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SENATE
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INTRODUCED BY SENATOR FRANCIS "TOL" N. TOLENTINO

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS TO CONDUCT AN
INQUIRY IN AID OF LEGISLATION ON THE STATUS OF THE SOUTHEAST ASIA
COLLECTIVE DEFENCE TREATY

WHEREAS, The Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty of 1954 or the "Manila Pact" created the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), a regional defense organization by representatives of Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Its objective was to provide mutual aid in preventing and countering security threats and to bolster cooperation in promoting economic and social progress. The SEATO had no standing forces but relied on the mobile striking power of its member states, which engaged in combined military exercises;¹

DESIRING to promote the ideals of peace and freedom and to uphold the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law, with the end goal of supporting the development of all nations in the treaty area, the SEATO political organs convened from time to time and were governed by the requirement of unanimity. The Council of Ministers provided for consultation with regard to matters such as military capabilities as the situation may require. The Council Representatives acted on the Council's behalf when it was not in session, and the Permanent Working Group met on an almost continuous basis in Bangkok, headquarters site of SEATO;²

RECOGNIZING that during SEATO's existence, aside from the three political consultative bodies, its civilian organs also included three committees: the Committee of Security Experts, the Committee of Economic Experts, and the Committee on Informational, Cultural, Educational and Labor Activities. These committees were composed of experts in these fields from the member nations and met periodically to discuss the relevance of the experiences of their countries to one another;³

TAKING NOTE that Pakistan withdrew from SEATO in 1972 after East Pakistan seceded and became Bangladesh.⁴ For its part, France gave notice that it will stop paying

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Southeast-Asia-Treaty-Organization>

² Institutional Growth of the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization: Circumstances of the Changes, Richard Butwell, Retrieved at <https://www.asj.upd.edu.ph/mediabox/archive/ASJ-03-02-1965/Butwell.pdf>

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/11/09/archives/pakistan-leaves-seato-alliance-withdrawal-action-follows-improved.html>

dues to the SEATO after 30 June 1974, ultimately suspending financial support in 1975. The Paris Government annually paid about \$1.7-million to SEATO. France consequently stopped participating in SEATO's military activities after limiting participation in civic activities since 1967;⁵

CONSIDERING that after the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, one of the most prominent reasons for SEATO's existence purportedly disappeared and the organization disbanded. The Organization held its final exercise on 20 February 1976, and formally ended on 30 June 1977. Markedly, the US recognizes the Treaty as still in force, as can be gleaned from the US Department of State index of treaties. Conversely, based on Australia's Federal Register of Legislation, the Treaty is no longer considered in force;⁶

MINDFUL that Article X of the Treaty provides that the Treaty "shall remain in force indefinitely, but any Party may cease to be a Party one year after its notice of denunciation has been given to the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, which shall inform the Governments of the other Parties of the deposit of each notice of denunciation";

WHEREAS, consistent with international law, while the SEATO, a by-product of the Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty may have been dissolved, the main Treaty can remain existent and valid;

IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, despite the dissolution of the Organization, it is important to consider the Treaty's separate existence as a possible avenue for multilateral defense cooperation amid growing security threats brought about by competing maritime claims in the West Philippine Sea;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved, to call on the Senate Committee on Foreign relations to conduct an inquiry on the status of the Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty, with the end view of strengthening the country's geopolitical status with other ASEAN nations amid various claims within the West Philippine Sea.

Adopted,



FRANCIS "TOL" N. TOLENTINO

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/1973/06/10/archives/france-to-stop-paying-dues-to-seato-in-june-1974.html>

⁶ *Id.* at 1