

India's Look East Policy: In its Second Phase

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Abstract

The qualitative and structural changes brought about by the end of cold war led to new orientations in the foreign policies of India and countries of Southeast Asia. On the one hand, India started moving towards Southeast Asia to build strong economic, strategic and political ties with these countries. And on the other hand, Southeast Asian countries, by leaving all inhibitions of the past came closer to India to develop warm and friendly relations with it. By adopting Look East Policy in 1991 by P.V.Narsimha Rao, this region has become more prominent in India's foreign policy. The Look East Policy has marked a strategic shift in India's perspective. It started with the aim to enhance economic relations with ASEAN countries and has reached towards the strategic, political and institutional linkage. Today, India's Look East Policy has become more comprehensive because of the adoption of "extended neighbourhood" theory, according to this India's Look East Policy includes not only ASEAN but also Northeast Asia, apart from Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan and South Korea.

Keywords: ASEAN, East Asia, Second Phase, Extended Neighbourhood, Multilateralism.

Introduction

The evolution and initiation of the Look East Policy was to be done with a lot of fanfare, although it was not to be smooth sailing all the way. The relations with ASEAN were pursued with a lot of vigor and glare which saw India become sectoral dialogue partner with ASEAN in 1992 and full dialogue partner in 1995. In July 1996, I.K. Gujral, the then Minister of External Affairs attended an ASEAN conference in Indonesia for the first time. Expressing the Indian government's approval of this new relationship, he said, "we see the full dialogue partnership with ASEAN as manifestation of our Look East destiny.....India would work with ASEAN as a full

dialogue partner to give real meaning and content to the prophecy and promise of the 'Asian century' that is about to draw upon us".ⁱ But India – ASEAN relations stepped up a match toward the end of 1990s and the beginning of 2000. In 1998, the then Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee intended to accelerate India's Look East Policy. The concept of "extended neighborhood" was popularized by Indian leaders such as I.K. Gujral and Jaswant Sinha. After almost a decade, the policy assumed a more pronounced strategic flavour and expanded to the countries other than ASEAN member like Australia, Japan and South Korea. India's then Foreign Minister Jaswant Sinha heralded the second phase of the Look East Policy in 2003, by saying:

"The first phase of India's Look East Policy was ASEAN-centered and focused primarily on trade and investment linkages. The new phase of this policy is characterised by an expanded definition of 'East' extending from Australia to East Asia, with ASEAN at its aim. The new phase also marks a shift from trade to wider economic and security issues including joint efforts to protect the sea lanes and coordinate counter-terrorism activities. On the economic side, phase II is also characterized by arrangement for FTA and establishing institutional economic linkage between the countries of the region and India."ⁱⁱ

India is looking to develop association with countries beyond its immediate neighborhood, perceiving countries in the East and Northeast Asia as its far eastern neighbors and the ASEAN countries as its near eastern neighbors. A lot of reasons have been advanced as having contributed to the development and evolution of the second phase of India's Look East Policy. As noted by Kuppuswamy, the Indian policy makers felt the need to pay more attention to the dynamic Asia-Pacific region as this region presented a lot of potential to the development and advancement of country's economic and strategic intents.ⁱⁱⁱ The other, according to C. Raja Mohan, is the movement away from exclusive focus on economic issues in phase one to a broader agenda in phase two that involves 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 states on a low key basis in the early 1990s are now expanding into full fledged defence cooperation. India has quietly begun to put in place arrangements for regular access to parts in Southeast Asia – India's defence contacts have widened to include, Japan, South Korea and China. Never before has India engaged in such multi-directional defence diplomacy in Asia.^{iv} As stated by Sridhran, in the wake of 9/11 and especially after Southeast Asia was designated as the second front of terrorism, the security dimensions has assumed importance in India-ASEAN relations. Speaking to the gathering of ASEAN leaders in Brunei in 2001, the Indian Foreign Minister said, "we now face an unprecedented challenges in the gray threat posed to regional and international peace and security by the dark focus of terrorism. As a major victim of terrorism herself, India full sports ASEAN's efforts to develop bilateral and regional cooperation to combat terrorism. India is ready to work together both bilaterally with ASEAN countries and in the India-ASEAN framework, to develop practical programmes of cooperation".^v The another feature of the second phase of Look East Policy is that now India is trying to establish air and road links to East and Southeast

Asia. As parts of its road diplomacy, India is now actively building transports corridors to the region. These include the trilateral highway project involving Myanmar and Thailand and the proposed rail link between New Delhi and Hanoi. Besides these, the second phase of India's Look East Policy has allowed India to break the artificial political barriers between the subcontinent and Southeast Asia. India's membership in the groupings like BIMSTEC and MGC has opened the door for the first time since independence to break out of the political confines of the subcontinent that have severely limited India's grand strategic optimism.^{vi}

In 2003-04, India attended the Bali and Laos ASEAN meeting at the summit level. A manifestation of the changed focus was India's strategic partnership with ASEAN and the India's signing ASEAN's Treaty of Peace, Cooperation and Amity, ushering in new era of greater trust and higher levels of cooperation's. At the same time, in 2004, India and ASEAN launched a common vision document laying down the road map and detailed contours of cooperation between the two up to 2020, endorsed at the Summit level. New and expanded areas of cooperation included trans-regional infrastructure, transportation, communication, HRD, Science and Technology including the knowledge areas, agriculture, trade and investment, energy, environment, culture and people-to-people contacts. At the political and strategic levels, cooperation based on evolving convergences was envisaged in areas such as maritime security, combating and containing terrorism and trans-national crimes, preventing the spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), human trafficking and trafficking in small arms; confidence building, conflict prevention and resolution; energy and environment preservation; and promotion of democracy, human rights, peace, development and disarmament. In this way, during the second phase of Look East Policy of India, some very significant development took place giving greater content and a meaningful direction to India's growing relations with Southeast Asia.

A close scrutiny of India's Look East Policy reveals that it was not simply meant to improve relations with Southeast Asia but there were a number of dimensions too. As Naidu says, Look East Policy is a multi-facted and multi-pronged approach to establish strategic links with many individuals' countries, evolve closer political links with ASEAN, and develop strong economic bonds with the region. Second, it is an attempt to carve a place for India in this larger Asia-Pacific. Thirds, the Look East Policy also means to work as a showcase for India's economic potential fear investment and trade.^{vii} According to Grare and Mattoo, another interesting dimension of India's Look East Policy is exhibition of greater sensitivity towards a large number of smaller countries of Southeast Asia.^{viii} The multi-dimensional approach and the progress that India's Look East Policy has achieved are briefly explained below.

Economic Dimension

Since the initiation of the Look East Policy, India has made significant progress in cultivating a multifaceted relationship with ASEAN one hand, and its member states on the other. In the economic realm, the Look East Policy provided a tremendous encouragement to economic ties between India and the ASEAN member states

resulting in the constitution of a numbers of institutional mechanisms to promote economic exchanges. The progress between India and the ASEAN with regard to bilateral trade is equally impressive. Malaysia and Singapore emerged as the 10th and 11th in terms of approved investment received by India by 2002. Thailand was in the 18th and Indonesia and Philippines were in 33rd and 35th position respectively. Indonesia and Singapore are important trading partners of India. Both countries account for more than half of India's export to ASEAN during the current fiscal year of 2010-11. In recent times, India's export to Malaysia and Thailand have improved significantly from US\$ 773.69 million in 2001-02 to US\$ 3956.98 million in 2010-11 and US\$ 633.13 million in 2001-02 to US\$ 2792.80 million in 2010-11 respectively.^{ix} Most notably India's imports from Indonesia and Thailand have increased more than nine and tenfold respectively during the period between 2001-02 and 2011-12. Overall, Singapore has continued to remain the largest market in ASEAN for India's merchandise exports, followed by Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. Cumulative FDI from Singapore to India has increased from US\$ 1.3 billion in 2005-06 to US \$ 17.15 billion in March 2012. Similarly FDI from India to Singapore has increased from US \$ 3.1 billion to US \$ 23.42 billion between 2004-05 to 2011-12.^x

Besides these, India has also received increasing investments from its East Asian neighbour's with Australia, the growth of India trade has been even faster, increasing from US\$ 10 billion in 2005-06 to almost US\$ 15 billion in 2011-02. Trade with China has expanded from US\$ 3 billion in 2001-02 and US\$ 73.9 in 2011-12. Simultaneously, trade with Japan has almost tripled over the same period from 2005-06 to 2011-12.^{xi}

India's economic integration with the East Asian region will grow gradually. While projecting a comprehensive economic partnership framework at the regional level, India has been moving on partnerships at bilateral level. The comprehensive Economic cooperation Agreement (CECA) with Singapore was signed in 2005, and now a similar agreement with Malaysia has been signed in October 2010 and with Indonesia in 2011. Such partnerships will go beyond trade in goods and investments. It will cover the service sector in which India has strength, and may also include areas like science and technology, tourism etc. to consolidate and expand economic cooperation. The pace of economic reforms in India will also give a further boost to not only India's economic growth but also to its relations with the East Asian neighbors.^{xii}

Political Dimension

With regard to the first, India tried to reach out to its Southeast and East Asia neighbours in many ways. Through various exchanges of officials visits, including at the highest political levels, India tried to explain to its eastern neighbours that India was a modern, peace loving, practical and cooperative country. In bilateral discussions, India's attempt was to enhance political understanding, identify areas of mutual interests and initiate moves to harness these interests.^{xiii} After a decade of its 'Look East Policy', India has made considerable political progress in engaging with ASEAN and its members countries. Within ASEAN, India has adopted a

differentiated approach between the new ASEAN members namely Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam and the old ASEAN members. The new members joined ASEAN during the 90s and have been not only economically lagging behind the old ASEAN members, but also had a different strategic background and perspective. These countries can provide enough scope and opportunities for India to extend its influence. The special focus on these new ASEAN countries in India's Look East Policy also led to the creation of a separate administrative unit, the CMLV (Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam) desk, in the Ministry of External Affairs to deal with them. Special programmes of assistance and cooperation in diverse fields are being initiated and executed in CMLV countries through this unit.^{xiv}

Whereas, India had a close relationship with Vietnam since the late 1970s, it always treated Myanmar as a part of its immediate neighbourhood. Naidu says that India's Myanmar policy saw a volt face driven by concern about growing China's influence and menaces of up unabated insurgency in the northeast, which could not be controlled without Yangon's active cooperation.^{xv} Of all Southeast Asian nations, Myanmar has special place from India's strategic and security perspective as Myanmar is the land bridge between India and ASEAN. Incidentally, Myanmar was also administratively a part for some years of British Indian Empire and there existed close relations between the two countries from 1947 until 1964 when military took over power. While the main thrust of Look East Policy has been economic integration, energy security with the nations of Southeast Asia, in the case of Myanmar it is also strategic importance and security of Northeast India. Several measures have been undertaken through Look East Policy to uplift Northeast India such as, 'Asian Highway', 'Asian Railway Link', and 'Natural Gas Pipeline'. There are proposals underway to connect ports and aviation from Northeast to Southeast Asian Countries.^{xvi}

Despite New Delhi's best efforts, perhaps the only country that responded enthusiastically to India's overtures was Singapore. Singapore on its own has been taking initiative to harnessing the vast potential of economic growth in India. It has emerged by far as the most important partners of India and was instrumental in strongly supporting India's case for Dialogue Partnership, membership in the ARF and in the ASEAN +1 Summit meeting. It may have seen a greater promise and potential in India's growing and liberalising economy. As a result, India's has close relations with Singapore in the whole region, since the adoption of its Look East Policy.^{xvii}

The development of relations between India and the ASEAN countries namely Malaysia and Thailand saw less momentum as compared to other East Asian countries. But their relations gathered momentum in the second phase of the Look East Policy. Besides, signing a strategic partnership agreement with both, India also signed a comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with Malaysia during Prime Minister's Manmohan Singh's visit to Malaysia in October 2010 and with Indonesia in January 2011.

As India's Look East Policy has entered into its second phase, India has also developed close bilateral understanding and cooperation with Japan, South Korea and China. In the past few years, the relations between India and China developed and diversified in many areas at many levels. In spite of mistrust in their relationship,

India – China's relations has been steadily expanding and maturing in recent years. These relations manifested in the regular high level political exchanges, burgeoning trade ties, nascent strategic dialogue, cooperation's in regional and international issues of common concern, etc. The visit of President Pratibha Patil's in May 2010 provided an opportunity for India and China to upgrade and deepen their engagement and help bilateral ties.^{xviii} Bilateral relations between India and South Korea has been usually characterized by friendship, cooperation and understanding. As members of Non-Aligned Movement, there is commonality of views between the two nations on many international issues, for instance, disarmament, South- South cooperation. Today, both nations are key members of Asian economy. The entering of the comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with South Korea which took effect from January 2010 and inviting the President Lee Myung Bak as Chief Guest for the Republic Day function in 2010 is note worthy in this regard. With Japan also, India had high level visits of Prime Ministers Shinzo Abe and Hatoyama in 2005, 2007 and 2009 respectively. India has some strategic partnership agreements, economic interaction, defence policy dialogue and have conducted joint naval exercise. India and Japan established a strategic and global partnership in Dec 2006 during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's official visit to Japan and since then the bilateral relations are moving fast on various areas of cooperation including in the defence sectors. The first ever two plus two Dialogue at the senior defence and foreign affairs official level was held between the two countries on 6 July 2010.

Strategic Dimension

India began to embark a closer defence ties with the countries of Southeast Asian. India's strategic engagement with Southeast Asia in both multilateral and bilateral. A multilateral level, India is an active participant in the regional security mechanism, the ASEAN Regional Forum and since 1995 the Indian navy has been hosting a biennial naval gathering called MILAN at Port Blair. There were several objectives of those joint naval exercises with Southeast Asia Countries. According to Shukla, besides, intended to balance China's influence, it was obviously underscoring India's emergence as a major player in the Asia – Pacific region. It was also likely to stem the flow of arms across the Bay of Bengal insurgents in the Northeast and it also demonstrated the Navy's ability to operate far from home.^{xix}

At the bilateral level, Defence relations between India and Singapore, including visit by defence officials and training at each other defence academies, have been going on for a long time. However, intense bilateral defence cooperation that has developed only after 1993, the annual exercise have expanded from simple naval maneuvers to advanced air, surface and subsurface exercise since 2005, have been upgraded to Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX) and ASW(Anti-Submarine Joint Warfare). Apart from joint naval exercises between the two, Singapore has already made use of India's missile in its inventory.^{xx} In 2003, both sides signed an upgraded bilateral Defence cooperation Agreement, which sought to deepen the ongoing military cooperation, facilitate personal exchanges, defence courage, intelligence sharing etc. The Singapore and Indian Air force also conducted

joint exercises at Gwalior in 2004 and in the same year participated in the multinational air exercises in Alaska, conducted by the US Air Force. Singapore is the only country that trains all three wings of its military in India. Another sign of the maturing defence ties between them was the signing of the 2007 Joint Military Exercise agreement. It allows Singapore air force to train at Indian military bases in Kalaikunda, West Bengal, for five years, in return for payment and the understanding that the Singapore air force maintains and upgrades the Indian facilities provided. This military agreement is significant because it is the first time the Indian government has allowed the stationing of foreign troops on its soil. In November 2008, a three week long joint air force training exercise was conducted, which Singapore, Ministry of Defence Considered as yet another significant milestone in bilateral defence relations.^{xxi}

In 1993 MoU on defence cooperation enabled Malaysia to train its air force personnel for Russian MiG-29 aircrafts that it had procured. The signing of the MoU led to the creation of the Malaysia – India Defence Committee (MIDCOM), jointly chaired by the two defence secretaries, focusing on the training of Malaysian military personnel in India. It met in February 1993, May 1997 and January 2001. The Malaysian and Indian Navies have also been conducting exercises on a regular basis. For instance, in May 2008, and June 2010, vessels from both navies conducted live – firing and anti-piracy exercises in the Malacca strait, demonstrating their mutual interest in keeping the vital strait safe.^{xxii} The otherwise important bilateral defence cooperation was revived under a new 2008 deal under which India once again trained Malaysian pilots to operate Su-30s. India has also agreed consider the possibility of cooperation in joint maintenance and use of 'Scorpene' submarines. During Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Malaysia in October 2010, both countries agreed to enhance their cooperative security relationship including cooperation in counter-terrorism, the establishment of a JWS (Joint Working Group) and the Indian defence industry's participation in the soon-to be established Malaysian Defence and Security parks.^{xxiii} Malaysia – India Defence Cooperation meeting at the level of Defence Secretary are held regularly. The 9th meeting of the MIDCOM was held in Kuala Lumpur in January 2012. Service chiefs from both countries regularly exchange visits: India's Chief of Air Staff visited Malaysia in Feb, 2012 and Malaysia's Chief of Army and Navy both visited India in April 2012. Both sides send naval ships and delegation to the bi-annual LIMA (Malaysia) and MILAN (India) regional events. India is also participating in the cooperative mechanism on the Strait of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS) and contributed to two of the six IMO Projects for enhancement of navigational safety and environmental protection in Straits.^{xxiv}

The defence cooperation between India and Indonesia, which began with an agreement in 2001, is rapidly growing. During the visit of the Indonesian President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in November 2005, the two countries agreed to hold annual senior officer level strategic dialogue, with the first meeting to be held in the first half of 2006. A MoU on cooperation between the countries diplomatic training institutes has also been signed. India has been providing training to Indonesian military officers under the ITEC (Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation). Indonesia has also been sending its forces to India for training purpose. Under the

newly established Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) mechanism, a number of activities, which include exchanges of naval officers for training in their respective institutions, are on the anvil. If the planned Indonesian acquisition of Russian Kilo-class submarines materializes, India is likely to play a key role in training the Indonesian army.^{xxv} The Indian Defence Minister A K Antony visited Indonesia from 15-17 October, 2012, to take part in the first ministerial level biennial defence dialogue between the two countries. The last meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWS) was held on December 13-14, 2011 in Semarang, Indonesia. Both sides have also signed an Extradition Treaty and a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in Criminal Terrorism and Jungle warfare in India earlier this year, India's Defence Minister, A K Antony proposed that Indonesia and India should continue the joint exercise between the two armies on a mutually agreed frequency. Similarly, the two navies are regularly conducting coordinated maritime patrols (CORPAT).^{xxvi}

While Vietnam's eagerness to engage India in a security role continued throughout the 1990s, the major upswing in defence relations between the two states came in 2000 when the Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes signed a new defence protocol which was more comprehensive and included an institutionalised framework for regular discussion between the two defence ministers, naval exercises between the two navies and coast guards, and training of Vietnamese air force pilots by the Indian. A joint declaration on the strategic partnership was signed in 2007. With this declaration, Vietnam was the first country in Southeast Asia and the second in Asia-Pacific (after Japan) that officially established strategic relations with India.^{xxvii} Noteworthy is the training that Indian soldiers get in Vietnam in guerilla warfare. With the supply of several spare parts, Vietnam can prolong the life of many of its Patya class ships. Several forms of strategic dialogues between the two countries have been established. Vietnam – India political consultative meeting was held for the first time in 2006 and the fourth meeting was held in New Delhi in October 2009. As a result, the first strategic dialogue meeting between Vietnam and India took place in New Delhi on October 15, 2009. The second strategic dialogue and fifth political consultative meeting between Vietnam and India was held in Vietnam in August 2011.^{xxviii} India and Vietnam have also built strategic partnership, including extensive cooperation on developing nuclear power, enhancing regional security and fighting terrorism, transnational crime and drug trafficking. Vietnam has also welcomed Indian Navy ships in their region which would enhance India and Vietnam military relations. Vietnam has also welcomed Indian support for a peaceful resolution of the territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

India's move to forge close relations with Myanmar is motivated by a desire to counter China's growing influence as a regional leader and enhance its own influence and standing. Concerns and tensions increased in India's over China's extensive military cooperation and involvement in developing ports, naval and intelligence facilities and industries, specially the upgrading of a naval base in Sittwe, a major seaport located in close to the eastern Indian city of Kolkata.^{xxix} The growing political comfort between India and Myanmar can be judged by the fact that India is the only foreign country to which Yangon has started sending its naval ships for periodic exercises and to participate in the MILAN naval exercises since the mid-2000s.

Defence relations and cooperation have been marked by regular exchanges of high-level visits and bilateral military exercises. The recent visit of Indian Prime Minister to Myanmar was in April 2012. Military training too has been an agenda of bilateral defence cooperation. In a significant move, during the visit of General Min Aung Hlaing, can commander in Chief of Defence services of Myanmar to India in August 2012, India once again offered to train Myanmar's Army personnel.^{xxx}

Similarly, Thailand and Philippines too have shown interest in holding Joint naval exercises with the Indian Navy and the first round of maritime exercise was conducted in May 1995. The navies of Thailand and India have been regularly conducting coordinated exercises in the areas adjacent of their international maritime boundary lines and biennial exercises near Phuket. Thailand also uses Indian facilities for training purposes. After acquiring its aircraft carrier, it turned to the Indian Navy to train its pilots for flying the sea Harriers. An agreement was signed between Philippines and India in 2012 to provided for exchange of military training expertise and information, exchange of military instructors/observer and visits of military aircraft and naval vessels.

Beyond ASEAN, India has also developed close strategic understanding and cooperation with China, Japan and Korea. India and China signed a "strategic and cooperation Partnership for Peace and Prosperity in April, 2005". It started conducting Joint Naval exercises between them. Last joint naval exercise that took place between the two nations was at Kunming in the year 2007 and at Belgaum in 2008. An agreement was made on 4 September 2012 between India and China to boost defence ties during the visit of Chinese Defence Minister Gen. Lian Guangle to India and his meeting with his Indian counterpart A.K. Antony.^{xxxii} The result of this meeting happened to that both sides agreed to strengthen border security cooperation between the troops in order to maintain peace in the border area.

In terms of security cooperation, Japan and India in recent times have confined themselves to energy security, maritime security and enhanced contacts between the Armed Forces of both countries. Regular exercises visit between the two Coast Guards through meetings of head of Coast Guards, mutual visits of Coast Guard ships and holding of combined exercises are very vital for both India and Japan in strengthening their respective security perimeters. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Tokyo in 2008 gave further filip to India-Japan security relations, which regulated in India and Japan signing a significant declaration on security cooperation towards making their partnerships an essential pillar for future architecture of the region. In 2012, naval vessels of both sides made mutual port calls and Maritime Self Defence Force (MSDF) visited India. Coming into force of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating piracy and armed robbery against strips in Asia and reaffirming to enhance cooperation in respect of Anti-piracy counter measures under its framework are welcome measures in this directions.^{xxxii}

With South Korea the convergence of interest started after signing a MoU on Defence Logistics and Supplies in the year 2005. In May 2007, India and South Korean Defence Minister held their first ever consultations on 'matters of mutual interests' and agreed to strengthen cooperation on training of armed focus personal exchange of visits and strengthening the mutual cooperation between the Coast Guard

of two countries. This partnership has become appreciably more intense and diversified in the recent years, and has been elevated to the level of 'strategic Partnership' during the visit of RoK President Lee Myung-bak to India in January 2010. Former President Pratibha Patil's visit in March 2012 would help further strengthen the strategic partnership between the two countries.^{xxxiii} Apart from military cooperation, there is a strong case for both countries to cooperate in defence trade since South Korea possesses sophisticated military technology.

India's Look East Policy and Multilateralism

The story of India's engagement with Southeast Asia is incomplete without a mention of its participation in a variety of regional multilateral frameworks. Though India had become the member of ARF in 1996, but the institutionalization of ASEAN – India relations came with the first India – ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh on 5 November 2002 and was perceived as the success of India's Look East Policy. It was considered an acknowledgement of India's emergence as a key player in the Asia Pacific Region. Recently the 10th India-ASEAN Summit held in Phnom Penh on 19th November 2012. There a plan for action was prepared to implement the ASEAN – India partnership for Peace, Progress and shared prosperity, stability and development. The plan was made for political, economic and security cooperation, to enhance the cooperation in areas such as maritime security, counter-terrorism, environmental security and energy security.^{xxxiv} There were initial reservations on India joining the new trans-regional "organisation of the East Asia Summit (EAS), the initiative for which Malaysia may be traced back to 1991. In the perception of Malaysia and some other prospective members of this organisation like China, India did not qualify to be an East Asian Country. This was contested by India and other ASEAN members like Singapore and Japan. Eventually, India along with Australia and New Zealand became its founding member when EAS was established in 2005.^{xxxv} Now India can legitimately claim that its Look East Policy is bearing fruits and it is being considered as a serious player in Asia-Pacific region. ASEAN also forged another regional organisation called the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) in 2007, to cooperate, to begin with, in the areas of humanitarian and disaster relief. At its fourth meeting in Singapore in May 2010, the ADMM became ADMM+8, by including eight other members namely Japan, Korea, China, Australia, New Zealand, India, Russia and the US.^{xxxvi} The other trans-regional organisation is Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) which was initiated in 1995 and included member states of ASEAN, EU, Japan, China and South Korea. Its goal was to work on major issues like trade and investment promotion, to promote educational networks, transportation, culture and technology. It is a great opportunity for India to be admitted in this organisation in 2006, because it provides India a multilateral platform to engage EU in global trade. Another landmark agreement, the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity Agreement (Vision 2020) was concluded by both parties at the Vientiane (Laos) Summit in November 2004. The Vientiane Agreement charted the roadmap to the consolidation of India's relations with the Southeast Asian countries. It is a blueprint which draws a comprehensive set of long-term objectives along with an Action Plan containing a

package of multi-sectoral areas of cooperation between the parties. The agreement commits India and ASEAN to reiterate their full support "for the implementation of the Declaration of ASEAN concord-II^{xxxvii} leading to the formation of a more integrated ASEAN community comprising the ASEAN security community, the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural community.^{xxxviii} In addition, it calls for political and security cooperation, combating terrorism and transnational crimes. Non-political areas of collaboration enumerated in the partnership are: trade and investment, finance, energy security, IT, human resources development, health and pharmaceuticals, tourism, agriculture, science and technology and people-to-people contacts. For the economic cooperation, the growing glory of the Look East Policy is the signing of the India – ASEAN Free Trade Agreement on 13 August 2009 at Bangkok. India has been moving on partnership at the bilateral level. The comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) with Singapore was signed in 2005 and now a similar agreement with Malaysia has also been finalised in 2011. Such CECA seeks to establish an ASEAN – India Regional Trade and Investment Area (RTIA) which includes an FTA in goods, services and investment. Such partnerships will go beyond trade in goods and investments. It will cover the services sector in which India has strength, and may also include areas like science and technology, tourism etc. to consolidate and expand economic cooperation.^{xxxix} Other institutions playing very crucial role in enhancing business contacts between India and ASEAN are ASEAN – India Business council and India – ASEAN Economic Cooperation Committee in which business delegates of all countries are represented. In these meetings both have forged economic links and synergies in sectors like energy, technology, capital goods, food and agriculture, telecommunication and transportation.

The institutional integration of India and Southeast Asia has not remained confined to ASEAN alone. Today India is eager to become involved in regional/sub-regional groupings with potential and promise from the very outset. India has participated in the establishment of new sub-regional grouping like the India – Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IORARC), the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Scientific, Technological and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC), and also participating as an observer in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

Thus, India has achieved notable success in securing institutional integration with the region under Look East Policy. With these regional initiatives India is trying to penetrate the ASEAN markets by enhancing the mutual economic benefits, transportation and infrastructural development space science, agriculture, information and communication technology, telecommunication, transport, tourism and culture. Apart from economic cooperation, there is a much more, where India can cooperate with this region. Cooperation in borderless issues such as terrorism, nuclear proliferation, piracy, trafficking in human beings, arms and drugs, environmental problem and natural disasters etc. to strengthen the regional security architecture. So there are a number of possibilities which need to be explored. Therefore, it is crucial that both India and ASEAN should try to cooperate together in exploiting the synergies between each other.

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