," trans. Jia Jia Teo and Ying Xin Show, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 18, no. 3 (July 3, 2017): 313–16, https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2017.1353399.

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