

Summary

The Look East Policy of India, which was adopted in the post-cold war era, is to cultivate partnership with the ASEAN, China, Japan and Korea, to enhance India's position in the politics of Asia-Pacific, to promote its national interests for stability, security and prosperity and to neutralize the growing challenges at the domestic and external levels. India share contiguous territorial frontiers with China, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia and others and their cultural and religious past have had common features. India was very close to the socialist world before 1991 and it did not take any substantive decision to promote cultural or economic partnership with the ASEAN. Japan, China, the EU and the US on the other hand, attached importance to the ASEAN as favoured nations, which were aptly reciprocated by the ASEAN countries. Naturally, ASEAN became pro-Western in their outlook and projected Vietnam as their common threat (1975-89). India differed with the view of the ASEAN regarding Vietnam and Cambodia (1978-88) and there were polemics and mud-slinging and thus the relations showed downward trend. This situation created visible gaps in India's understanding and perception. However, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and rapid development in the emerging new world order posed new challenges and new problems to be addressed. Thus, we discovered convergence, of interests to cultivate each other.

The ASEAN boom, their independent standing and incentives of trade and investments attracted India. On the other hand 'ASEAN was also looking for new partners and untapped markets. The dissolution of the Soviet Union, their withdrawal from Cam Ranh Bay naval base' (Vietnam) and-- the American decision to withdraw

from Subic Bay naval base (the Philippines) and the fear of withdrawal from entire region created the syndrome of a security vacuum. On the other hand, the Chinese attempts to occupy the Spratlys, and Mischief Reef incidents and their foothold in the Indian Ocean compelled ASEAN for new thinking China began to claim sovereignty over South China Sea and it had shattering impact on some of the ASEAN countries. Now the ASEAN felt positive role for India in the changed situation and thus, India was invited as a sectoral partner of the ASEAN in 1992 and subsequently it was offered full dialogue partnership status in 1995. India also started to look forward this region because of two reasons; firstly, the economic crisis that India faced in the early 1990s compelled it to look for alternate markets for exports at that time ASEAN was developed as world's most dynamic economic region. Secondly, ASEAN nations started accumulating large reserves of foreign exchange, so India wanted to attract investment from this region. Keeping in view the above factor India unveiled Look East Policy in this period and since the time India has done well so far as trade and investment figures testify to this fact.

This elevated the interactions between ASEAN and India from the senior official to the ministerial level and enabled cooperation in the political and security field, including India's participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the only such security forum in the Asia-Pacific. The third defining moment occurred when ASEAN and Indian leaders agreed to their annual summit. This transformation did not come easily. The financial crisis of 1997 and the developments in South Asia also affected the dialogue relations between ASEAN and India. However, ASEAN-India dialogue relations endured these challenges and are now on the upswing. This paved the way for both sides to enter into a new level of strategic interaction, which will see the signing of a joint declaration and the adoption of a Plan of Action for a forward-

looking relationship at the forthcoming ASEAN- India Summit in November 2004 in Vientiane, Laos. On political front also, after the disintegration of USSR, and sudden demise of bipolar global system, both India and ASEAN came closer to each other due to change in political scenario. The factor which contributed the most was that at that time china tried to establish its hegemony over the region and three countries joined the Warsaw Pact to protect their interest but proved fruitless. As India was a strong democratic country and it was not aligned to any other pole of the world so it was considered as a choice to establish relations with India by ASEAN and considering this India was made a sectoral dialogue partner and than full dialogue partner. Today, India has strengthened its bilateral relations with all the South Asian nations in the last two decades since launching of its Look East Policy. High level visits of heads of states from most of these nations have taken place. India has entered into a bilateral Free Trade Agreements (Thailand) and economic cooperation agreements (Indonesia and Singapore). The high point of India's relations with Malaysia is the defence cooperation which began in 1993 and has developed over the years with annual meeting of the defence secretaries, military training and supply of defence equipment. Special attention is being paid to the three economically under developed countries, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, where there is enough scope and opportunity for India to extend its influence. Indonesia and Singapore has helped India to get into the East Asian Summit despite objections from some other ASEAN members and China. Of all the South East Asian nations, Myanmar has a special place from India's strategic and security perspective as Myanmar is the land bridge between India and ASEAN.

On the economic front, India is an emerging economy of the world with a GDP of more than US\$500 billion and a consumer market of more than 1.2 billion

people. India will grow steadily by 6 percent in the next few years. In the present phase of its “look east policy” India is moving towards economic integration apart from enhancing our political and strategic relations by entering into FTAs both with ASEAN as a whole and with individual countries of the region. The FTA is a part of Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation signed with ASEAN in 2003, which included goods, services and investments and is to be functional by 2016. The FTA is significant for the reason that it is the first multilateral trade agreement entered in to by India. India is also committed to complementing its free trade agreement with ASEAN covering trade, investment and services. India’s trade with ASEAN is already US\$13 billion. India expect to achieve a trade figure of about US –billion by 2015 with ASEAN, in the light of increasing services transactions, investments, projects executions and laobour flows as well as a diversifying trade basket with manufacturing goods playing an increasing role.

India has established institutional linkages with ASEAN and strengthened bilateral relations with the member states. India became a member of the ARF in 1996. India’s participation in the ARF demonstrates its increasing engagement in the Asia-Pacific region, both in politico-security and economic spheres and underlines its commitment to objective of sustaining regional peace and stability. India has hosted several activities such as peacekeeping, maritime security and cyber security. ASEAN states supported India’s entry into the East Asian Summit (EAS) despite Chinese attempts to dissuade ASEAN from doing so. India, being an Asian nation and with its growing economic potential, deserves its place on its own merit. During the 2nd India-ASEAN summit in October 2003” ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation” was signed by India and “Joint Declaration on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism” was adopted. During the 3rd summit Prime Minister signed agreement on

“India- ASEAN Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity”. The institutional integration of India with South East Asia has not remained confined to ASEAN alone. India along with some of the South and Southeast Asian neighbours, also establishes a sub-regional grouping called Bay of Bengal Initiatives for Multi-sectoral Scientific, Technological and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) to promote rapid economic cooperation in the areas of trade, investment, tourism, fisheries, agriculture, transportation links and human resource development. The Kunming Initiative, is a TrackII sub regional organization that includes Bangladesh, China, India, and Myanmar (BCIM) was born out of the attempts to link the development plans of the southwestern Chinese province of Yunnan to India’s Look East Policy. Beside this, India’s interaction with its eastern neighbours also take place in the Indian Ocean Rim Association For Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) , established in 1997, and various forums for Asian cooperation. In 2000, India and Mekong basin countries of Southeast Asia namely, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Kampuchea and Vietnam, established a Mekon- Ganga Cooperation (MGC) forum with India. It is important to note that this concept was floated by India. China had criticized this initiatives as having been to designed to counter-balance the influence of china in this region, which is a riparian Mekong River country and which has not been included in this sub-grouping. Since January 2007 India hold the chair of MGC.

The 2nd phase of India’s Look East Policy has an important place in its foreign policy towards ASEAN. Phase 2nd is marked by arrangements for free trade areas and establishing institutional economic linkages between the countries of the region and India. The broader area of phase 2nd also focuses on security cooperation including joint operations to protect sea lanes and pooling resources in the war against terrorism. The military contacts and joint exercises that India launched with ASEAN

started on a low key basis in the 1990s are now expanding into full-fledged defence cooperation and it has also reached to the level of training of defence personnel and trade in military equipment. Malacca Straits is main point of maritime security cooperation between India and Malaysia in recent times. India's security cooperation with Singapore dates back to mid-1960s however it was not until 2003 that a defence cooperation agreement was signed between two countries. This agreement led to setting up of an India-Singapore Defence Policy Dialogue. A joint Working Group on security between India and Thailand was set up in 2002 and was institutionalized in 2003. Closer defence relations with India have also enabled Southeast Asian states to enhance their capacity for managing nontraditional security threats. Both Southeast Asian states and India have a common interest in overcoming the threats posed by Islamist and other terrorists as well as drug trafficking, sea piracy, armed robbery, human smuggling and other transnational crimes like insurgency-related activities or oil spills. The India-ASEAN Joint Declaration for Combating Terrorism, signed in October 2003, brings the two sides closer in this new era of security and commits them to counter, prevent, and suppress all form of terrorist acts. Closer Southeast Asia-India defence engagement has enhanced stability in Southeast Asia because of Indian contribution to the regional balance of power. India's deployment has underscored India's greater ability to project its military power into Southeast Asia, thus balancing the military power of China and other in the region.

In this study an effort has been made to evaluate the relations between India and ASEAN. In the first chapter, the changed global environment after the end of the cold war has been discussed. The end of the cold war represents a significant development in international relations, which had serious implications for both India and the Asia-Pacific. This development has a far-reaching implication for India and

has led to the reorientation of India's foreign policy. The major change adopted by India has been the beginning of economic reforms and adjustment with the emerging euphoria of globalization and liberalization. It resulted into the emergence of "Look East Policy".

The second chapter discusses about the India's Look East policy towards Southeast Asian countries and vis-à-vis. After the end of cold war, India started moving towards South East Asia to build strong economic, strategic and political ties with them. On the other hand, South East Asia, by leaving all inhibitions of the past, came closer to India to develop warm and friendly relations with them. The need for economic cooperation has been a two-sided affair, as South East also rated India very high on its economic priorities. Because, India with its large and sound human resource base, could provide ample opportunities to ASEAN surplus capital to reap advantages by investing in India. Thailand and some others have adopted "Look West Policy" to reciprocate India's "Look East Policy", and have proposed to build roadways, railways and waterways to India in the economic and strategic partnership.

The third chapter is concerning the political relations between India and ASEAN. The Look East policy adopted by India is a multi pronged approach to evolve political relations with ASEAN countries and to develop strong economic bonds with the region. India –ASEAN relations have deepened and intensified significantly in recent years. India became a sectoral dialogue partner in 1992 and full dialogue partner in 1995. It participated in the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM), the Post Ministerial Conference(PMC) and the ASEAN Regional Forum(ARF) in July 1996. These political level interactions are further strengthen through the Senior Official meeting, as also specialized working groups in the functional areas. Apart from this dual track diplomacy, people to people contacts have also been encouraged

to cement the ties between India and ASEAN. Promotion to tourism, trade, cultural activities, academic exchanges etc has been enhanced to develop friendly contacts between the common men of two region. Thus this three tire approach to diplomacy has been helped in bringing about closer ties between India and Southeast Asia. In the same chapter, the 2nd phase of India's Look East policy is also discussed. Beyond the ASEAN, India has also developed close strategic understanding and cooperation with Japan, Australia, Korea and even China.

The fourth chapter comes with the discussion on challenges and prospects in the way of India and ASEAN's relations. An objective assessment of nearly the past two decades of India's Look East Policy would suggest that while notable progress has been made, there is still a long way to go and tremendous potential remains to be harnessed. There are a number of challenges in the form of global terrorism, instability of financial institutions like FTAs, growing gap between announcements and implementation of policies, the China factor etc are some important hurdles in the way of their smooth realations. Exploitation of the emerging synergies between India and ASEAN to foster a much deeper social, cultural, political and economic interface and meeting the common challenge require an accelerated program of mutual cooperation.

An objective appraisal of the existing relations indicates that the level of cooperation has increased substantially but it will take years to be at par with that of Japan, China, Korea or Australia. It is a reality that some of the dialogue partners are considered more important than India. Some of them might not agree with the philosophy of ASEAN vision and spirits, but because of some other reasons they exercise more influence. Although India is adjusting its policies in tune with ASEAN vision and prove herself a reliable partner, but it has not been allowed participation In

ASEM or APEC. This has not stopped India from wholeheartedly supporting ASEAN stand on Cambodia, Myanmar and East Timor. However, the experiences suggest that there is a need for self-introspection. India must evaluate its "Look East Policy", to find out whether these 'policies are dated or relevant. Whether there is a scope for new inputs or does it requires new priorities for better output? Policy-makers must be constantly in touch with entrepreneurs, journalists and academicians to bring dynamism in their partnership. India must draw some lessons from economic reforms in Vietnam and China and should be quick to adjust in the changing environment.

Although people to people contracts and cultural interactions have increased, but for the regional integration some new initiatives are required. The proposals for growth areas/triangles and infrastructure for service industries and tourism, for instance, should be explored. Appropriate infrastructure for promoting trade and investments should be given priority. Concrete measures should be taken for fulfillment of the ASEAN vision and Hanoi Action Plan (1998) whereby the decision was taken to evolve a network for trans-ASEAN transportation, i.e. the railway, highway, waterways and telecommunications, etc. We have already constructed a road at Tamu-Moreh Border to link India with the ASEAN and similar attempts are needed to promote the endeavour of regional integration at different places. Ganga-Mekon Project and BIMST-EC should not remain merely an accord on paper, but there should be substantive contribution from all those who cherish to develop and be the partners in the global market.

India's economic partnership with Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand has shown increasing volumes but the remaining seven partners need to be enthused. The areas of cooperation should be looked into so that regional integration gets a new thrust. The ASEAN partners should think about affirmative action vis-à-vis India and

important gaps should be filled up to balance the situation. This would be in tune with the policy of constructive engagement with peripheral partners and help the endeavour of AFTA and collective prosperity. India should continue to support the strengthening of ASEAN leadership and facilitation of multilateral initiatives in the region. Finally, implementation holds the key to India's sustained engagement both at ASEAN level as well as the East Asian Community level. India should continue delivering on its promises and take proactive efforts in providing assistance to the ASEAN region.

The overall objective of the ASEAN, as understood, is to bring about collective development of the partners and foster the feeling of regional integration. If India, contiguous to Southeast Asia, is unable to keep pace with the development track of the ASEAN states or if it remains one of the poorest region, if the threat to stability and security remains substantial, the prospects for integrated development of the region would be harmed in the long-run. It is felt that India needs a long-term partnership with Southeast Asian countries for its stability, security and development. Some of the outstanding problems like ethnic disputes, insurgency in the Northeast, narcotics trade, smuggling and border disputes, etc. can be tackled effectively if there is regional understanding and cooperation. The suitable environment for peace and development can evolve if it has the support of a regional grouping. ASEAN and India should work together with other like-minded countries to strengthen the United Nations to demonstrate their commitment towards multilateralism and ensure that the world body remains the sole guardian of international laws, and the protector of the weak and vulnerable.

ASEAN and India both for pragmatic and idealistic reasons have chosen to cooperate further and deepen their relations. More activities that emphasize shared

commitments to responding to non-traditional security threats should be done. They must also be prepared to harmonize their respective human rights and nationalistic and regional goals so that conflicts do not occur. A better and deeper relationship between ASEAN and India is ultimately to the benefit of the greater East Asia and the Asia Pacific region.