

India's 'Look East' Policy with Special Reference to ASEAN

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Abstract

This article aptly traces the establishing main motives and relevance of the India's 'Look East' Policy, through connecting the political, economic, strategic and security perspective achieved through explaining the foreign policy in terms of regional as well as internationally engaging with ASEAN. And India checking the regional and global issues through the concretion and corporation with the South East Asia in the opportunities and necessitated in the external and internal say in the world order as a super power in 21st century.

Introduction

India's 'Look East' policy encompassing relations with its eastern neighbours, including the 10 Asean countries- Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam- as well as China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand constitute an increasingly important dimension of India's Foreign Policy. With all countries there is an unprecedented level of engagement and, with the exception of China, that too only, for that last two or three years, much greater mutual trust and confidence. Trade, economic and defense ties have been surging ahead. Air links, tourism and people-to-people ties have developed dramatically this region in today India's largest trade partner about 35 percent of total trade head of Europe as well as the US, and the rate of growth is comparatively much faster. It is an increasingly importance the last five years, visits have been exchanged at the highest level with all countries especially Asean.

Historical Relations

History witnesses a close relationship between India and Asean. "Ancient Indian classical work such as Ramayana, reference parts of South East Asia, while Indian merchants began brining Hinduism and Buddhism across the sea by the 1st century AD, influencing the development of Kingdoms and empires like Srivijaya in Sumatra and the Majapahit in Java, Bali and the Philippines archipelago". Today Indian influence in visible in

South East Asian architecture, food, pop culture, language, religion and soon. “Though India initially was a champion of decolonization in South east Asia during the 1950s and 1960s as head of the Nonalignment Movement (MAM), the 1970s saw India drifting in to the Soviet orbit” (Parameswaran 2010). After the adoption of India’s Look East Policy the relations of India and South East Asia countries further got a great boost.

“The revival and resurrection of India’s glorious past in impossible without the support of Southeast Asia and it is no exaggeration to say that the prosperity of India is linked to the ASEAN region and vice versa” (Jha 2010:122).

Emergence of ASEAN:

The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established in 1967 by five countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand for promotion of “political and economic cooperation and regional stability”. Brunei joined in ASEAN in 1984. Vietnam becomes member of ASEAN in 1995. Laos and Burma (Myanmar) accepted full membership in July 1997 and Cambodia became the tenth member in 1999 (<http://www.state.gov/p/eap/regional/asean/>).

ASEAN was established for regional economic integration in East Asia. It under took “several economic integration initiatives in East Asia including the ASEAN framework agreement on service (AFAS) and ASEAN free trade agreement (AFTA) and the ASEAN Investment Area (ATA) (Anand 2009:2).

The 1967 ASEAN declaration was considered as the founding document of ASEAN and the principles of peace and cooperation are formalized for which ASEAN in working. The ASEAN Charter came into force on 15th December 2008. After the ASEAN Charter came into force, ASEAN achieved its legal identity as international organization and dedicated itself in the community belonging processes (<http://www.state.gov/p/eap/regionalasean/>)

The ASEAN community in compressed of three pillars the political security community, economic community and socio-community. Each pillar has its own blueprint approved at the summit level, and together with the initiative for ASEAN integration (IAI) strategic framework and (IAI) work plane Phase II (2009-2015) they form the roadmap for and ASEAN community (2009-2015) ‘ASEAN commands for greater influence on Asia

Pacific trade, political and security issues then its members could achieve individually. This has driven ASEAN's community building efforts (ibid).

Evaluation of India's Look East Policy:

India initiated reform in its economy to integrate it with world economy in 1991. In this circumstance, India adopted the Look East Policy and since then, India's relations with ASEAN become an important component of our foreign policy this look east policy was formed and enacted by P.V. Narasimha Rao, Atal Bihari Vajpayee further took one step ahead to improve relations with ASEAN countries and offered 'open sky policy'. This policy provided opportunities for proper connectivity between capitals of 10 ASEAN countries and Metropolitan Cities in India (Brajesh Kajak 2009).

Causes of India's adopting Look East Policy:

Always India wants to maintain good and friendly relations with ASEAN because it is interested in reduced tariff and need market to export the goods produced in India to South East Asian Countries. Free trade between India and many ASEAN countries like Thailand would provide opportunities for both countries for free trade on all goods (Brajesh Kajak, 2009).

Moreover, the countries of ASEAN want India's cooperation for combating Drug Trafficking Money laundering, terrorism and religious extremism (ibid). To develop relations with ASEAN countries India is involved in Mekong-Ganga-Cooperation India (MGC). This unites India and five ASEAN countries such as Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. Again India's look east policy is strengthened by BIMSTEC which is formed by India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand (Ibid).

Causes of Emergence of India- ASEAN Relations:

The disintegration of USSR leads to the end of cold war which gave rise to political change and security concern in Asian countries and that necessitated a strategic place. India became this strategic place for conducting the foreign policies. India dominated the world geopolitically because of its location in heartland of world and is "bounded by Volga River, the Arctic Ocean, the Yangtze River and Himalayan River and the Himalayan Mountains" also dominated the world politically.

Political Cooperation:

Bilateral Cooperation between India and ASEAN developed in 1992 the economic field and suddenly spread to political and security sphere when India was given full ASEAN dialogue partner status in 1995. In 1996 again India became member of ASEAN regional forum and include in East Asian Summit in 2005. India also signed treaty of amity of cooperation in 2003. It signed free trade agreement (FTA) with Singapore and Thailand and linked with Mekong-Ganga-Cooperation initiatives (MFCI) and the Bay of Bengal initiative for multi-sectoral technical and economic cooperation (BIMSTEC).

Economic Cooperation:

In the field of trade, India and ASEAN are dependent on each other because of the availability of various goods in their respective sphere. India's exports to ASEAN countries oil, gems and jewellery, meat, rice, drugs and pharmaceutical, meat preparation cotton, yarn, fabrics, machinery chemicals and so on. India import from ASEAN countries including artificial resins, plastic material, natural rubber, woods and wood products, electric goods, organic chemicals, edible oils, fertilizers and so on.

For improving land sea and air connectivity, India has started, ASEAN connectivity coordinating committee the India Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway expected to be completed by 2016 and is expected to boost growth in India northeast region (Mohan 2013). The India- ASEAN trade volume increased by 37% in 2011-12 and reached US\$ 79.3 billion.

During the 7th ASEAN-INDIA Summit in Oct, 2009, India declared to provide US \$ 50 million to ASEAN- India Cooperation fund for the successful implementation of ASEAN India Plan of Action 2010-2015 (Mohan 2013).

Security Cooperation:

India ASEAN economic and political cooperation accompanied with cooperation for combating terrorism, piracy, sea lane protection and climate change would create a stable, peaceful Asia. Both also share similar concern and interest in the field of combating piracy, terrorism, drug-trafficking natural disaster relief, climate change and so on (Paramswarn 2010-15).

India and ASEAN have common interest for establishment of regional peace and security. After the 11th Sept. 2001 attack on US world trade centre, terrorism has become a global threat. India and ASEAN are common victim of terrorism and work for establishing peace and security in

the region (Anand 2009:56) the Indian ocean became the main route during the attack of 9/11 various terrorist organizations around Indian ocean are operating freely. Moreover, terrorism is closely linked with give running and drug trafficking. All are extreme threats, threatened the Indian Ocean region. The problem of terrorism in India in this sphere, the South East Asian Countries want help from India for training their forces far anti terrorist operations the insurgent group in North East India staying in South East Asia, especially operating from Myanmar and Thailand.

So cooperation between India and South East Asia countries are necessary for controlling this problem there is need of joint declaration on terrorism between India and ASEAN which include “exchange of information, cooperation in legal matters cooperation in enforcement matters and training (Singh and Kaur 2009).

ASEAN-India Green Fund was established in 2007 with US \$ 5 million for providing found for the pilot projects for the adoption of technologies to control clime change on 27th -28th June 2012, ASEAN-India Expert meeting on climate change was organized at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore (<http://www.mea.gov.in/portal/foreignrelation/indiaasianrelationpdf>)

The INS Sudarshini shipping expedition was flagged off on 15th September 2012 from kochi and is scheduled to conclude on 29th March 2013. It was a nine ASEAN countries during this exception various “maker” event- B2B event by FICCI and ICC, Kolkata and cultural event by ICC are being organized at various parts of call (<http://www.asianindia.com/summit-2012>)

On 6th -7th Sep. 2012, in the New Delhi first meeting at the ASEAN-India Environment ministers was on capacity building on Nagoya protocol on 4th-5th Sep. 2012. ASEAN India Minister meeting on new and penetrable energy in New Delhi on 7th Nov. 2012 (<http://men.gov.in/portal/foreignrelation/india/ASEAN-realtion.pdf>).

Conclusion

A clear-cut observation of India- ASEAN relations make it clear that both the parties have been able to established good relationship in political economic and security sphere where their economic relation occupies a predominant position. After India’s adoption of Look East Policy and reforms in Indian economy, the protectionist nature was removed and India- ASEAN trade placed for open completion and in these

circumstances India- ASEAN trade is increasing to its maximum. So it is necessary that the leader of India and ASEAN work to resist protectionism in the future, and this would help for deepening the bilateral ties between India and ASEAN countries in the matter of cooperation and correlation in every sphere of balance of power and countering of China influence in the South East Asia region.

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