



## **Nature of Indo-ASEAN relation**

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### **Abstract**

No policy originates in vacuum, certain factors definitely motivate it. India, Policy of LEP (Look East Policy) is also not exception to this rule. The origin of LEP can be traced out in early years of 1990. The disintegration of Soviet Union resulted in the end of Cold War. Now Russia was not in a position to give political and economic help to India. India had already adopted free market economy, hence then was need for new economic partner and new markets. It led to the adoption "Look East Policy" which brought to an end the long separation between India and South-East Asia. End of Cold War brought number of changes in World Politics. It led to the formation of various regional economic organization. In the early years of 1990 number of consequences of globalization were witnessed. Then results created number of political and economic compulsions for various countries. It encouraged international compulsion and also created a new wave of regionalism. Under these circumstances India decided to adopt the Look East Policy.

**Keywords:** India, ASEAN, cold war, look east policy

### **Introduction**

No policy originates in vacuum, certain factors definitely motivate it. India, Policy of LEP (Look East Policy) is also not exception to this rule. The origin of LEP can be traced out in early years of 1990. The disintegration of Soviet Union resulted in the end of Cold War. Now Russia was not in a position to give political and economic help to India. India had already adopted free market economy, hence then was need for new economic partner and new markets. It led to the adoption "Look East Policy" which brought to an end the long separation between India and South-East Asia.

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On 8th August, 1967 it was declared in Bangkok Resolution that the three main objectives of ASEAN are:

1. To accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavors in the spirit of equality and partnership in order to strengthen the foundation for a prosperous and peaceful community of South East Asian Nations.
2. To promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rules of law in the relationship among countries of the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter.
3. To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest in the economic, social, cultural, technical, scientific and administrative fields.

In the post cold war era, India realized that there is a wave in favour of regionalism, therefore, it decided to revisit its Look East Policy towards ASEAN. At that time the economy of South East Asia was growing with drumfire rapidity, therefore, it attracted not only India, China, Europe and United States of America. Thus because of the following reasons India needs close relationship with ASEAN:

1. Indonesia is the largest exporter of Coal in the world, So it can meet out the requirements of India.
2. Myanmar is extremely rich in Natural Gas resources about 90 Trillion Cubic feet. Thus it occupies 10th position as far as Natural Gas resources are concerned.
3. Malaysia and Indonesia are respectively second and third exporters of liquefied Natural Gas in the world.
4. The recent researches and explorations expect that east Natural Gas Fields are very rich in Natural Gas resources.
5. It is also estimated that in future Vietnam can emerge as the chief exporter of Crude Oil. (dPpk rsy)
6. India want to be profited to secure co-operation with fast growing economies of South East Asia.
7. To accelerate the process of Regional Economic integration after watching the success of ASEAN.
8. ASEAN may prove to be an important link for India in Indian ocean.
9. ASEAN can also prove to be a good market for Indian products and capital.
10. ASEAN can also be important for India to give impetus to the process of development and trade.
11. By promoting cordial relationship with ASEAN, India wants to out Pakistan from this region and thus compete with China.
12. ASEAN members can be important for investment to development infrastructure.

13. North eastern states of India have their boundaries with Myanmar which is a member of ASEAN. Thus ASEAN may be important for development and security of north-eastern states of India.
14. India, further needs ASEAN for the sake of unity of Third World countries on the platform of W.T.O. This argument is also applicable for the purpose of promoting the interests of third world countries.
15. India, a relationship with ASEAN is also needed to give a positive direction to the process of expansion and democratization of U.N. and its various organs and specialized agencies.
16. To implement the demand of the establishment of New International Economic order under following introducing reforms in International Monetary Fund (IMF). World Trade Organization (W.T.O.) and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (I.B.R.D. also known as World Bank).
17. To secure the permanent membership of Security Council, the support of ASEAN will be crucial.
18. ASEAN is a gateway for India to deal with the nations of Asia-Pacific region.

There is no doubt that India needs ASEAN, at the same time it is also noteworthy that ASEAN also needs India because of number of factors on reasons:

1. This fact brings the two areas closer that India is the largest democratic nation of the world.
2. India is a fast emerging economy and it is the fourth biggest economy of the world.
3. Indian ocean area is an important. India is an important country for the security of merchant ships.
4. India is a superpower regarding Information Technology and outer space.
5. Indian ocean may prove to be an important connecting point between ASEAN and India. Both can jointly explore sea-resources, oil and gas resources also.
6. The large market of India will prove to be very important for the products, technique and capital of ASEAN.
7. Large production and population, and educated middle class of India may prove to be beneficial for ASEAN members.
8. India's large army and developed military system of India is a great source of attraction for ASEAN.
9. India's geo-strategic position is also important for ASEAN.
10. China is a source of terror for ASEAN. ASEAN members are having boundary disputes with China in South China sea. These problems have motivated ASEAN to develop close relationship with India.

Thus mutual requirements have inspired the two sides to be close to each other. Thus it can be said that Look East Policy of India and Look West Policy (LWP) of ASEAN are complimentary to each other. Infact, India had started taking keen interest in ASEAN from the early 1990. The government of P.V. Narsimharao led made important initiatives towards Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and other member states of ASEAN. These countries have become important for India because of Indian economy, national security and

diplomatic concerns. Following factors are behind India's Look East Policy:

1. The economic interests forced India to pursue the L.E.P. ASEAN has 2 million Kms. special Economic Zone (SEZ). Therefore, India must take advantage of it. Hence India is co-operating with ASEAN in the fields of trade and investments. India's trade with ASEAN was only 2.5 billion dollar in 1993-94 which was increased to 5.36 billion dollar in 1998-99.
2. This region is very important for India from the strategic and security point of view. To strengthen its political ties, India has co-operated with number of countries of this region in security area. India has also joined ARF (ASEAN Region Forum) which is only forum to discuss the security issues.
3. Energy security is a very sensitive issue both for India and ASEAN. Since West Asia is politically instable, hence it is necessary for India to try to secure the supply of petroleum and other sources of energy from ASEAN region.
4. Extraction is an important issue of LEP.
5. To render mutual legal assistance in criminal matters.
6. Both India and ASEAN should co-act on security matters including international security issues.
7. Both should also co-operate with other to check the drug menace.
8. To combat terrorism and piracy are two other areas where the two sides can co-operate with each other.
9. Both can exchange their views and action to deal with the problems of Black money, printing of false currency, illicit trade of weapons and human beings.
10. LEP will also help in the fast development of north-eastern states of India as they are having common boundaries with Myanmar which is considered to be gateway for South-East Asian nations.

In fact India and ASEAN did not want to look back after developing close relationship with each. Hence ASEAN gave to India the status of Sectoral Dialogue partner which was converted into Full Dialogue Partnership in two years. India also became a member of ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) even before the entry of China in it. ARF is the only one security mechanism for entire Asia-Pacific. After this the co-operation and partnership continued to develop. The result was that they signed Regional co-operation pact to fight against piracy in Indian Ocean. Joint military exercises, BIMSTEC, Making Ganga-Co-operation, Asia-Europe Co-operation, East Asia Summit are also some examples mutual co-operation between India. Moreover, India and ASEAN have also conducted joint Naval Patrolling, Joint land, Aerial and naval exercises to ensure strategic and security co-operation. The objective of these exercises was to fight against piracy etc.

In the second stage of LEP, which was in the later part of 20th century, India strengthened its relationship with East Asian and Oceanic nations. But still ASEAN was the central point of Indian Policy. In 2003 India and ASEAN signed a framework agreement for comprehensive Economic co-operation. This agreement provided a basis for the implementation of ASEAN Free Trade Agreement related to goods, services and

investment from 2011 to 2016. Meanwhile in 2003 India signed framework agreement with Thailand in 2003. In 2005 India had signed comprehensive Economic Co-operation Agreement with Singapore. Highlighting the importance of Indo-ASEAN FTA, ambassador Rajiv Siks said that FTA was necessary in order to become an active player of this region. Political leadership of India was of opinion that FTA was essential to accelerate internal reforms. Thus it can be said that Indo-ASEAN relations have been motivated factors.

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