

**INDIA AND ASEAN - OPPORTUNITIES AND WAY FORWARD****Hemant Kumar Pandey, Ph. D.***Department of Defence Studies, Meerut College, Meerut (U.P.)***Abstract**

The foreign policy of a state is determined by its geography, history, culture and its people and the same goes in context of India. When it comes for South Asian and South East Asian region, India has been on natural higher ground because of its rich historical, geographical and cultural connections with the whole region. Despite of all that India's relation with South East Asian region is kind of a sine cosine function i.e. with ups and downs in phases. Though in the past India has been closely linked with the region, there was time when the south East Asian region has not occupied the focus of Indian foreign policy makers. However there has been a course correction of late and India has started giving prime importance to this region. In the 1990s that India articulated her 'Look East Policy'(LEP) that initiated India's foreign policy focus on south east Asian countries.

According to LEP's viewpoint India's future interests are best served by the integrating with the Southeast Asian countries. This was built on a massive historical and cultural foundation. India's interactions with South East Asia that go back to several centuries and continue to be seen in the region's culture. In recent years India has been showing interest in working on those ties and also rebuilding her socio-political connectivity with the nations of this South East Asian region.

ASEAN set up in 1967, with five founding members: Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia. Later Brunei (1984), Vietnam (1995), Laos and Myanmar (1997) and Cambodia (1999) were added making total of ten. After addition of Myanmar (1997) India was no longer just the maritime neighbor of ASEAN, it started a huge land boundary with her. For ASEAN India is not only appealing trade and investment partner but also a great pacifier in the region.

The purpose of this study is to examine the upcoming opportunities for India after 8th India-ASEAN summit on 20th anniversary of India-ASEAN dialogue partnership by collaborating with Southeast Asian region. Also, creating new window for better geopolitik and economic stability, maritime security and how India can move forward and change the tides by creating EU kind of a alliance with ASEAN for overall growth of not just southeast Asia but whole south asian region.

Introduction

International relations can be defined as the study of relationships and interactions between countries, including the activities and policies of national government, international

organisations (IGOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and multinational corporations (MNCs). States are independent of each other, at least legally: they have sovereignty. But that does not mean they are isolated from each other. On the contrary, they adjoin each other and affect each other and must therefore somehow find ways to coexist and to deal with each other.ⁱ States establish various organisational structures and functional relationships to create and carry out foreign policiesⁱⁱ.

Regionalism has been a significant fact in post world war ii international relations. Regional economic cooperation has become more important for national development of developing countries because of increasing interdependence of national economies on global world economies.

The process of regionalization began in Southeast Asia since the 1960s. This led to the creation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967. Regionalism in ASEAN has been built on the firm foundation of national self-interest of its members. Economic cooperation and collective security have been the basis on which the ASEAN member countries have built a successful regional economic and political organization. The Association has attained a notable international standing in comparison with other ‘Third World’ⁱⁱⁱ regional. Regionalization in Southeast Asia has sustained the challenge of the financial crisis of 1997.

The changing international approaches in the end of cold war period made India to think about the ‘Geographically proximate regional friends’ who were making a new record of success. The disintegration of the Soviet Union created a vacuum that left the spaces of international influence vacant. United States shrunk their fronts after the end of Cold War. India feared that China would seize the chance to fill this vacuum with its rising power, and eventually block India inside the small region of South Asia. Most importantly, the centre of world economy began to shift to Asia-Pacific region during 1990s, and ASEAN became one of the most powerful and vital economic blocs of the world. In order to revive the domestic economic development, India has to stimulate its national economy through regional economic and trade cooperation. Due to this reason, India implemented the “Look East Policy” (LEP) that greatly affected the entire situation and development of the twenty-first century Asia-Pacific region.

The essential philosophy of the LEP is that India's future and economic interests are best served by greater integration with East and Southeast Asia. The commitment was built on a massive historical and cultural foundation. India's interactions with Southeast Asia go back millennia and continue to be visible in the region's food, language, religion, and architecture. Since Rao's articulation of interest in East Asia, India's relations with ASEAN have grown. It was developed and enacted by the government of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao and rigorously pursued by the successive governments of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and now with outlook of Man Mohan Singh.

“India's Look East Policy is not merely an external economic policy; it is also a strategic shift in India's vision of the world and India's place in the evolving global economy. Most of all it is about reaching out to our civilizational neighbours in South East Asia and East Asia”.

Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh^{iv}

The LEP is the product of various compulsions, changed perceptions and expectations of India in the changed international environment. The end of cold war brought about a fundamental change in the international system, which focuses on the economic content of relations and led to the rapidly increase of the formation of regional economic organisations. While India was opening up to the world market, it became aware of the growing trends towards regionalism and feared that it might be marginalised from the dynamics pushing the global economy. The economic reforms, coupled with the integrative forces of globalisation; frustration with the process of integration within South Asia and the renewed concern about the antecedent and powerful China and its impact on India's security, as well as India's unease at Beijing's growing assertiveness in the Asia-Pacific region made India to rethink the basic parameters of its foreign policy

India's first PM Jawaharlal Nehru's in the *Discovery of India* (1944) wrote: “*The Pacific is likely to take the place of the Atlantic in the future as the nerve centre of the world. Though not directly a Pacific state, India will inevitably exercise an important influence there. India*

will also develop as the centre of economic and strategic importance in a part of the world which is going to develop in the future”.

He further wrote that *“India will have to play a very great part in security problems of Asia and the Indian Ocean, more especially of the Middle East and South East Asia”* and that *“India is the pivot around which these problems will have to be considered”*.^{vi}

The developments of the last few years in the South East Asian and Far Eastern regions and the expectations that the ASEAN member countries have from India to provide leadership at a difficult period seem to confirm what Nehru saw clearly 70-years back. India has been a source of strength for most ASEAN countries for its unequivocal stand on maritime disputes. India supports unimpeded rights of passage and other maritime rights in accordance with the international law. New Delhi has welcomed the decision to implement the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and that countries in the region adopt a code of conduct on the basis of consensus.

Dialogue to Strategic Partnership

Strategic partnerships are commonly associated with defense or security related issues, but a survey of formal strategic partnerships around the world reveal they can also be quite a hold-all, covering a wide range in bilateral relations, from defense to education, health and agriculture, and quite commonly, economic relations, including trade, investment and banking.^{vii}

Hence the addition of the “strategic” qualifier to the “partnership.” The method is a way for India to get its foot in the door for further diplomatic engagement on military and defense issues should circumstances change. In the meantime, acknowledging that its foreign policy is driven primarily by its economic priorities, the proliferation of such partnerships begins to make more sense.

India was admitted as sectoral dialogue partner of the ASEAN in 1992 and went on to become a full-fledged dialogue partner in 1996. There has been a significant increase in India-ASEAN trade from \$42 billion in 2008 to \$80 billion in 2011. This trade relationship will get a further boost with the two signing the FTA on services and investment. The FTA on goods was signed in 2009 since its implementation India has been keen on expanding trade in services in order

to leverage its own strengths. The relationship is now officially 'strategic' with the two sides deciding to elevate their ties from a mere dialogue partnership.

Despite its historical and cultural links with South-East Asia, India in its post-Independence foreign policy largely tended to ignore the region. The structural constraints of the Cold War proved too formidable despite India's geographic proximity to the region. It was the end of the Cold War that really brought this region back to the forefront of India's foreign policy horizons. And the then Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, whose contributions are often ignored in Indian foreign policy discourse, was visionary enough to recognize the importance of engaging with the world's most economically dynamic region. Since then, India's 'Look East' policy, which originated primarily focused on trade and economics, has now attained a distinct security dimension. As India's economic linkages with various countries in the region have become more extensive, demands have grown for a gradual strengthening of security ties at a time of China's rapid ascendance in the global hierarchy

India has intentions about air, land and maritime connectivity into actual performances in the region. As these infrastructure projects demanded enormous funds, both India and ASEAN should think of innovative ways of financing and executing them. India was putting a great deal of emphasis on quick implementation of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and its extension to Laos and Cambodia. It also planned to launch a second route that would run from India through Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia to Vietnam.

Defying China Influence

India's regional neighbor China started the open door policy during the 1980s which had seen the meteoric rise of an emerging economic giant in Asia. China competes with India in the political, economic and military spheres and most importantly, for economic influence in South East Asia. In short, India must adopt an economically aggressive stance to compete well with international market forces at work in the region.

Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh said that he welcomed Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into India, which rakes in US\$3 billion only as compared to US\$53 billion in FDI to China annually. India's FDI barely measures up to 6% of its main rivals^{viii}. Obviously for India, there is a need

to seek new markets in order to grow economically and to seek a significant way of countering China's own economic policies.

In a speech made at Harvard University, Indian External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha pointed out that formerly, India's engagement with Southeast Asia was based on an idealistic perception of Asian brotherhood, a shared colonial history and cultural ties.^{ix} However, and modern regional dynamics dictate that the progress of Southeast Asia is also motivated just as much by trade, investment and production. The truth is that Asia's other large regional player, China, has much better pre-set conditions conducive for economic investments and developments attractive to SEA investors. This includes a larger, educated work force in quantitative terms, cheaper material resources in abundance and relatively stable governance free from any significant external or internal security threat. The simple fact of consumer behaviour gravitating towards a better choice in terms of cost and quality ensures that Southeast Asia turns first to China for trade and investment rather than other countries. However, one major weakness exists for China. Its long history of socialist rule results in a tightly controlled state with little room for political manoeuvring or reform. This means that China is a state that plays by its own rules and is not answerable to non-state players like foreign investors. India, in contrast, having less to offer in tangible terms like manpower costs and resource abundance, however, enjoys the reputation of being a democracy which respects consumer rights and international law governing trade and foreign investments? Also, India's long standing recognition of English as the official language breaks down language and cultural barriers in trade communications, and in theory, accelerates business procedures. This is the advantage that India's Look East Policy has over China, and should be exploited to the full to gain an edge.

China has, in truth, a less than savoury reputation in its foreign relations with its neighbours with regards in pursuing its own economic interests. It deals from a position of strength with regional partners, and usually ends with the latter having to compromise with a lesser share of the cake. India, however, starts with a clean slate in terms of economic co-operation with regional partners, putting it in a favourable position to win and maintain trust with its partners. Thus it is very much up to India's present leaders how they wish to promote the "Look East"

policy and market the virtues and advantages of having bi-lateral economic ties with their nation.

India enjoys certain advantages in crafting a sound partnership with southeast Asia. While China, Japan, the US, France, The UK, Spain and Holland evokes memories of imperialist past in southeast Asian minds, India is perceived as a benign neighbour. This is more so in view of the fact that the southeast Asian countries such as Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Indonesia have deeply influenced by Indian political ideas religion art and language. Indian cultural impact in these countries is so deep that the enriched culture of Southeast Asia survives even today. B.B kumar, an Indian analyst of repute, aptly described the cultural closeness between India and Southeast Asia thus :

“We need to know Southeast Asia not only because it lies in our immediate neighborhood and we had age-old ties with the region. We need it also because it deepens our understanding about ourselves. Southeast asia form a part of India centric continuum operates at several levels, in the term of geographical spread, in the depth and the perceptual levels. Indian South East Asia share the perceptions of divine kingship, apotheosis/deification of kings, cult, syncretism, composite cult emblems, law, bureaucratic Government and expression in the art, norm, value and ethos”^x

China is clearly too big and too powerful to be ignored by the regional states. But the states in China’s vicinity are now seeking to expand their strategic space by reaching out to other regional and global powers. Smaller states in the region are now looking to India to act as a balancer in view of China’s growing influence and a broader leadership vacuum in the region, while larger states see India as an attractive engine for regional growth. To live up to its full potential and meet the region’s expectations, India will have to do a more convincing job of emerging as a credible strategic partner of the region. India, for its part, would not only like greater economic integration with the fastest growing region in the world but would also like to challenge China on its periphery. But India will have to do much more to emerge as a serious player in the region. After all, China’s trade with Asean in 2011 was a whopping \$363 billion and it remains far better integrated into the region.

The recent rupture in China-Asean ties has provided India with a key opening in the region to underline its credentials as a responsible regional stakeholder. On the one hand, China's aggressive pursuit of its territorial claims has aggravated regional tensions. On the other, despite the Obama administration's famous 'pivot' toward the Asia-Pacific, there are doubts about the ability of Washington to manage regional tensions effectively. India's proximity to the region and its growing capabilities make it a natural partner of most states in South-East Asia. It is not without significance, that the vision document released at the summit talks of promoting maritime cooperation and "strengthening cooperation to ensure maritime security and freedom of navigation, and safety of sea lanes of communication for unfettered movement of trade in accordance with international law." New Delhi has been reiterating its commitment to not only supporting freedom of navigation and right of passage but also access to resources in accordance with accepted principles of international law.

ASEAN-India Defense Cooperation

The extent of India's engagement in Southeast Asia, and in ASEAN in particular, go beyond the strategic importance that many analysts have given to India which focus largely on defence and security concerns. While India has established defence and security cooperation with some ASEAN states, one would note that the nature of this engagement is mostly conducted on a bilateral basis and is limited to capacity building as defined by the kinds of programmes that had been outlined. These include: conducting training programmes; exchange of military expertise and information; exchange of visits of military personnel; visits of aircraft and military naval vessels; and conducting security dialogues at the official or 1.5 level. Others also include assistance in defence procurement, production and maintenance. (table 1)

However, within the context of the much broader ASEAN-India Dialogue Partnership, one could argue that the views within ASEAN of India's strategic role are mixed. A careful look at the Joint Declarations and other official documents between ASEAN and India indicate the reluctance within ASEAN member states to ascribe a role for India beyond that of a development partner. This is not to say however that India has not engaged with ASEAN—as a body—on defence and security matters. India had been participating in joint military exercises in non-combat activities such as disaster response, peacekeeping and other

humanitarian actions within the framework of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and ASEAN Defence Ministerial Meeting-Plus (ADMM+) activities.

India's Bilateral Defence and Security Relations with ASEAN

	Singapore	Malaysia	Indonesia	Philippines	Thailand	Cambodia	Vietnam
Bilateral Defence Agreements	2003 Defence Cooperation Agreement; 2007 Air Force Bilateral Agreement (renewed 2012); 2008 Army Bilateral Agreement	1993 MOU on Defence Cooperation includes joint ventures, joint development projects, procurement, logistic and maintenance support and training.	2001 Defence Cooperation Agreement	2006 Agreement Concerning Defense Cooperation	2012 MoU on Defence Cooperation		2000 Protocol on Defence Cooperation; 2007 Strategic Partnership Agreement; 2009 MOU on Bilateral Defence Cooperation: areas of cooperation-national defence industry, military techniques, training and practising

	Singapore	Malaysia	Indonesia	Philippines	Thailand	Cambodia	Vietnam
Defence Interactions	Joint military training and exercises; Annual defence policy dialogue	Malaysia-India Defence Cooperation (MIDCOM); Exchange of high-level visits; Joint training exercises; Port visits and regular naval port calls; Cooperative Mechanism on the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS); Contribution to two of the six IMO Projects (Project 1 and Project 4) for enhancement of navigational safety and environmental protection in the Straits; Mutual participation in defence exhibitions	Exchange of high level visits, ship visits, officers studying in Staff Colleges in either country; Joint coordinated patrols in the mouth of the Malacca Straits	Phil-India Security / Strategic Dialogue; Philippines-India Joint Defense Cooperation Committee; Military-to-military exchanges	Regular joint exercises; Joint and coordinated maritime patrols near the international maritime boundary to counter terrorism, piracy and smuggling; Training of officers at each others' Armed Forces Training institutions; Exchange of visits at various levels; MOU and Standards Operating Procedures for Coordinated Patrol signed in 2007 ensures the effective implementation of the Law of the Sea to prevent illegal activities	Exchange of visits of defence officials; Goodwill visits by Indian Naval Ships (most recently on 12-16 July 2011, Indian Naval Ship –INS AIRAVAT visited Sihanoukville Port of Cambodia); Supply of medical equipment & other stores and imparting of training courses to RCAF personnel in demining (the 5th annual three-week demining training course was conducted on 26 August to 13 Sept 2011); Peace keeping operations (the first UN peacekeeping training course was organised from 9-27 August 2010 in Cambodia)	Vietnam-India Defence Strategy Dialogue; High level bilateral visits; Training of personnel; Assistance in defence production; Defence equipment servicing and maintenance of military hardware and naval ports; Supply of military hardware and spare parts; Training for submarine operations to Vietnam in exchange for a permanent berth facility at Na Thrang Port; Sharing of intelligence; Joint exercises

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	Singapore	Malaysia	Indonesia	Philippines	Thailand	Cambodia	Vietnam
Regional Defence Relations	Multilateral cooperation under the auspices of the ADMM-Plus; Support for the ADMM-Plus Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief and Military Medicine exercise to be held in Brunei in 2013.						
Security Cooperation			2004 MOU on combating international terrorism; Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism; Extradition Treaty; Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in Criminal Matters	2004 RP-India Extradition Treaty; 2009 RP-India Defense Cooperation Agreement, transnational crimes and terrorism; PHL-India 2007 Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism	2008 Joint Working Group on security cooperation: Areas of concern: counter-terrorism, military cooperation, maritime security, international economic and cyber-crimes, anti-narcotics and money laundering; 2012 Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Persons	2005 Agreement on Combating International Terrorism, Organized Crimes and Illicit Drug Trafficking	Joint Working Group on Terrorism under the Strategic Partnership Agreement: areas of concern: counter-terrorism, piracy, security of sea lines of communication; 2011 Extradition Treaty

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The progress of ASEAN-India political cooperation has helped in moving forward relations in the security arena. Until very recently, India’s engagement with ASEAN in the area of defence and security has been limited largely to bilateral activities. However, in 2010 India participated in the inaugural meeting of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) which was held in October in Ha Noi, Vietnam. The ADMM-Plus is the highest ministerial defence and security consultative and cooperative mechanism for regional security issues. India’s participation in this new regional framework is significant. The ADMM-Plus is regarded by ASEAN as a key component of robust, effective, open and inclusive regional security architecture for cooperation to address security issues of mutual interests.

It can also be observed that for a number of years, India has undertaken a number of confidence building measures (CBMs) with Southeast Asian countries, including periodic naval exercises and biannual gathering of regional navies at MILAN. As seen on Table 1, India has extensive bilateral defence cooperation agreements with Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, Laos and Indonesia. India has also been active in assisting the armed forces of Myanmar and Thailand in capacity-building activities. Singapore uses India’s missile testing range to test its own guns

and missiles and uses Indian facilities to train its naval personnel. Thai pilots are also being trained in India to gain experience to operate their aircraft carrier and the Myanmar armed forces undergo counter-insurgency training.

Moreover, India and Indonesia conduct frequent joint patrols on the critical straits of Southeast Asia to ensure the security of sea-lanes of communication^{xiii}. The role of the Indian navy has been significant in advancing defence cooperation between ASEAN and India. This is best demonstrated in the Indian navy's pivotal role in launching the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS). Started in 2008, IONS is an initiative that seeks to enhance maritime cooperation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region by providing an open and inclusive forum for discussion of regionally relevant maritime issues with the aim of generating a flow of information between naval professionals that would lead to common understanding and possibly agreements on the way ahead. The key objectives envisaged for the IONS construct are the promotion of a shared understanding of the maritime issues facing the littoral nation-states of the Indian Ocean and the formulation of a common set of strategies designed to enhance regional maritime security. Among the IONS activities is the Conclave of Chiefs which is held every two years. The IONS has also conducted various seminars and workshops on topics of interest to member nations. For example, an Anti-Piracy and Preparatory Workshop was held in Jakarta, Indonesia in 2011. The Workshop enabled members to exchange experiences and opinions towards tackling the scourge of piracy prevalent in the Indian Ocean region^{xiv}. As observed by one analyst, India's naval diplomacy has been ahead of the governments in developing closer ties with ASEAN.^{xv}

Conclusion

Over the year the themes of connectivity, cooperation and contacts dominate India's engagement with ASEAN. Results are visible. The most recent development in ASEAN-India relations shows the deepening of the partnership between ASEAN and India within the economic front and ofcourse, maybe a product of the long years of engagement between them. There is no doubt that ASEAN's outward looking perspective and India's Look East Policy (LEP) was able to intertwine allowing them to reap possible benefits in the future.

India's partnership with ASEAN in coming years will depend upon two factors: first, how the ASEAN states will address various challenges which they are currently facing individually and collectively: and secondly, how much significance the region will impart to India in resolving these challenges. Whatever method India or ASEAN should adopt to resolve these challenges individually but for enhanced co-operation both should have to resolve the various challenges with collective efforts for smooth functioning in future.

Completion of the India-ASEAN FTA would pave the way to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which includes ASEAN members and its six partner countries^{xvi}. For India, RCEP is a tool to achieve its goal of integrating with the East Asian economies and gaining access to a vast regional market from Japan to Australia. This is important, as India is not a member of APEC^{xvii}. RCEP has the potential to beef up India's trade volume with countries of the region, including China and Japan. India's services sector, information technology, telecommunications, business process outsourcing (BPOs), Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPOs) and other skilled services, such as banking, are particularly likely to accrue benefits from RCEP.

The South China Sea territorial dispute, which is of tremendous strategic importance to all the ASEAN states has drawn ASEAN and India closer to an extent that here have been pressures to find amicable solution to the same. China and ASEAN have agreed to actively carry out consultation to reach, on the basis of consensus and at an early date. Developments in the South China Sea (SCS) have significant implications for India's strategic interests and its role in the Indo-Pacific. Almost, 55% of India's trade with the Asia Pacific transits through the SCS.^{xviii} Apart from helping secure energy supplies for countries like Japan and Korea, India has the unique distinction of shipping oil from Sakhalin to Mangalore through sea routes of the region. Therefore, it is vital for India to have access to the region. If China continues to assert dominance over these waters, it will be difficult for India to continue with its activities through this channel.

India and China have always had troubles along their land boundaries but their strategic interests are now converging into the maritime domain as well. There will be serious ramifications for maritime security in the Indian Ocean if relations between the two rising

Asian powers can't be managed. For the aforementioned reasons, China and India have had highly limited economic exchanges for a long time. On the whole, trade between China and India was rather small before the 1990s and remained so even during the early 1990s. Sino-Indian economic relations, ignited by the Indian systematic reform and series of cooperation agreements signed by the two governments. This has helped the two countries to come closer and hence the trade between them has accelerated. It has also had a positive impact on investment, technological cooperation and other exchanges and communications, etc.

As Asian economic integration deepens and the economies of both countries develop rapidly, new conditions are being created for reshaping Sino-Indian relations. Discussion of Sino-Indian relations has been put on the global agenda. However, there are also a series of impediments restricting the depth and extent to which the two countries can cooperate further. India's 'Look East Policy' has long shaped the nations tie, with the Asia-pacific. India's strategy of counter –balancing China's influence the policy was initially aimed at diplomatic and economic engagement with Southeast Asia. But over the years, the policy has evolved, to include broader security and defence ties across the whole Asia- Pacific, with India signalling its willingness to play a greater strategic role in the region. India's interest in the Asia-Pacific is being driven by an understanding of the economic benefits of closer engagement with East and Southeast Asia as well as a convergence of strategic objectives, and a desire for a large global role for India.

Government has intensified its outreach to India's key partners such as Japan, Vietnam, Australia, and ASEAN. Her key goals are to deepen economic ties with the Asia-pacific in order to boost India's own economic growth, to balance externally against Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean and to expand India's global role.

India's New Look East Policy refers to India's strategy of strengthening its relations with states in Asia-Pacific that are beyond the South East Asia region, extending to East Asia. It is safe to assume that the new version of India's Look East Policy has been shaped partly by China's rise and the manner in which Beijing is strengthening its position in the South and Southeast Asian regions both in terms of strategic ties with countries in the region and technological advancements like anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBM). The improved version of India's

strategy appears designed to help New Delhi manoeuvre into a favourable position in the Asia-Pacific, without being directly involving in any internal conflicts but at the same time meeting challenges that might arise in the region. Enhancing greater relations with other regional players like Japan, Australia and South Korea further would provide a solid basis for India's new LEP.

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