

A stylized map of India and Southeast Asia, rendered in white and light blue against a dark blue background. The map shows the outlines of the Indian subcontinent and the Southeast Asian archipelago, including the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago. The title text is overlaid on the map.

INDIA-ASEAN DEFENCE RELATIONS

RSIS Monograph No. 28

Editor

Ajaya Kumar Das

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EDITOR
Ajaya Kumar Das

S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Note

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S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Nanyang Technological University

South Spine, S4, Level B4, Nanyang Avenue

Singapore 639798

Telephone: 6790 6982 Fax: 6793 2991

E-mail: wwwrsis@ntu.edu.sg

Website: www.rsis.edu.sg

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INTRODUCTION

Ajaya Kumar Das

India's shift to a free-market economy coinciding with the end of the Cold War created the necessary condition for its decision makers to launch the "Look East Policy" with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) at its centre, thereby ending India's isolation from Southeast Asia since the 1960s. Whereas its economic agenda dominated the new foreign policy initiative, India simultaneously engaged Southeast Asia in the area of defence. This came with the backdrop of the region's discomfort vis-à-vis India's rising military power in the 1980s, especially its naval power.¹ The region as a whole through ASEAN welcomed India's initiative and has steadily accommodated India's objectives by accepting India as a full dialogue partner and a partner at the summit level. Also, in the political and security domain, India has been admitted into ASEAN-led forums such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asian Summit (EAS) and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM). Plus despite initial reluctance on the part of some ASEAN member states. On the occasion to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations, India and ASEAN declared that the "Partnership stands elevated to a strategic partnership" and have committed to raise security cooperation.²

In terms of bilateral defence relations, India and ASEAN states have engaged in joint military exercises, coordinated patrols, naval

1 Isabelle Saint-Mézard, *Eastward Bound: India's New Positioning in Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2005), pp. 280–286.

2 Vision Statement, ASEAN India Commemorative Summit, 21 December 2012, <http://www.asean.org/news/asean-statement-communications/item/vision-statement-asean-india-commemorative-summit>.

port calls, training and education, defence dialogues, exchange of high-level visits, defence supplies, etc. Among all, India-Singapore defence relations are the closest. They have held annual Singapore-Indian Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX) since 1994 and have renewed the Air Force Bilateral Agreement in 2012 which allows Singapore Air Forces to conduct training exercises and exchanges with Indian forces on Indian soil. India's defence agreements with Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Philippines have increased the scope of bilateral defence cooperation.

In order to project itself as a benign military power, India has additionally engaged the Southeast Asian states through multilateral initiatives like *Milan* and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium. Independent India has no history of territorial dispute or military conflict with Southeast Asia and, by harmonising with ASEAN norms for peace and security, is expected by some ASEAN states to play a larger security role. It is time to take stock. What are India's strategic objectives in Southeast Asia? And how has it pursued them in the field of defence? Equally importantly, how do the ASEAN states view India as a strategic partner and in terms of defence cooperation? Do the expectations on the two sides match? And what is the trajectory of the relationship? How should policy makers think about the future? What are the implications for geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific region? These questions need more systematic and detailed examination in the face of enduring geopolitical complexity in the Indo-Pacific. This edited volume draws its chapters from the Workshop on "India-ASEAN Defence Relations" organised by the South Asia Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, in November 2012.

The chapters in the monograph are divided on three thematic lines. The first four contributors provide the readers with insights into India-ASEAN relationships from the general strategic perspective from both sides. The second half of the monograph is composed of five chapters focussing on relations from a purely defence perspective both at the bilateral level and at the level of India-ASEAN relations. The last part of the volume comprises three chapters that shift the discussion to maritime security. The volume thus discusses India-ASEAN relationships both from the general strategic and

defence perspectives as well as from the narrower viewpoint of maritime security. All the contributors recognise the obstacles to closer defence relations between India and ASEAN states; and, while agreeing that there exist opportunities to expand cooperation, they provide necessary prescriptions for the policy making community.

Following this introduction, **C. Raja Mohan** examines India's security role in Southeast Asia, and argues that the prevailing security condition in the region provides a unique opportunity for greater defence cooperation. Suggesting that India's "Look East" policy marked the beginning of India's return to regional security politics, he notes that India's policy features "cautious realpolitik" and the objective of widening its own "regional profile". He suggests that the future of India's security role lies in understanding the circumstantial and structural bases of the gap between ASEAN's expectations and India's capacity.

In her chapter, **Mely Caballero-Anthony** analyses the strategic importance of India to ASEAN in the context of their dialogue relations. She finds the presence of "mixed" views about India's role in the strategic map of the ASEAN states, and "reluctance" among them to view India as more than a "development partner". She points out that India's defence and security relations with ASEAN states are largely bilateral and confined to "capacity building". Furthermore, she argues that it is in the overall ASEAN-India dialogue relations rather than the security and defence relations where one can more objectively appraise the strategic significance of India to ASEAN. Also, she discusses how to elevate ASEAN-India relations to the level of strategic partnership, concurring with the recommendations of the ASEAN-India Eminent Persons Group Report.

Focusing on the role of China in India's strategy towards Southeast Asia, **Rahul Mishra** finds "balancing", "competing and catching up" and the role of a "swing state" dominate India's strategy. To him, India's goals vis-à-vis Southeast Asia are in flux. He suggests that India needs a "logical gradation" of its objectives for better policies. Mishra argues that India's strategy in the future will be determined by the evolution of China's relations with the United States, Japan, ASEAN and India. He assumes that in a scenario of intense tension between China and East Asian countries, India's position will be

“decisive” and may increase the tension. Furthermore, India’s covert balancing may help a “friendly” competition with China if the latter respects their convergent interests. The author argues that the possible emergence of India as a “swing state” will be determined by the development of its economic and military power.

In his chapter, **Ajaya Das** assesses India-ASEAN defence relations by applying the concept of “soft power”. On the basis of the argument that soft power, based on a mutually reinforcing relationship between defence and non-defence resources, maximises a state’s influence, he stresses that defence relations should be viewed as part of a larger framework of “soft power”. His analysis informs us that soft power can be generated from hard power (defence and economic power) as well as non-military soft power resources like culture, political values and foreign policy. He presents the argument that soft power will effectively serve India’s interests in the region if it is composed of economic and military power resources as well as attractive culture, political values and foreign policy.

Moving away from strategic perspectives, the next five chapters focus on purely defence relations. **David Brewster** looks into India’s defence strategy towards ASEAN states and argues that it is underpinned by India’s objectives to become the principal power in the northeast Indian Ocean and to balance China and expand space for its strategic interests. He points out that while supporting a greater Indian engagement in the political and economic sphere, the ASEAN states are not in accord with regard to India’s defence role. He further argues that while India has given greater emphasis to Southeast Asia in its defence strategy, it is still to emerge as a credible defence partner to many states in the region.

The chapter by **Bilveer Singh** discusses the defence strategy of ASEAN. Suggesting that defence cooperation among ASEAN states has been pursued both bilaterally and multilaterally to promote regionalism and maintain regional order and security, Singh maintains that they lack a common defence doctrine. He finds that there is a broad consensus not only regarding the utility of defence cooperation but also on “broad principles”. Singh highlights the evolving defence cooperation between India and ASEAN, and believes that India is likely to emerge as a “more important player” in the region

in the face of growing tensions between certain ASEAN states and China over disputes in the South China Sea.

Jasjit Singh, in his contribution, assesses the relationship between the Indian Air Force and ASEAN states in the context of surging defence cooperation since the launch of the “Look East” policy. He identifies the relationship with the Republic of Singapore Air Force as the closest and argues that it can be replicated with other ASEAN states. Furthermore, as India proceeds with military modernisation in the future, there is greater scope for cooperation in the aerospace sector, especially in research and development (R&D), joint ventures, and maintenance and repair. He suggests that India has the potential to engage ASEAN states in U.S. Red Flag-type exercises with infrastructure being created jointly.

The chapter by **Ristian Atriandi Supriyanto** presents an Indonesian perspective on Indonesia-India defence relations and asks why there is “mutual neglect” despite the two countries being maritime neighbours and sharing common values. He applies the concept of “mental map” and studies both “geographical mind” and “geographical field” to suggest that India was a “black hole” in the mental map of Indonesia in the 20th century. He suggests that although the 21st century provides new prospects, both need to reduce their “non-geographical” distances by mutually dependent economic and strategic relations, “shared awareness and interests for power projection in the Indian Ocean”, and further utilisation of democratic values.

While examining the bilateral defence relations between Malaysia and India, **K. S. Nathan** argues that there exist adequate bases for closer defence cooperation in the context of historical and cultural links. He finds maintenance of balance of power in the region as a common interest and identifies challenges coming from differing mutual perceptions and interests. He further argues that while the changing security situation presents conditions to increase defence cooperation, the two states are reluctant to build a strategic partnership in order to protect their strategic autonomy.

The last cluster, which consists of three chapters, focuses on India-ASEAN defence relations from the maritime perspective. In his contribution, **G. V. C. Naidu** looks at India’s approach to security in the Indian Ocean as the latter takes the “centre stage”. He examines

India's maritime strategy, changing force structure, naval diplomacy and its readiness to emerge as a security provider in order to conclude that "India is gearing itself to play a larger role in the Indian Ocean" with the aim to emerge as the "pre-eminent power". To him, this is a "historic opportunity".

The chapter by **Lawrence Prabhakar Williams** discusses India's naval interests in Southeast Asia and its strategy. While suggesting that both economic and strategic reasons underpin India's naval engagement with the region, he stresses that India's maritime engagement exhibits "benign elements of building maritime security". According to him, Southeast Asia is the "intermediate Mandala" or "strategic bridge" that supports India's naval aims in the Arctic, the South China Sea and the Indo-Pacific. Also, he draws attention to the dilemma faced by the Indian Navy vis-à-vis the rising People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) in the region.

Koh Swee Lean Collin, in his chapter, looks at ASEAN-India naval cooperation by examining the cases of Singapore and Vietnam from the Southeast Asian perspective. He argues that while both countries, following ASEAN norm of "inclusivity", engage India in defence relations, they face varying geopolitical conditions which affect their bilateral naval relations with India. Singapore, unlike Vietnam, is not associated with the South China Sea dispute, and enjoys greater freedom in establishing naval relations with India. Moreover, India's acquisition of Western and Israeli equipments and simultaneous drive towards indigenisation expand the scope for collaboration with Singapore. In contrast, Vietnam is constrained by the China factor while India seems reluctant to transfer advanced technology to it.

The papers in this collection are varied in their range and scope. Taken together, they represent an array of views that fall within a spectrum that is neither overly optimistic nor very pessimistic about the future of India-ASEAN defence relations. Clearly, India is not likely to play a predominant role in Southeast Asia — that is likely to be the preserve of the United States and China. For this same reason, it does not appear likely that, for the foreseeable future, India's defence relationships with ASEAN states will be greatly intensified. Besides, neither the states of ASEAN nor India will want to

antagonise China unduly. That said, there is still considerable scope for India-ASEAN defence cooperation. Both sides are favourably inclined toward a multilateral framework of security that ensures regional strategic stability and both have much to gain from defence collaboration on an on-going basis. This volume sets the tone for further exploration of the quality and quantum of such collaboration.

AN UNCERTAIN TRUMPET? INDIA'S ROLE IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN SECURITY

C. Raja Mohan

Southeast Asia's security politics have arrived at an inflection point, thanks to the renewed territorial conflicts, deterioration of great power relations and the seeming inability of existing regional institutions to cope with these challenges. More than three decades of relative peace and tranquillity, which provided the conditions for rapid economic growth and the development of regional cooperation, appear to be coming to an end. Amidst the new strategic uncertainties confronting the region, there is growing interest in the region for a larger Indian contribution to peace and stability in Southeast Asia. The perceptions of India's rise and its expanding military capabilities have raised hopes within the region for a stronger Indian security profile in Southeast Asia. Within India too there is much greater awareness of the changing security politics in East and Southeast Asia and the rare opportunities that present themselves for raising India's standing in the region and the world.

At the commemorative summit in Delhi during December 2012 celebrating two decades of India's engagement with ASEAN, the two sides elevated their ties to the level of strategic partnership and underlined the importance of deepening security cooperation, especially in the maritime domain. While celebrating India's new partnership with ASEAN, Delhi suggested that it was not too eager to be drawn into the conflicts between some of the ASEAN countries and China. In response to the calls from Vietnam and the Philippines for explicit support from India in their territorial disputes with China, India's Minister for External Affairs Salman Khurshid signalled caution and ruled out Delhi's intervention in

these disputes.¹ This highlights the real gap between expectations from ASEAN states and India's security role in the region as well as the difficulties of moving from general rhetoric about greater security cooperation to specific circumstances and particular agendas.

This paper argues that the new dynamic in Southeast Asia presents India with a rare opportunity for expanding defence cooperation. For the first time since the end of the Second World War, when the Indian armies played a decisive role in bringing it to an end in Southeast Asia, Delhi is in a position to contribute effectively to the evolution of security politics in the region. This objective possibility, the paper argues, must be weighed against the many geopolitical, institutional and other subjective constraints that limit an expansive Indian role in Southeast Asia. The paper begins with a broad overview of India's relations with the ASEAN, explains the factors shaping the Indian approach to the political and security challenges facing Southeast Asia, and concludes with an assessment of the divergence between the possible and plausible in defence and security cooperation between India and the ASEAN in the coming years.

INDIA'S HISTORIC ROLE

For long the Subcontinent has influenced the cultural, political and economic evolution of Southeast Asia. It exported Buddhism, facilitated the spread of Islam, and provided the platform from which Western imperialism could establish itself in Southeast Asia. After it prevailed over the rival European powers, the British Raj became the principal shaper of regional security order in Southeast Asia. When this order was shattered by Japanese imperialism, it required the full mobilisation of Subcontinent's resources to reverse Japanese

1 "ASEAN members seek India's help on South China Sea Disputes", *South China Morning Post*, 22 December 2012, <http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/article/1110226/asean-members-seek-indias-help-south-china-sea-disputes>. See also "Vision Statement: ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit", New Delhi, 20 December 2012, <http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/20982/Vision+StatementASEANIndia+Commemorative+Summit>.

aggression. Nearly 750,000 Indian troops under Lord Mountbatten's Southeast Asia command delivered a hard fought victory in what is often called the 'forgotten war.'² Writing at a time when Japan was still in occupation of Southeast Asia, K. M. Panikkar reflected on the future security arrangements in the region after the war and decolonisation. Calling for a collective security system for Southeast Asia involving all powers, including China, Panikkar underlined the importance of India. "A free and stable government in India conscious of its responsibilities and capable of playing its part in Southeast Asia, is the essential pre-requisite" for the success of such a collective security system. "In the absence of such a government in India," Panikkar went on, "Southeast Asia will remain the cockpit of colonial ambitions, incapable of defending itself, and a prey to the predatory urge of any power which is strong enough to attack it."³

What Panikkar could not have visualised in 1943 was the Partition of India that tore apart the role of the Subcontinent as the traditional geopolitical anchor for the stability of Southeast Asia. Through the 19th and the first half of the 20th Century, military power radiated out of the Subcontinent into all corners of the Indian Ocean and its abutting regions. Since the Partition, the military energies of the Subcontinent turned inward as the bitter legacy of Partition endured. On top of it, China's entry into Tibet further focused India's military energies northward. India's capacity to influence Southeast Asia rapidly declined. Equally important is the fact that the breakup of the Raj created a security vacuum in Southeast Asia that has not been easy to fill since the middle of the last century. Whether it is the U.S. led alliances like the SEATO or the new security forums led by the ASEAN, Panikkar's insight that Southeast Asia is not in a position to secure itself and will need a significant Indian contribution to regional stability remains valid. The relative decline of the United States and the rapid rise of Chinese military power have brought that reality into sharper view.

2 Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2007).

3 K. M. Panikkar, *The Future of South-East Asia: An Indian View* (New York: Macmillan, 1943), pp. 11–12.

LEADING ASIA, LEAVING ASIA

Although Partition severely weakened Delhi, there was no diminishing of independent India's aspirations to lead Asia. If the British Raj underlined the primacy of the Subcontinent in securing Southeast Asia, India's nationalist movement was driven by a different set of impulses in pursuit of the idea of Asian unity. Christophe Jaffrelot has argued, convincingly, that India's post-Cold War Look East policy could be traced back to the Asianist ideals of the national movement.⁴ As India's own rich past and its expansive interaction with East and Southeast Asia came to light at the turn of the twentieth century, the idea of a shared destiny with Asia became an enduring leitmotif of the Indian national movement. Poet Rabindranath Tagore, who became one of India's early international interlocutors at the beginning of the 20th century, had a critical role in defining India's perceptions of Asia and making the case for reviving the old bonds with Asia. Tagore talked about India leading Asia's spiritual renaissance and offering an alternative to the material West.⁵ The early decades of the 20th century also saw the notion of 'greater India' reinforce resurgent Indian nationalism. It became quite popular for the nationalists to talk of India's 'culture colonies' in the east.⁶ It was inevitable then that the idea of Asian unity and solidarity quickly gained ground within the national movement. Jawaharlal Nehru went a step further to talk of the solidarity among the oppressed and colonised people of Asia and the idea of forming an eventual 'eastern federation' among the major Asian nations.⁷

4 See Christophe Jaffrelot, "India's Look East Policy: An Asianist Strategy in Perspective", *India Review*, Vol. 2, No. 2, April 2003, pp. 35–68.

5 Stephen Hay, *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and his Critics in China and Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970); Rustom Bharucha, *Another Asia: Rabindranath Tagore & Okakura Tenshin* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

6 For a recent analysis, see Susan Bayly, "Imagining 'Greater India': French and Indian Visions of Colonialism in the Indic Mode", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 3, July 2004, pp. 703–744.

7 See H. Venkatasubbiah, "Prospects for an Asian Union", *India Quarterly*, April – June 1949, Vol. 5, pp. 99–112 and July–September 1949, pp. 212–228; G. D. Deshingkar, "The Construction of Asia in India", *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 23, No. 2, June 1999, pp. 173–180.

As Asia captured the political imagination of an emerging India, it was no surprise, then, that the first diplomatic act of India, months before it became free, was to convene the Asian Relations Conference. Nehru later joined the Indonesian leader Sukarno in sponsoring a more structured Asian-African conference at Bandung, Indonesia in 1955. Despite the current romanticism about a 'Nehruvian' foreign policy and the tendency to over-interpret some of Nehru's diplomatic initiatives, the Asian gatherings in Delhi (1947) and Bandung (1955) underlined the profound differences among the newly emerging nations.⁸ These included divergent assessments of the contemporary international situation and contrary attitudes to the East-West divide at the global level. Sino-Indian differences as well as fears of the smaller countries of a potential domination of Asia by China and India or 'Asiatic imperialism' were among the other factors that divided the region and have endured since.

Worse still, at the end of the Bandung conference, there was a widespread sense that Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai outsmarted Nehru.⁹ Even as Nehru and his associates recognised the difficulties of 'leading Asia,' it was not easy for newly independent India to dissociate itself from the romanticism about Asia. As pointed out by an astute analysis of India's early foreign policy, "The nationalist Indian idea of pan-Asianism, with its attendant themes of Asian Federation, Sino-Indian unity and Greater India, has been a difficult legacy for the post-independence practitioners of Indian foreign policy."¹⁰ It would be wrong to conclude, however, that India's early engagement was all about multilateral initiatives and that it was entirely idealistic in its content. Nehru, in fact, negotiated two

8 For a recent scholarship on the issue, see See Seng Tan and Amitav Acharya (Eds.), *Bandung Revisited: The Legacy of the 1955 Asian-African Conference for International Order* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008); and Itty Abraham, "From Bandung to NAM: Non-alignment and Indian foreign policy, 1947–1965", *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (2008), pp. 195–219.

9 For a discussion of Zhou's diplomacy in Bandung, see Guy Wint, "China and Asia", *China Quarterly*, No. 1, 1960, pp. 61–71.

10 T. A. Keenleyside, "Nationalist Indian Attitudes Towards Asia: A Troublesome Legacy for Post-Independence Indian Foreign Policy", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 55, No. 2, Summer 1982, pp. 210–230.

friendship treaties with Indonesia and Burma in 1951. Both treaties had a vague but identical provision calling for security consultations whenever required. The relevant article in both agreements states: "The two Governments agree that their representatives shall meet from time to time and as often as occasion requires to exchange views on matters of common interest and to consider ways and means for mutual cooperation in such matters."¹¹ This was no abstract provision; India had substantive and defence and security cooperation with both Burma and Indonesia during the 1950s. But India's relations with both these important Southeast Asian partners turned sour in the 1960s and limited bilateral cooperation in all spheres well until the 1990s.

As the core concepts of India's Asian project were shattered by the early 1960s, India had no option but to discard, in operational terms, any ambitions on the Asian project. The rhetoric on Asian solidarity, however, would continue at the official level and treated as policy by much of the intelligentsia. Meanwhile East and Southeast Asia began to turn away from India, as New Delhi focused less on Asia and more on the global Cold War issues. At the time of the formation of the ASEAN in the late 1960s, India entertained many doubts about the organisation and was not interested in what it saw as a probable re-birth of the discredited Southeast Asia Treaty Organization sponsored by the Anglo-American powers. In the early 1980s, the attempt at a renewed dialogue between India and the ASEAN collapsed amidst New Delhi's decision to support Vietnam in the conflict over Cambodia.¹² While this decision has been roundly criticised in Southeast Asia, it nevertheless underlined India's enduring interest in balancing China in the region. By the late 1980s, the distance between India and East Asia seemed vast and unbridgeable. Adding to the separation was India's own inward-looking economic policies that steadily severed the historic commercial links between India and Southeast Asia. India's expanding defence capabilities in the 1980s, especially that of its Navy, and India's willingness to

11 See Article III of the friendship treaty with Indonesia (dated 3 March 1951) and Article IV of the friendship treaty with Burma (dated 7 July 1951).

12 For a succinct historical analysis, see Kripa Sridharan, *The ASEAN Region in India's Foreign Policy* (Aldershot, England: Dartmouth, 1996).

assert itself within the Subcontinent—for example in Sri Lanka and the Maldives—and its strategic partnership with Soviet Russia came under much criticism in the final years of the Cold War.¹³

RETURNING TO ASIA

When it did return to Southeast Asia with its Look East policy in the early 1990s, India was indeed a much-chastened nation. New Delhi now had to cope with the changed balance between India and Southeast Asia and leave behind the hubris that characterised its engagement with its Southeast Asian brethren in the past. Decades of relative economic decline vis-à-vis Asia inevitably led India to leave its old ambitions of leading the region at the door of the ASEAN. The emphasis of the Look East policy instead was on catching up with Southeast Asia's economic miracle. If Asia had looked up to India during the middle of the 20th century, it was India's turn now to be inspired by East Asia's rapid economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s. The ASEAN and its economic policies became benchmarks in India's own tortuous debates on economic reforms.

That India and the ASEAN had traded places was also reflected in the fact that not all members of the regional organisation were enthusiastic about bringing New Delhi into the regional institutions. India's friends in the region advised India to discard the loud and hectoring tones of its diplomacy. Determined to become a part of the region's institutions, New Delhi was quite happy to heed Deng Xiaoping's advice to the Chinese leaders, "keep a low profile, and never take the lead". Since the early 1990s, India steadily expanded its defence cooperation with the Southeast Asian nations, both bilaterally and multilaterally. But defence cooperation was by no means the priority for India or the ASEAN. For India it was more important to focus on economic and institutional integration into the East Asian structures. On the defence front the immediate priority for India in the 1990s was to remove the distrust accumulated in the region during the Cold War and restore high level exchanges and gently explore the prospects for deeper cooperation. As it welcomed India

13 For a review, see G. V. C. Naidu, *The Indian Navy and Southeast Asia* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2000).

into the ASEAN fold in the early 1990s, the region had no reason to see India as a counter to China. ASEAN's relations with China were on the upswing and there was no real alarm about Beijing's rise. In fact many in the region advised India not to bring its historic baggage against China or Pakistan into the ASEAN deliberations. A modest initial approach to security issues, then, seemed to serve the objectives of India's Look East policy as well as the ASEAN.

From the mid 1990s, when India became a dialogue partner of the ASEAN to its membership of the first East Asian Summit in 2005, India slowly crawled back into the region's institutional structures. After arguing for years that India had no place in Southeast Asia let alone the larger framework of East Asia, the region began to accept, if grudgingly India's relevance to the Asian order. As India's economic growth gathered momentum and its relations with all the great powers, especially the United States, China and Japan were on the upswing, the region became more open to considering the importance of New Delhi for the strategic future of Asia. With the decision to set up the EAS and draw in India as a founding member, ASEAN signaled its interest in a more explicit Indian role in contributing to regional security. Since then, the interest in the ASEAN for security cooperation with India has steadily grown. As great power relations deteriorated and regional conflict deepened since 2010, the hopes for a stronger Indian contribution to the regional security order have risen within the ASEAN. India, which was comfortable, with a modest approach to defence cooperation seemed unprepared for the developments in the region at the turn of the second decade of the 21st century. Caution rather than boldness marks India's security politics in the region.

CAUTIOUS REALPOLITIK

Despite the many calls on India to play a larger role in Asia, India has been rather hesitant in articulating a grand strategy for its Asian policy. Unlike China where the strategic community and the government have shown great self-consciousness of Beijing's rise and articulated a clear set of regional goals, India has been relatively mute. In contrast to the recent hype in the West and in the region about India's rise and its role in transforming Asian balance of power, Delhi has chosen to keep its head down. In fact there is much resistance in Delhi's political

establishment to even acknowledge India's rise. Its leaders and policy makers have repeatedly denied any great power ambitions and insisted that their focus will be ensuring a peaceful periphery that can facilitate India's economic advancement. Put simply, the Indian elite, unlike its Chinese counterpart, has been unwilling to discard the advice of Deng Xiaoping. In dealing with the emerging challenges to its Asian strategy, improvisation and adaptation are likely to be the dominant preferences for Delhi. Being a relatively weaker player, India does not see any compulsion to articulate a grandiose doctrine for its regional policy. Having flirted disastrously with grand concepts in the past, India's current emphasis is on cautious realpolitik.

Disclaiming leadership of Asia did not necessarily mean India has not done anything at all to raise its security engagement with the region. Absence of evidence, as has been famously said, does not mean evidence of absence. While there is no articulation of a grand Asian schema by New Delhi, it is quite easy to identify the elements of India's East Asian policy— multi-directional engagement with the great powers of Asia, integration with the regional institutions, expand India's security cooperation with key actors in the region and work for a relative improvement in India's geopolitical standing in Asia. The political culture of India's foreign policy in recent years has been marked by a preference for innovation by stealth at the political level and strategic improvisation by a small bureaucratic vanguard.

The many recent changes in India's foreign policy, including on the difficult accounts of United States, China and Pakistan, has come from these sources rather than an *a priori* framing of a strategic doctrine. Externally the fact that India's rise is much slower than that of China reduces the imperative for clear definition of Indian goals in Asia. Despite the many new initiatives in its foreign policy since the early 1990s, the Indian leadership refused to make the case for a new foreign policy or claim credit for the many innovations made in the era of reform. The explanations of and insights into India's changing foreign policy came from outside observers and retired diplomats rather than serving political leaders.¹⁴

14 Two examples are J. N. Dixit, *My South Block Years* (New Delhi: Konark, 1994) and C. Raja Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Shaping of India's New Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2003).

Similarly on India's new Asian policy, there was significant academic literature,¹⁵ but little framing of the big issues by the political leadership. This is rooted in part in the inability of the Indian political parties to build institutional capabilities and their growing reliance on the bureaucracy for policy innovations. It was no surprise then that the Indian political leadership—either at the moment of national vulnerability in the early 1990s or at a moment of seeming arrival on the world stage in the first decade of the 21st century—was not prepared to define a set of easily understandable propositions about India's changing world view. Although the world began to debate the prospects of India as a potential great power in the international system, and this has had some resonance with the popular media representations of India as a putative “super power”, the political leadership has down-played these expectations rather than pander to them.¹⁶

FROM COLLECTIVE SECURITY TO BALANCE OF POWER

In the run up to independence and immediately after that, India distinguished itself by rejecting the notions of balance of power and calling for one world and collective security. India's national movement was deeply inspired by universalism and liberal internationalism. Its constitution in fact directs the Indian state to “strive for the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security, just and honorable relations between nations, respect for international law and treaty obligations, as well as settlement of international disputes by arbitration.”¹⁷ Yet the contradictions between the commitment to

15 Sandy Gordon and Stephen Henniggham (Eds.), *India Looks East: An Emerging Power and its Asia-Pacific Neighbours* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1995); Amitabh Mattoo and Frederic Grare (Eds.), *India and ASEAN: The Politics of India's Look East Policy* (New Delhi: Centre for Human Sciences, 2001); K. Raja Reddy, *India and ASEAN: Foreign Policy Dimensions for the 21st Century* (New Delhi: New Century, 2005).

16 “India consumed by Superpower mania, says report”, *Times of India* (New Delhi), 1 December 2006; for a downplaying of this by Congress leader Sonia Gandhi and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the *Hindustan Times* Summit in New Delhi at the end of 2006, see Namita Bhandare (Ed.), *India: The Next Global Superpower* (New Delhi: Eastern Book Corporation, 2007).

17 Constitution of India, Part IV, Article 51, Directive Principles of State Policy.

strategic autonomy and the declared commitment to multilateralism steadily deepened in India's foreign policy. Nehru's decision to take the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir to the United Nations remains for many in the Indian political establishment one of the biggest blunders of the nation's foreign policy.¹⁸ If the politics of the Security Council destroyed India's illusions on collective security, the international criticism of India's use of force in Goa in 1961 and East Pakistan in 1971 cured India of its fascination for multilateralism in the areas of national security.¹⁹

Whatever its traditional rhetoric on a normative order for Asia, India has tended to be cautious about collective security arrangements in general. Even at the height of its partnership with the Soviet Union during the Cold War, India was lukewarm to Moscow's proposals—both from Brezhnev and Gorbachev—for Asian collective security.²⁰ This opposition is rooted again in India's fierce commitment to strategic autonomy. While the debate on East Asian security has begun to imitate the European one on building a community, bound by a common set of norms, India is unlikely to accept any framework that might involve undermining its own freedom to decide on national security issues. In that sense, India's policy is not dissimilar to those of the United States and China that place extraordinary emphasis on sovereignty in the security realm. The reluctance to promote sovereignty-limiting regional security institutions is also reflected in India's relatively low profile in the expansive

18 For a balanced assessment of India's motivations in taking the Kashmir question to the UNSC, see Chandrasekhar Dasgupta, *War and Diplomacy in Kashmir, 1947–1948* (New Delhi: Sage, 2002).

19 See Arthur Rubinoff, "The Multilateral Imperative in India's Foreign Policy," *Round Table*, Vol. 80, No. 319, July 1991, pp. 313–334. See also Chinmaya Gharekhan, "India and the United Nations," in Atish Sinha and Madhup Mohta (Eds.), *Indian Foreign Policy: Challenges and Opportunities* (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2007), p. 200.

20 See Alexander O. Ghebbardt, "The Soviet System of Collective Security in Asia," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 13, No. 12, December 1973, pp. 1075–1091; Arnold Horelick, "The Soviet Union's Asian Collective Security Proposal: A Club in Search of Members," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 47, No. 3, pp. 269–285; and Elizabeth Wishnick, "Soviet Asian Collective Security Policy From Brezhnev to Gorbachev," *East Asia*, Vol. 7, No. 3, September 1988, pp. 3–28.

debates on Asian security architecture.²¹ Key nations of Asia have seen the importance of bringing a rising India into the construction of new security architecture for Asia and chose to invite India to the first East Asia Summit in 2005.²² Yet India itself has not defined a clear view on what it would seek from Asian security architecture except calling for an 'open,' 'inclusive' and 'balanced' regional framework.²³ The key words, 'open,' 'inclusive' and 'balanced' might be seen emphasising the structuring of an order that includes both India and the United States in the East Asian architecture. The reluctance to articulate a more detailed approach to Asian security architecture does not imply New Delhi does not have a view. At a moment when institution building and norm setting has become the intellectual fashion in Asia, India has steadily moved towards an emphasis on balance of power.

For decades, the Indian political classes had tended to reject the notion of balance of power. In more recent years, however, the idea of balance of power has slowly become a part of India's official vocabulary. India's defence minister Pranab Mukherjee, for example, in 2005 identified the "maintenance of an equitable strategic balance" in Asia as a major Indian objective. The increasing use of the phrase 'balance of power' by senior Indian officials produced a reaction from the traditionalists in the national discourse on foreign

21 For a recent review of the Indian attitudes, see C. Raja Mohan, "India and the Asian Security Architecture", in Michael J. Green and Bates Gill (Eds.), *Asia's New Multilateralism: Cooperation, Competition, and the Search for Community* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 128–153.

22 For an explication of this rationale on inviting India, see the speech by Singapore's Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong, "Constructing East Asia", Speech by Goh Chok Tong, Asia Society, 15th Corporate Conference, Bangkok, 9 June 2005.

23 For example at the Seventh East Asia Summit in Phnom Penh, November 2012, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh urged the member states to "create an open, balanced, inclusive and rule-based architecture in the region for our collective security, stability and prosperity". See Statement by the Prime Minister at Plenary Session of 7th East Asia Summit, 20 November 2012, <http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/20830/Statement+by+the+Prime+Minister+at+Plenary+Session+of+7th+East+Asia+Summit>.

policy.²⁴ Although there is considerable resistance within the left liberal intelligentsia as well as the political classes, the new emphasis on balance of power is likely to endure in India's future thinking on Asian security. If the Indira Gandhi years saw New Delhi discard much of inherited idealism from the national movement, India's public expression of its worldview remained rooted in an idealist and normative framework. As India emerges as a great power and confronts a rapid change in the distribution of power in Asia and the international system, its discourse on foreign policy has begun to acquire an increasingly realist tone in both private and public.

ASEAN CENTRALITY

Realism is also at the heart of India's deliberate deference to the leadership of the ASEAN in the building of an East Asian order. Through the last two decades, India has repeatedly underlined the ASEAN centrality in shaping the future of East Asia.²⁵ There is more than prudence dictating this policy posture. It is rooted in the recognition that ASEAN's coherence is in India's vital national interest. India is aware that a weaker ASEAN might allow a great power to pry away its member states into special relationships and introduce rivalry with other powers, including India. For India, a strong ASEAN that can insulate Southeast Asia from great power rivalry is preferable to a weak regional institution that becomes vulnerable to external intervention. India recognises the significance of the ASEAN, in transforming a region that was once known as Asia's Balkans into the principal agency promoting regional integration. Yet, India will increasingly have to confront the fact that ASEAN's own ability to steer the future of the region may be in doubt. Many analysts, especially of the realist bent, are skeptical of ASEAN's prospects in

24 See Pranab Mukherjee, Concluding address to the Seventh Asian Security Conference, Institute of Defense Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, 29 January 2005 and Siddharth Varadarajan, "Asian interests and the Myth of Balance", *The Hindu*, 13 December 2005.

25 See, for example, PM's opening remarks at the 10th India-ASEAN Summit, Phnom Penh, 19 November 2012: "We believe that ASEAN centrality is essential in the evolving regional architecture for peace, stability, development and prosperity."

building a stable Asian order and point to the fallacy of weak states disciplining stronger ones.²⁶

Seen from the perspective of India's reluctance and/or inability to lead Asian institution building, New Delhi has every reason to contribute to the strengthening of the ASEAN as a whole and sustaining its primacy in building a regional order through the EAS. Amidst the rapid rise of China, relative decline of the U.S., a reorientation of Japan and the emergence of India, the ASEAN is finding new ways to cope with the security challenges arising out of the redistribution of power in Asia.²⁷ Although the ASEAN has offered the broadest possible platform for Asian regionalism in recent decades, it is not clear if ASEAN can retain that role in the future.

Until recently ASEAN enthusiasts could boast that only they could bring China, Japan, and the Koreas onto a single platform. Mahbubani, for example has argued that the "only forums where the three Northeast Asian leaders can meet comfortably and discuss common challenges have been the meetings convened by ASEAN, especially ASEAN+3 (China, Japan, South Korea)".²⁸ Since then the 'plus three' countries have begun to meet on their own, for the first time at the end of 2008 in the Japanese town of Dazaifu. They had agreed to institutionalise annual summit meetings between the three leading economies of Asia. Calling it the "three minus ASEAN" summit, a leading scholar of Southeast Asian studies raises some fundamental questions about the future of ASEAN led regional

26 See David Martin Jones and Michael L. R. Smith, "Constructing Communities: the Curious Case of East Asian Regionalism", *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1, January 2007, pp. 165–186. For a more optimistic view of Asian regionalism led by the ASEAN, see Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order* (London: Routledge, 2000).

27 Evelyn Goh, "Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies", *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 3, Winter 2007/08, pp. 113–157.

28 Kishore Mahbubani, *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008), pp. 84–85.

integration.²⁹ The ASEAN's claim to be the driver of regional integration had also been challenged by Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's 2008 proposal for "a regional institution that spans the entire Asia-Pacific region—including the United States, Japan, China India, Indonesia and the other states of the region".³⁰ It did not take long for a section of the Southeast Asian elite to criticise what they saw as an Australian attempt to privilege the membership of Indonesia at the expense of the ASEAN. The Australian call to recognise the special role of Indonesia has been matched by a growing measure of disenchantment with ASEAN in Jakarta. There has been a gathering political sentiment in Jakarta that Indonesia must return to playing a larger independent role in world affairs.³¹ Even more consequential for ASEAN have been the new tensions between China and the United States on the one hand, and between China and some of its Southeast Asian neighbours. During 2010–2012, as China's maritime territorial conflicts with Vietnam and Philippines intensified, it has not been clear that the ASEAN as a whole is willing to lend strong support to their member states against Beijing. One of the members of the ASEAN, Cambodia, has been accused of acting on behest of Beijing in ASEAN gatherings and dividing the organisation.³² What we see here is the inevitable consequence of the changing external and internal distribution of power in Southeast Asia. As the weakest of the major powers, India perhaps has a greater stake than anyone else in having a strong and united ASEAN. As internal political fissures within ASEAN come to the fore amidst the changing regional balance of power, India cannot assume that repeating the slogan of

29 Donald E. Weatherbee, "Three Minus ASEAN: The Dazaifu Summit", *PAC Net*, No. 2 (Honolulu, Hawaii: CSIS Pacific Forum, 9 January 2009). See also *Joint Study Report for an FTA among China, Japan and Korea*, December 2011, http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/release/24/3/pdfs/0330_10_01.pdf.

30 The full text of the Rudd Speech at Asia Society, Sydney, 4 June 2008 is available at <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23812266-5013871,00.html>. See also Rudd's Singapore lecture, "Building on ASEAN's Success—Towards an Asia Pacific Century," 12 August 2008, http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech_0419.cfm.

31 Jusuf Wanandi, "Indonesia's Foreign Policy and the Meaning of ASEAN", *PacNet*, No. 27 (Honolulu, Hawaii: CSIS Pacific Forum, 15 May 2008).

32 Sebastian Strangio, "Cambodia as divide and rule pawn", *Asia Times Online*, 18 July 2012.

'ASEAN centrality' is enough of a strategy.³³ It will need to develop a more vigorous and purposeful policy that helps ASEAN maintain its centrality. That in turn takes us to the question of India's relations with the great powers in Asia.

INDIA'S GREAT POWER DIPLOMACY

Since the end of the Cold War, India has enjoyed an unprecedented and simultaneous deepening of its relations with all the great powers. As great power relations in Asia enter an era of turbulence, India's changing relations with China and the United States are of some consequence for the security politics of Southeast Asia. Over the last decade, India has proclaimed "strategic partnerships" of varying intensity with the U.S., China and Japan.³⁴ Yet the fact remains that all three remain susceptible to significant swings—up or down. Changes in one relationship are bound to affect the other two. India is also aware that it is the weakest of the major powers in Asia. While this will allow India to play the role of a swing state in the regional balance of power, it is also possible that a fundamental realignment of major powers could put India at a disadvantageous position.

India and China have long been adversaries and their relationship has been described in terms of unending rivalry.³⁵ This behaviour of mutual balancing has been partly mitigated in recent years as India and China have worked hard to construct a more cooperative relationship. After a tentative rapprochement that began at the end of the Cold War, India and China have successfully deepened and broadened their relationship.³⁶ Bilateral trade between the two countries is booming and had touched US\$74 billion in 2011. China has become India's largest trading partner in 2012. The two countries

33 For the unfolding debate within the ASEAN on its central role, see Benjamin Ho, "ASEAN's Centrality in a rising Asia", RSIS Working Paper, No. 249, September 2012.

34 C. Raja Mohan, "India and the Balance of Power", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 4, July – August 2006, pp. 17–32.

35 For a good overview, see John Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the 20th Century* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002).

36 For an assessment of recent positive evolution of Sino-Indian relations, see C.V. Ranganathan (Ed.), *Panchsheel and the Future: Perspectives on India-China relations* (New Delhi: Samskriti, 2005).

are embarked on a dialogue to resolve their long-standing political differences. While their disputes have not been resolved, they have become better at managing them in recent years. As both nations acquire greater economic and political clout, there is also a sense of competition between them across a broad front—from the maritime domain to outer space. From Latin America to Siberia, and from Southern Africa to Central Asia, China and India are locked in a global competition to ensure resource security. Citing the protection of their sea lines of communication, China and India are determined to expand naval power and ensure maritime presence far away from their shores. In some areas, like Southeast Asia, especially in Burma, their competition for influence is open and vigorous.³⁷

While Sino-Indian relations are being managed in the space between security dilemma and cooperative security, Indo-U.S. relations are moving from a prolonged estrangement during the Cold War to a conscious effort to build a strategic partnership. During the Bush years, 2001–2009, the Bush Administration had made a sustained effort to change the very fundamentals of the relationship with India. On the deeply divisive issue of Pakistan, the U.S. has ended its traditional political tilt towards Islamabad and positioned itself for the first time as a neutral actor. In the process, the Bush Administration has achieved the near impossible: simultaneous improvement in relations with both India and Pakistan. On the other traditional bone of contention, nuclear non-proliferation, the Bush Administration has made a big move to accommodate India into the global nuclear order. It has changed its own domestic non-proliferation laws to facilitate renewed civilian nuclear cooperation with India and is working with the international community to change the global

37 For a review of recent developments in Sino-Indian relations, see Amardeep Athwal, *China-India Relations: Contemporary Dynamics* (London: Routledge, 2007); David Scott, "Sino-Indian Security Predicaments for the Twenty First Century", *Asian Security*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2008, pp. 244–270; and Jonathan Holsag, "China, India and the Military Security Dilemma", *BICCS Background Papers*, Vol. 3, No. 5, (Brussels: Brussels Institute of Contemporary Chinese Studies, 2008).

rules on nuclear commerce with India.³⁸ The Bush Administration has publicly declared its commitment to assist India's rise as a great power, and has offered it a full range of military cooperation from advanced conventional weapons to missile defence. This contrasts with the U.S. reluctance to sell arms to China and its campaign to prevent European arms sales to Beijing. Underlying this unique American readiness to spend political capital on India and strengthen its power potential is the recognition of New Delhi's role in the future Asian balance of power, especially in balancing the rise of China.³⁹

Despite the perceptible transformation of U.S.-India relations, questions about future ties abound in both New Delhi and Washington. How far is India willing to go in partnering the United States? Is India in fact ready for an alliance like relationship with Washington? Or will India continue its preference for some kind of non-alignment? These issues came into sharp focus after Sino-U.S. relations took a turn for the worse in 2010–2012. Just before this period, India's concerns were about a potential condominium between China and the United States over Asia.⁴⁰ But amidst China's recent assertiveness and the U.S. pivot to Asia, the Indian debate has focused on the potential impact of Sino-U.S. rivalry on its own strategic autonomy in Asia.⁴¹ On the one hand, India finds itself in a rare historic moment in which it can significantly influence the evolution of great power relations in Asia and expand its influence in East Asia. On the other hand,

38 C. Raja Mohan, *Impossible Allies: Nuclear India, United States and the Global Order* (New Delhi: India Research Press, 2006). See also P. R. Chari (Ed.), *Indo-U.S. Nuclear Deal: A Case Study in Indo-US Relations* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2009).

39 Robert Blackwill, who played a key role shaping U.S. policy towards India under Bush underlined the importance of the China factor in Washington's calculus. See his "Future of U.S.-India Relations," Confederation of Indian Industry, New Delhi, 5 May 2009; an edited text is available on the webpages of the *Financial Times* at <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/1ec735fe-3a12-11de-8a2d-00144feabdc0.html> (accessed on 12 May 2009).

40 C. Raja Mohan, "President Barack Obama, the United States and the Sino-Indian Balance," *ISAS Insights No. 46* (Singapore: Institute for South Asian Studies, 2009).

41 See, for example, Sunil Khilnani et al., "Nonalignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century," Centre for Policy Research, Working Paper, January 2012, http://www.cprindia.org/sites/default/files/NonAlignment%202.0_1.pdf.

India is acutely discomfited at the possibility of being dragged into a Sino-American conflict.⁴² India recognises the benefits of a deeper strategic partnership with the United States; but it is also conscious of the potential costs in its engagement with China including the danger of provoking Beijing into a premature conflict. As it navigates the new turbulence in the region, India's main objective is to emerge as an indispensable element in the Asian balance of power and raise its independent profile in East Asia.

An intensified relationship with Japan fits naturally into this broad framework that India has set for itself.⁴³ Japan has been the last among the great powers of the world to sense India's rising power potential. But during the final years of the premiership of Junichiro Koizumi and the brief tenure of Shinzo Abe, Japan has moved rapidly to define a new approach to India. Although India's improved relationship with the U.S. and the fluidity in Sino-Japanese relationships has cleared the ground for an improved Indo-Japanese relationship, there are other factors driving the bilateral strategic partnership. The two nations on the fringes of East Asia now have every incentive to expand their cooperation. The two sides announced a framework to expand security cooperation in 2008 and since then there has been a steady expansion of defence exchanges between the two sides, including a two-plus-two dialogue involving the senior officials of the defence and foreign ministries. Unlike much of East Asia, India carries no baggage about Japan's history or a grudge against its nationalism. India, then, has found it easier to initiate a defence dialogue with Japan. Traditionally, India was not part of Japan's conception of Asia. In expanding its geographic definition of Asia to beyond Myanmar in the west, and drawing India into a strategic partnership, Japan believes it has a better chance of coping with the unfolding redistribution of power in Asia and establishing a stable balance of power in the region. India, in turn, sees huge strategic

42 For a summary of the Indian response, see C. Raja Mohan, "India: Between 'Strategic Autonomy' and 'Geopolitical Opportunity'", *Asia Policy*, No. 15, January 2013, pp. 21–25.

43 For a recent review, see N.S. Sisodia and G.V.C. Naidu (Eds.), *India-Japan Relations: Partnership for Peace and Security in Asia* (New Delhi: Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, 2006).

complementarities with Japan.⁴⁴

India's efforts at multi-directional engagement in Asia have not been without problems. Its effort to simultaneously construct strategic partnerships with the United States and China amidst the uncertain relations between Washington and Beijing has led to misperceptions at home and abroad. India's expanding cooperation with the United States, and the domestic and international debate on the motivations of the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal have raised either hopes or fears of an impending alliance between New Delhi and Washington. India's left parties for example withdrew support from the Manmohan Singh government in 2009 on the grounds that it had become too cosy with the United States and abandoning traditional policies of non-alignment. Many traditionalists in the Indian foreign policy establishment as well as leading political figures in the UPA government like the defence minister A. K. Antony are deeply concerned about drawing too close to the U.S. and making China a needless enemy. Put another way, the rise of China and the American response to it have generated dilemmas for India that are not very different in other parts of Asia. Like in other political capitals, Delhi too is increasingly divided on how best to cope with the new great power dynamics in Asia.

INDIA'S REGIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

India's policy towards East Asia is not a simple function of its great power relations. India has every reason to deepen its independent relationships with all the major nations of East Asia and engage all the regional institutions. If security initiatives were conspicuous by their absence in the first phase of India's Look East policy, they have begun to acquire a new importance in the second phase that had begun in

44 For a review of the changing India-Japan partnership, see Madhuchanda Ghosh, "India and Japan's Growing Synergy: From a Political to a Strategic Focus", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 48 No. 2, 2008, pp. 282–302; Purnendra Jain, "Westward Ho! Japan Eyes India Strategically", *Japanese Studies*, Vol. 28 No. 1, May 2008, pp. 15–30; and Joshy M. Paul, "India and Japan: Reluctant Idealism to Practical Realism", *South Asian Survey*, Vol. 15, No.1, 2008, pp. 99–119. See also Joshy M Paul, "India-Japan Security Cooperation: A New Era of Partnership in Asia", *Maritime Affairs*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2012, pp. 31–50.

the middle of the 2000s.⁴⁵ Although India initiated tentative defence engagement with Southeast Asian nations from the early 1990s, it was the conclusion of a bilateral defence cooperation agreement with Singapore in 2003 that launched vigorous security diplomacy in the region.⁴⁶ At the end of 2004, the Indian Navy was quick to respond, on its own, to the tsunami disaster and later joined the navies of the U.S., Japan and Australia to provide relief in Southeast Asia. In 2005, the Indian Aircraft carrier, INS Viraat, arrived for the first time in the ports of Southeast Asia—Singapore, Jakarta in Indonesia and Klang in Malaysia.

In the Spring/Summer of 2007, the Indian Navy sailed all the way up to Vladivostok and conducted a series of bilateral and multilateral exercises with a number of nations that included major powers like the U.S., Japan, Russia and China as well as regional actors like Singapore, Vietnam and the Philippines. India's military diplomacy in 2007 culminated in large-scale naval exercises with the U.S., Japan, Australia and Singapore in the Bay of Bengal. These exercises raised alarm about a potential 'Asian Nato' and India's presumed uncharacteristic enthusiasm for such an arrangement.⁴⁷ A closer look suggested, however, that India is focused more on expanding its own regional profile rather than the creation of a new alliance. This was reflected in the Indian Navy's initiative to convene for the first time an Indian Ocean Naval Symposium in February 2008. Only littoral navies from South Africa to Australia were invited. That the navies of the U.S., China, and Japan were not invited is explained by Indian officials in terms of geography, but there is no mistaking the enduring intent of India to affirm its own independent engagement of the

45 For a former Indian official's perspective on the security dimensions of India's Look East policy, see Sudhir Devare, *India and Southeast Asia: Towards Security Convergence* (Singapore: Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, 2006).

46 See Udai Bhanu Singh, "India and Southeast Asia: Enhanced Defense and Strategic Ties", in N.S. Sisodia and Sreeradha Datta (Eds.), *Changing Security Dynamics in Southeast Asia* (New Delhi: Magnum, 2008), pp. 329–345.

47 Christian Caryl, "Asia's Dangerous Divide: Beijing and Washington are building new alliances throughout the continent", *Newsweek International*, 10 September 2007; Praful Bidwai, "Five Nation Drill presages Asian Nato", *Inter Press Service*, New Delhi, 10 September 2007.

Indian Ocean littoral.⁴⁸ India has also sought to revive the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation and inject some security content into its deliberations.⁴⁹ While India had to step back from large multilateral exercises of the kind done in 2007 because of domestic political concerns, Delhi has allowed the Indian Navy to despatch a contingent every year since into the Western Pacific.

Beyond the expanded reach and scope of its recent external military engagement, India has stepped up its bilateral security cooperation across the region. During the last few years, India has signed security cooperation agreements with a number of Southeast Asian countries, including Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and Cambodia.⁵⁰ These involve Indian assistance in military training and arms transfers. India's arms exports are way below the level of the Chinese volumes; but these are set to grow, if slowly. As it privatises its defence industry and begins to co-produce advanced weapons systems with European producers, India is positioning itself to meet some of the security needs of the Southeast Asian countries. India is already committed to servicing some of the Southeast Asian fighter aircraft purchases from Russia and training the military personnel from the region to operate them. India's expanding defence cooperation with Vietnam in particular has received special attention given New Delhi's past efforts at balancing Beijing in Indo-China. Some see it as the most consequential Indian strategic partnership in Asia.⁵¹ Yet it might be premature to declare a robust future for this relationship

48 See Gurpreet Khurana, "Indian Ocean Naval Symposium: Where From... Whither Bound?," *IDSAs Strategic Comments*, 22 February 2008, <http://www.idsa.in/publications/stratcomments/gurpreetkhurana220208.htm>.

49 See, for example, Vijay Sakhujia (Ed.), *Reinvigorating IOR-ARC* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2012).

50 For a broad discussion India's security politics in East and Southeast Asia, see David Scott, "Strategic Imperatives of India as an Emerging Player in Pacific Asia," *International Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2, April/June 2007, pp. 121–140; and Harsh Pant, "India in the Asia-Pacific: Rising Ambitions with an Eye on Rising China," *Asia Pacific Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2007, pp. 54–71. See also Sudha Ramachandran, "Indian Navy pumps up eastern muscle," *Asia Times Online*, 20 August 2011.

51 See David Brewster, "India's Strategic Partnership with Vietnam: The Search for a Diamond on the South China Sea?," *Asian Security*, Vol. 5, No. 1, January 2009, pp. 24–44.

given the imperatives on Vietnam to maintain a reasonable relationship with its powerful neighbor to the north, China.

India is also conscious of the dangers of being dragged into a conflict between China and its neighbours. Vietnam and the Philippines are looking for stronger Indian political support in their confrontation with China and more visible Indian naval presence. The Indian naval leadership signalled in December 2012 that it is prepared to deploy forces to the South China Sea if the need arises and is practicing for such contingencies. The Indian political leadership, which has been hesitant about showing too strong a hand in South China Sea, was quick to dissociate the government from the view of the naval establishment.⁵² There clearly are divisions in Delhi's security establishment on the nature of the Indian strategy towards the South China Sea. Some of it is about articulation and timing. A lot of it is about defining strategic priorities. Should India for example focus on consolidating its position in the Indian Ocean or should it focus on developing the capability to operate in China's front yard, the South China Sea. There is also the question of geography and the challenges of sustaining Indian naval operations in the South China Sea.⁵³ Within a short span of two years, the question of South China Sea, rarely heard in Delhi before, has become an important theme of debate within the Indian strategic community. This development underlines India's growing stakes in the waters east of the Indian Ocean, the widening theatre of Sino-Indian rivalry, and the value that some ASEAN countries attach to defence and security cooperation with India. It is also evident that India is not seeking to rush into the South China Sea and inject itself into the region. At the same time India is developing the capabilities to eventually emerge as an actor of consequence in the waters of Southeast Asia.

52 See Vinay Kumar, "We'll send force to protect our interests in South China Sea, says Navy Chief", *The Hindu*, 4 December 2012; Ananth Krishnan, "Media needs to 'more accurately reflect' ties, says Menon after Navy Chief's comments", *The Hindu*, 6 December 2012; and Indrani Bagchi, "ASEAN nations lap up Navy Chief's South China Sea comments", *Times of India*, 19 December 2012.

53 James R. Holmes, "Inside, Outside: India's Exterior Lines in the South China Sea", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2012, pp. 358–363. See also Arun Prakash, "Where are our ships bound", *Indian Express*, 1 October 2011.

CONCLUSION

For nearly four decades, India had withdrawn into a shell of military isolationism that became the flip side of its foreign policy of non-alignment. From being a lone ranger, India has begun to emphasise the virtues of security partnerships—of working with other great powers as well as regional actors to promote security public goods in the region. India's increasingly vigorous military diplomacy underlines an important political change in New Delhi's world view and a greater consciousness of its emergence as a potential security provider in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Some countries of East and Southeast Asia are more than eager to welcome a stronger Indian military presence in the Western Pacific and the South China Sea. New Delhi's expanded institutionalised engagement—political, economic and military—with East Asia has been one of India's more rewarding foreign policy initiatives.

Yet, in comparison to the region's concerns about Chinese assertiveness and America's interest in deepening India's military capabilities, Delhi's security cooperation with East Asia has been criticised as too tentative at both the bilateral and multilateral levels. Many ASEAN states want India to demonstrate greater vigour in its contribution to the security deliberations of the ARE, ADMM Plus and the EAS. They also want India to breathe some life into its many bilateral defence cooperation agreements with the ASEAN states. It has been widely noted that there is a lack of sufficient band-width in the Indian Ministry of Defence to cope with the greater regional and international demands for cooperation and engagement with the Indian military and security establishments. At the political level, there are many ambiguities and unresolved questions about how best India take advantage of the changing geopolitical situation in Asia, without being caught in a crossfire either between Washington and Beijing or between China and its maritime neighbours. As a large and diverse country with its increasingly fragmented politics at home, India is likely to move only with deliberation and at a slow pace.

Yet, there is no denying that New Delhi is waking up, if slowly, to the full significance of China's rise and will not allow itself to be marginalised from Asia's power politics. India's military diplomacy with the great powers and its security engagement with its Southeast

Asian neighbours have significantly expanded in recent years. But, as a critic has pointed out, India is tied down by a 'defensive mindset' and unwilling to invest fully in deepening security cooperation with the East Asian countries.⁵⁴ The challenge for policy makers and scholars is to figure out how much of the current gap between ASEAN's hopes for a stronger Indian security role in Southeast Asia and Delhi's capabilities is rooted in structure and circumstance. Such an understanding will allow the consideration of ways to bridge the current gap or at least prevent it from expanding further.

54 David Brewster, *India as an Asia Pacific Power* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 163–164.

ASEAN'S STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES OF INDIA

Mely Caballero-Anthony

In 2012, ASEAN and India celebrated the 20th Year of ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations. To mark this auspicious event, the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit was held in New Delhi on 20 December 2012 with the theme, “ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace and Shared Prosperity”. The added significance of the Commemorative Summit was the decision to elevate this bilateral dialogue relations to that of a strategic partnership.

The decision to elevate the status of this relationship to one of strategic partnership is not lost on analysts who follow ASEAN-India relations, and ASEAN's relations with major powers. At least in the last decade or so, India's position in the great power equation in the region has drawn a lot of interest. More recently, India has featured more prominently in regional discourses, particularly within the context of the evolving regional security architecture of the Asia-Pacific. But if one were to ask what ASEAN's strategic views of India is—one would argue that there is yet to emerge a singular (ASEAN) view. This is evident in the different ways ASEAN scholars and even officials portray India's role in the regional security landscape, despite the numerous officials' statements on the nature and importance of ASEAN-India relations.

On India's role in the regional security architecture, for instance, there are at least two views that can be had from a number of articles/commentaries out there. One view is that India is a 'resident power' in the Asia-Pacific region. If the strategic power game between the U.S. and China will take place on the 'seascape' of the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, India will ensure that it has an overriding say in the area. The other view is the pivotal role that India has in the U.S.-China rivalry which, in turn, can determine the direction of the balance of power in East Asia.

Yet, one would argue that 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 (See Table 3.1).

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. The later section will discuss in more detail.

This brings us to question how 'strategic' is India to ASEAN? And what does strategic really mean beyond the conventional depictions of India being a resident naval power in Asia and one that can 'balance' China in the major power competition between China and the U.S.? How does getting India 'involved' in this power equation benefit ASEAN? And, how is this benefit operationalised?

The answers to the questions that are flagged above are certainly beyond the scope of the paper. Nonetheless, this paper will provide a broad overview of ASEAN-India relations seen within the context of the nature of its dialogue partnership relations. It is from this perspective that I will assess the strategic value of India to ASEAN. In

TABLE 3.1
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

Source: "ASEAN Member Countries (and related links); ASEAN and India: Progress and Prosperity, <http://www.aseanindia.com/countries/asean> (accessed 28 November 2012); "India-Cambodia Relations", <http://www.aseanindia.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Cambodia-January-2012.pdf>; "India-Indonesia Relations", http://www.aseanindia.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Indonesia-Bilateral_Brief_Decem_2012.pdf; "India-Malaysia Bilateral Relations", <http://www.aseanindia.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/myanmar-july-2012.pdf>; "India-Philippines Bilateral Relations", http://www.aseanindia.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/India-Philippines_Website_Brief_December_2012_.pdf; "India-Singapore Relations", <http://www.aseanindia.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Singapore-February-2012.pdf>; "India-Thailand Relations", <http://www.aseanindia.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Thailand-February-2012.pdf>; "India-Vietnam Relations", <http://www.aseanindia.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Vietnam-January-2012.pdf>.

	Singapore	Malaysia	Indonesia	Philippines	Thailand	Cambodia	Vietnam
Defence Interactions	<p>Joint military training and exercises;</p> <p>Annual defence policy dialogue</p>	<p>Malaysia-India Defence Cooperation Meetings (MIDCOM);</p> <p>Exchange of high-level visits;</p> <p>Joint training exercises;</p> <p>Port visits and regular naval port calls;</p> <p>Cooperative Mechanism on the Straits of Malacca and Singapore</p> <p>(SOMS);</p> <p>Contribution to two of the six IMO Projects (Project 1 and Project 4) for enhancement of navigational safety and environmental protection in the Straits;</p> <p>Mutual participation in defence exhibitions</p>	<p>Exchange of high level visits, ship visits, officers studying in Staff Colleges in either country;</p> <p>Joint coordinated patrols in the mouth of the Malacca Straits</p>	<p>Phil-India Strategic Dialogue;</p> <p>Philippines-India Joint Defense Cooperation Committee;</p> <p>Military-to-military exchanges</p>	<p>Regular joint exercises;</p> <p>Joint and coordinated maritime patrols near the international maritime boundary to counter terrorism, piracy and smuggling;</p> <p>Training of officers at each others' Armed Forces Training institutions;</p> <p>Exchange of visits at various levels;</p> <p>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</p>	<p>Exchange of visits of defence officials;</p> <p>Goodwill visits by Indian Naval Ships (most recently on 12-16 July 2011, Indian Naval Ship – INS AIRAVAT visited Sihanoukville Port of Cambodia);</p> <p>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);</p> <p>Peace keeping operations (the first UN peacekeeping training course was organised from 9-27 August 2010 in Cambodia)</p>	<p>Vietnam-India Defence Strategy Dialogue;</p> <p>High level bilateral visits;</p> <p>Training of personnel;</p> <p>Assistance in defence production;</p> <p>Defence equipment servicing and maintenance of military hardware and naval ports;</p> <p>Supply of military hardware and spare parts;</p> <p>Training for submarine operations to Vietnam in exchange for a permanent berthing facility at Na Thrang Port;</p> <p>Sharing of intelligence;</p> <p>Joint exercises</p>

	Singapore	Malaysia	Indonesia	Philippines	Thailand	Cambodia	Vietnam
Regional Defence Relations	Multilateral cooperation under the auspices of the ADMIM-Plus; Support for the ADMIM-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	2003 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

doing so, the paper sets to argue that it is in the depth and breadth of the ASEAN-India dialogue relations where one can better appreciate the strategic importance of India to ASEAN.

The paper begins with a brief historical overview of ASEAN-India relations and follows to discuss the depth and breadth of this bilateral partnership. It concludes with some reflections on how to enhance ASEAN-India relations to realise the strategic importance of such partnership.

ASEAN-INDIA RELATIONS: FROM A DIALOGUE PARTNERSHIP TO STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Before discussing the current state of ASEAN-India dialogue partnership, it is useful to briefly discuss here the nature of ASEAN's external relations. In the early years since its establishment in 1967, the primary focus of ASEAN's external relations was to seek development assistance from interested external parties/states/institutions to propel the economic development of the ASEAN member states. As a consequence, the nature of ASEAN's dialogue relations with external parties had largely been defined by development assistance. However, with the rapid economic growth of ASEAN in the 1980s and 1990s, the nature of dialogue relations has slowly changed from one of 'donor-recipient' engagement to that of a partnership between equals.

With the advent of the ASEAN Charter, the profile of ASEAN's relations with its Dialogue Partners (DPs) has started to change qualitatively, as efforts were being made to put ASEAN's position vis-à-vis its external partners on an even keel. Article 41 of the ASEAN Charter on the Conduct of External Relations stipulates that ASEAN shall develop friendly relations and mutually beneficial dialogue, cooperation and partnerships with countries and sub-regional, regional and international organisations and institutions. Article 44 of the ASEAN Charter on the Status of External Parties stipulates that in conducting ASEAN's external relations, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting may confer on an external party the formal status of Dialogue Partner, Sectoral Dialogue Partner, Development Partner, Special Observer, Guest, or other status.¹

1 See *The ASEAN Charter*, Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 2009.

In ASEAN's rather complex process, bestowing a full dialogue status to an 'external partner' is often seen as a reflection of the importance given by ASEAN member states to its relations with the country concerned. To be accorded the status of a DP of ASEAN, a country should have been able to meet certain criteria, which included a history of established relations with ASEAN and had contributed to maintaining peace and development in Southeast Asia.

ASEAN-India dialogue partnership is considered relatively 'young' as compared with the other external partners of ASEAN that had been accorded the status of a DP. In fact, India was the last one to be given the DP status by ASEAN in 1995 when it was made a full dialogue partner, from its earlier status of being a sectoral dialogue partner in 1993.² The relationship was 'further elevated' in 2002 when the first ASEAN-India Summit was convened in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Since the first Summit in 2002, the ASEAN-India dialogue relations have grown rapidly. The extent of the cooperation on both sides has gone beyond the realm of functional cooperation to cover the areas of political and security, economic and socio-cultural cooperation. The nature and depth of this cooperation is reflected in several documents, notably: the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity which was signed at the 3rd ASEAN-India Summit on 30 November 2004 in Vientiane, and the accompanying Plan of Action (2004–2010) which was developed to implement the ideas contained in the Partnership document. The other is the ASEAN-India Plan of Action (AI-POA) for 2010–2015 which was signed at the 8th ASEAN-India Summit in October 2010 in Hanoi, Vietnam.³

The range of cooperation outlined in the Plans of Action is indeed extensive. Based on the review of by ASEAN-India Eminent Persons Group (AIEPG), which was tasked to take stock of past and current ASEAN-India relations, it appears that the dialogue partner-

2 ASEAN has 10 Dialogue Partners: Japan, China, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, U.S., Canada, Russia, the EU and India.

3 *ASEAN Secretariat Information Paper, 2012; Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity (2010–2015)*, October 2010.

ship has been growing stronger.⁴ The AIEPG review as well as the progress report prepared by the ASEAN Secretariat, indicate that progress in implementing had been encouraging given the rather ambitious targets that have been set in the POAs. Some of these achievements are highlighted below.

Political and security cooperation

Since the start of ASEAN-India relations and particularly in the last 10 years, there had been a deepening of political engagement between the two parties. The key highlights of this political and security relations include:

Institutionalisation of ASEAN-India meetings

Since becoming ASEAN's DP, India regularly participates in a series of consultative meetings organised by ASEAN—from the annual Summit meetings to ministerial meetings, senior official meetings, and meetings at expert level. India also actively participates in the various dialogue and cooperation frameworks initiated by ASEAN. These are the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) 10 + 1, and the East Asia Summit (EAS). There are also other 'subregional' frameworks which India participates in which are geared to help contribute and enhance intra-regional dialogue and accelerate regional integration. These include the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Cooperation.

India's accession to ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC)

India's accession to the TAC in October 2003 was a milestone in ASEAN-India relations. The TAC is one of the most significant

4 The ASEAN-India Eminent Persons Group was established in 2011 in accordance with the plans outlined in the 2010–2015 ASEAN-India Plan of Action. The AIEPG was tasked to take stock of the ASEAN-India relations over the past 20 years, explore ways to widen and deepen existing cooperation between ASEAN and India, as well as recommend measure to further strengthen ASEAN-India relations in the future. *ASEAN Secretariat Information Paper*, September 2012.

agreement, in fact the first ever Treaty that ASEAN, as an inter-governmental body, had adopted since its establishment in 1967. It is in the TAC where the norms that define ASEAN are best encapsulated. Among these norms are the principles of non-interference, mutual respect of one's sovereignty, non-use of force, and the pacific settlement of disputes.⁵ It is also the TAC which served as the normative foundation of the multilateral security institutions like the ARF and more recently, the EAS. So important was the TAC, that in 2011 when ASEAN member states were faced with the implications of two major powers—the United States and Russia—joining the EAS, the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Dr Marty Natalegawa had pushed for the idea of the “TAC-isation of the EAS” which essentially underscored the need for the EAS member states to observe the norms outlined in the TAC. Moreover, it is important to note that among the key criteria for external parties to join the EAS is the accession of the party concerned to ASEAN's TAC.

To ASEAN, India's signing on to the TAC was therefore very significant and symbolic. It demonstrated the willingness of one of Asia's major powers to be bound by the norms of inter-state conduct that ASEAN has adopted to ensure peace and security in Southeast Asia. India's accession has gone a long way in fostering trust and building confidence between major powers and ASEAN.

Appointment of an Indian ambassador to ASEAN

The adoption of the ASEAN Charter in 2007 paved the way for ASEAN being given a legal personality. One of the consequences of being a legal entity is the fact that a state which intend to strengthen and enhance its bilateral relations with ASEAN can now appoint its own Ambassador to ASEAN. With the entry into force of the ASEAN Charter in 2009, India was one of the earliest DPs to accredit its Ambassador to ASEAN in the Jakarta, which is also where the headquarters of the ASEAN Secretariat is located.

India's Ambassador to ASEAN becomes an important conduit to ASEAN-India relations. This allows the Ambassador to officially

5 See *The ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation*, 1976, <https://asean.sec.org>.

join and represent India's senior officials in high-level official meetings that are held regularly in the Secretariat in Jakarta and in other places.

Support for ASEAN 'centrality' in the emerging regional architecture

Since the establishment of the EAS in 2005, India has openly supported the notion of the 'centrality' of ASEAN. This is reflected in many official statements coming from Indian officials, and most recently from India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during the 7th East Asia Summit held in Phnom Penh in November 2012. In his speech, the Prime Minister re-affirmed India's support when he said:

I would like to begin by complimenting ASEAN members, not only for their progress in creating an integrated ASEAN community, but for their leadership in launching wider regional initiatives such as the ARE, EAS and the ADMM+. For India, ASEAN has been the bridge to the East. It is also central to the evolution of a regional architecture and its different cooperative frameworks.⁶

He reiterated the same during the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit when he said that:

The path to regional peace and stability is greater coordination, cooperation and integration among our economies. ASEAN has shown the way for the entire region, building a regional mechanism of cooperation and consensus that has become a great force for peace and prosperity. It has also emerged as the principal architect and driver of economic and security structures and institutions that are emerging in the region. ASEAN centrality and leadership are essential elements for the success of these forums and India fully supports ASEAN as the lynchpin of these efforts. We also support the objective of an ASEAN Community by 2015 and will continue to be an active participant in the Initiative for ASEAN Integration and the ASEAN Master Plan on Connectivity.⁷

6 PM's statement at Plenary Session of 7th East Asia Summit, November 20, 2012, <http://pmindia.gov.in/speech-details.php?nodeid=1251>.

7 PM's opening statement at Plenary Session of India-ASEAN Commemorative Summit, New Delhi, December 20, 2012, <http://pmindia.gov.in/speech-details.php?nodeid=1259>.

Despite the fact that the notion of ASEAN centrality has not really been fully operationalised, statements such as the above are indicative of the position that India has taken with regard to the role that ASEAN has taken in the regional security landscape.

Establishment of the ASEAN-India Eminent Persons Group

The AIEPG was established to review the progress of the dialogue partnership and to craft a number of policy recommendations to further enhance the partnership as both sides prepare to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of Dialogue Relations in 2012. A major highlight in the 20th anniversary celebrations as mentioned earlier was the holding of the Special Commemorative Summit in December 2012 in India's capital, New Delhi.

It was the AIEPG that recommended that the time was ripe for the Dialogue Partnership to be elevated to a Strategic Partnership. The AIEPG has also recommended that India establish a separate diplomatic mission with a resident Ambassador to ASEAN to facilitate and enhance further bilateral cooperation in all 3 pillars of the ASEAN community.

Broadening of ASEAN-India defence cooperation

The progress of ASEAN-India political cooperation has also 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 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 3.1, 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.⁸ 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 co-operation 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.⁹ As observed by one analyst, India's naval diplomacy has been ahead

8 A. Ahmed, "India-ASEAN relations in the 21st century: Strategic Implications for India", *Eurasia Review*, July 9, 2012, <http://www.eurasiareview.com/09072012-india-asean-relations-in-21st-century-strategic-implications-for-india-analysis/> (accessed 28 November 2012).

9 "About IONS", http://ions.gov.in/?q=about_ions (accessed 17 January 2013).

of the government's in developing closer ties with ASEAN.¹⁰

Economic cooperation

ASEAN-India economic relations have grown steadily. In the area of trade and investments, the volume of trade and investment flows between ASEAN and India has been increasing over the years. In 2011, the total trade between ASEAN and India was US\$68.4 billion, a growth of 23.4 % from US\$55.4 billion in 2010. This accounted for 2.9% of the total ASEAN trade in 2011.¹¹ As for foreign direct investment (FDI), the inflow from India to ASEAN Member States was US\$1.8 billion in 2011¹², a decrease of 154% from US\$3.4 billion in 2010.¹³ It has been observed that India's trade and investments flows to ASEAN remain relatively low compared with the other DPs of ASEAN.¹⁴

The potential for deepening trade and investment between the two parties is enormous and officials recognise that more can certainly be done. In 2003, ASEAN and India had signed the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation which would pave the way for the ASEAN-India FTA. The establishment of the ASEAN-India FTA is envisaged to help ASEAN capitalise on the emerging middle class in India estimated at over 300 hundred million. It is expected that a stronger and more dynamic India will translate into opportunities for enhancing ASEAN's own economic potential.

With its geographical proximity, ASEAN is in a good position to take advantage of the fast growing economy of India. Following the 2003 Framework Agreement, ASEAN and India signed the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods (TIG) Agreement in Bangkok on 13 August

10 B. Singh, "Southeast Asia-India Defence Relations in the Changing Regional Security Landscape", Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) Monograph Series No. 4, May 2011, <http://www.idsa.in/system/files/MonographNo4.pdf>.

11 ASEAN Investment Statistics Database as of 12 June 2012.

12 Ibid.

13 Net FDI = Equity + Net Inter-company Loans + Reinvested Earnings. Data is compiled from submission of ASEAN Central Banks and National Statistical Offices through the ASEAN Working Group on Foreign Direct Investment.

14 Among ASEAN's DP, India is ranked no. 6 in trade and no. 10 in FDI's.

2009 after six years of negotiations. The Agreement entered into force on 1 January 2010. The signing of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement was to have paved the way for the creation of one of the world's largest free trade areas (FTA)—a combined market of almost 1.8 billion people with a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of US\$2.2.75 trillion. The ASEAN-India FTA will see tariff liberalisation of over 90 percent of products traded between the two dynamic regions, including the so-called “special products”, such as palm oil (crude and refined), coffee, tea and black pepper. Tariffs on over 4,000 product lines will be eliminated by 2016, at the earliest.

Aside from the Agreement in Trade in Goods, both sides are also currently negotiating the ASEAN-India Trade in Services and Investment Agreement. Both sides are aiming for an early conclusion of this Agreement. In order to further enhance trade and investments, ASEAN and India have been working closely with business communities on both sides. The ASEAN-India Business Fair and Conclave (AIBFC) held in New Delhi in 2011 attracted an estimated 60,000 visitors and over 500 trade exhibitors from business leaders, practitioners and enterprises from ASEAN Member States and India for networking, knowledge and experience sharing and enterprise development. The AIBFC is envisioned to become an annual event to boost trade and investments from both sides.

Functional and development cooperation

India is one of the DPs of ASEAN that has established a development assistance fund to help ASEAN member states. In 2007, India contributed US\$1 million to the ASEAN Development Fund. The ASEAN-India Green Fund with an initial contribution of US\$5 million was also set up in 2010 to support pilot projects between ASEAN and India on promoting technologies geared toward adaptation and mitigation schemes to address the impact of climate change. In addition, India also provided US\$1 million to the ASEAN-India Science and Technology Development Fund to encourage collaborative R&D and technology development between the two sides.

Apart from establishing a Development Fund, ASEAN has also benefited from a range of technical assistance from India which are geared to build capacity in the region. Some of these are highlighted

below:

- On Human Resource Development, ASEAN has benefited from technical assistance from India in the field of education and related programmes. Under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme, India has been offering 637 scholarships annually to ASEAN nationals. India also provides 200 scholarships to ASEAN students annually for bachelors, masters and doctoral programmes in premier Indian Institutions. So far, 240 space scientist from ASEAN have benefited from training programmes at the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific (CSSTEAP) in Dehra Dun, India.
- India is also supporting ASEAN's Initiative for ASEAN Integration (AIA). The AIA is a cornerstone programme of ASEAN to narrow the development divide and to deepen ASEAN integration. In this regard, India has been generously supporting various programmes within the AIA framework, such as setting up Centres for English Language Training (CELTs) in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar.
- On Information and Communication Technology, India has been working with ASEAN in developing four IT Centres in CLMV countries which are aimed at developing IT training curricula and training programmes.
- On Food and Agriculture, ASEAN officials have benefited from the various training programmes conducted by India's Central Institute of Agriculture and Engineering on areas such as: (i) advances in agriculture equipment; (ii) food processing; and (iii) production and processing technology for value addition of horticultural products. In October 2012, the ASEAN-India Farmers Exchange was launched to create greater awareness among young and innovative farmers on the promising career in the agriculture sector. In addition, the ASEAN-India Roadmap on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in Agriculture Sector would further contribute to the development of relevant coping technologies and risk management practices, and the sharing of knowledge to help

both ASEAN and India to enhance agriculture production and productivity towards food security in the midst of addressing the impacts of increased frequency of draughts, floods and heavy rainfall in the region.

- The Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) is also working with ASEAN countries on facilitating knowledge exchange on best practices in farming systems, sharing of climate resilient germplasm and agro- and forestry-based technologies, capacity building programmes to advance farming and agriculture.
- On Science and Technology, India and ASEAN have had extensive joint cooperation projects. These include developing portal for the ASEAN-India Technology, Information and Commercialisation (TICC) project, the 'ASEAN-India Virtual Institute for Intellectual Property (VIIP). In the Space sector, ASEAN and India are now working on further exploring cooperation in sharing satellite imageries from OCEANSAT-2 and RESOURCESAT-2. India has also offered to train space scientists from ASEAN on how to make best use of satellite imageries for socio-economic benefits in the region.

INDIA AND ASEAN'S MASTER PLAN ON CONNECTIVITY

With the launch of ASEAN's Master Plan for ASEAN Connectivity, ASEAN has looked to its DPs, including India to help realise its vision of connecting with ASEAN members. Under the Connectivity Master Plan, ASEAN has outlined its goals of improving connectivity through a 3-pronged strategy of "enhanced physical infrastructure development (physical connectivity), effective institutions, mechanisms and processes (institutional connectivity), and empowered people (people-to-people connectivity)"¹⁵

India's geographical proximity to ASEAN, sharing a common maritime and land borders with ASEAN, would make it a natural partner of ASEAN in achieving its connectivity plans. It is therefore

15 2010 Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity: One Vision, One Identity, One Community, Adopted in Ha Noi, Vietnam, 28 October 2010.

to ASEAN's advantage if India provides more support to upgrading regional infrastructure and inter-connectivity between ASEAN states and between ASEAN and India, which, combined with an enabling policy framework to facilitate and promote goods in transit, multi-modal transport and inter-state transport would benefit both sides and create a wider trade zone. With regard to improving land connectivity for instance, ASEAN has sought India's support in improving physical infrastructure in (i) the India-Myanmar-Thailand Highway (ii) its extension to Laos and Cambodia and (iii) the development of a new highway also linking Vietnam. There is also a study on a Mekong-India Economic Corridor conducted by the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA)¹⁶, which proposes the linking of corridors in the peninsular, and possibly the north east regions of India with the East Asian region (see Box 3.1).

Air connectivity is an important area which offers immense potential and opportunities to forge closer economic and other opportunities. Both ASEAN and India have expressed keen interest in an Open Skies regime. In this regard, there has been interest on both sides to conclude the ASEAN-India Aviation Cooperation Framework, which has been laid down. ASEAN has been looking forward to the next logical step of concluding the ASEAN-India Air Services Agreement and is encouraging India to expedite and commence the negotiation of the ASEAN-India Air Transport Agreement (AI-ATA) as agreed upon by both sides, with the implementation timeline of 2011.

Connectivity and ASEAN-India Car Rally and Sudarshini

One of the major activities set that marked the 20th Anniversary of ASEAN-India relations was the holding of a Car Rally from ASEAN to India on 19 November until 19 December 2012. The Car Rally was meant to demonstrate the proximity of India with the ASEAN Member States and create public awareness of ASEAN-India relations.

16 "Mekong India Economic Corridor Development", *ERIA Research Project Report 2008-4-2*, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), 2009.

Box 3.1 – Mekong-India Economic Corridor (MIEC)

Economic Corridors constitute state-of-the-art transportation infrastructure such as modern expressway and high speed railway transportation that connect major industrial agglomerations, modern airports, Special Economic Zones and other industrial infrastructures alongside the route—with enabling policy frameworks. The economic corridors framework integrates physical infrastructure to production, trade and investment, by way of minimising non-physical cross-border barriers in order to promote increased trade and investment and regional development.

The proposed Mekong-India Economic Corridor (MIEC) will involve integrating the Greater Mekong Sub-region countries with India through its east coast. In essence, it will connect Ho Chi Minh City (Viet Nam), with Dawei (Myanmar), via Bangkok (Thailand) and Phnom Penh (Cambodia) and further linking to Chennai in India. The route is expected to enhance trade between the four countries with India by reducing travel distance, and removing supply side bottlenecks. It is foreseen that the economic corridor would provide opportunities to these countries to build a strong economic and industrial based and world-class infrastructure, and these linkages will enhance regional connectivity and plug Asia firmly into the regional and global economies.

The MIEC is expected to have a huge economic development impact to the Mekong region. An analysis based on the Geographical Simulation Model (IDE/ERIA-GSM) showed that construction of facility with sufficient border process improvement under MIEC would increase national GDP of Cambodia, Viet Nam, Myanmar and Thailand by 17.6%, 37.8%, 4.8% and 1.9% respectively. With regard to MIEC's impact on trade, an estimate shows that additional exports generated in Cambodia will reach an amount of USD 20 billion; the incremental exports for Viet Nam would be around USD 132 billion. The largest impact on trade due to MIEC however would be in Thailand as the total incremental exports estimated will be around USD 292 billion.

The PMC+1 meeting on July 11, 2012, called for the early convening of the ASEAN-India Transport Ministers' Meeting to look into the possibility of taking concrete steps towards the development of Mekong-India Economic Corridor linking the east coast of India to the Southeast Asian region.

Source: ASEAN Secretariat Information Paper, 2012

Another example was the Sail Training Ship “Sudarshini” which embarked on an expedition to ASEAN countries on 15 Sept 2012 from Kochi, Kerala.

From the above, one can see the extensive area of cooperation that now defines ASEAN-India relations. To be sure, the progress in deepening cooperation over the last 20 years is significant. India has much to offer ASEAN—helping ASEAN to achieve economic integration, developing its human resources, assisting in narrowing the development divide, and managing the many challenges that the region faces with regard to food security, energy, climate change, information technology, transport and infrastructure, among others. The many areas of common interest underscore the fact India is indeed strategic to ASEAN.

MOVING FORWARD: TOWARD ASEAN-INDIA STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Given the remarkable progress in ASEAN-India engagement and the expanded cooperation across a wide range of areas, there are certainly more opportunities to forge an even closer, strategic partnership for mutual benefit. There has been a lot of thinking and discussion in the lead up to the 20th anniversary celebration among the senior officials from India and ASEAN on how to advance bilateral relations further. As mentioned earlier, the AIEPG was formed for the specific purpose of crafting a strategic vision for moving ASEAN-India relations to a higher plane. The recommendations that are contained in the AIEPG report were very interesting as it tried to cover the salient elements of bilateral cooperation within the framework of the 3-pillared ASEAN Community. The next section will touch upon some of the recommendations of the report.

One of the key recommendations by the AIEPG in promoting deeper political and security cooperation between ASEAN and India is for India to establish a separate diplomatic mission, with an Ambassador accredited to the ASEAN and residing in Jakarta. Whereas the current Indian Ambassador to Indonesia is also designated as Ambassador to ASEAN, it was felt that in order to further facilitate the enhanced dialogue partnership cooperation in all the three pillars of the ASEAN community, a dedicated Ambassador to

ASEAN was necessary. If this is implemented soon, India would be the fourth dialogue partner to establish its own mission to ASEAN and appoint a resident Ambassador to ASEAN.¹⁷ The United States was the first ASEAN DP to appoint its own resident Ambassador to ASEAN, followed by Japan, and China.

Apart from the functional advantages of having an assigned Ambassador to ASEAN, the move will also underscore the importance that India gives to its relations with ASEAN particularly with the elevation of this relationship to a strategic partnership. This will also lend more credence to pronouncements from India that it supports ASEAN's centrality in the regional architecture.

The AIEPG has also urged the holding of regular and high-level security dialogue between India and ASEAN. The AIEPG is of the view that a much higher level of security cooperation through enhance dialogues should be encouraged given the shared concern of both ASEAN and India on a number of threats such as extremism and maritime security issues including piracy.

The recommendation to encourage more high-level security dialogue is certainly timely. As has been observed, more attention needs to be given to promote this kind of political and security exchange at the strategic level, especially if one were to meaningfully transform the bilateral relationship to one of strategic partnership. While steps are being taken in this direction such as the holding of the Delhi Dialogue, more can certainly be done. ASEAN has always emphasised the importance of holding regular high-level consultations with its dialogue partners and other external actors. Not only do these dialogues foster and build mutual confidence, they also facilitate and promote better understanding of the kind of political thinking and changing strategic interests and challenges that various actors/states face at various points in time.

Closely tied to the AIEPG's recommendations on enhancing political and security cooperation are the recommendations pertaining to the evolving regional architecture. In this regard, the AIEPG report has underscored the importance of promoting and strengthening cooperation in the ADMM+ to ensure the maintenance of

17 ASEAN-India Eminent Persons Group Report, November 2012.

peace, security, stability, and enhancing prosperity in the region.¹⁸ The same was also said for advancing cooperation in the EAS.

So far, India has been seen to be very supportive of the regional frameworks—ADMM+ and the EAS. Shri Shivshankar Menon, India's National Security Advisor highlighted this point when he stated:

Asian Security Architecture should be open, flexible and inclusive given the diversity in Asia both in terms of power and interests. It must include all the relevant powers, which have presence in the region. It should also be plural as no one size fits all. Therefore, the region must strongly encourage the ADMM process and the EAS as it meets all the criteria of the Asian security order. ASEAN thus is central to the region's conception of the future of Asian security.¹⁹

Similarly, in July 2012 at the 19th ARF Ministerial Meeting, India's External Affairs Minister SM Krishna noted that:

There has been a steady evolution of the regional security architecture centred on the ASEAN in terms of the East Asia Summit, ARF and ADMM Plus. We fully subscribe to the view that ASEAN should continue to be the driving force for these forums. There is scope for greater synergy and complementarity between different forums.²⁰

Another important recommendation is to advance the agenda for maritime cooperation, which must include combating piracy, dealing with maritime emergencies, establishing a collaborative early warning system and providing prompt and effective disaster relief. Given that ASEAN and India are maritime nations, and have been linked throughout history to sea-faring and seaborne trade, it seemed natural that such cooperation should have started much earlier. However,

18 ADMM+ agenda are: maritime security, counter-terrorism, military medicine, peacekeeping operations, and disaster management.

19 Delhi Dialogue III, *Indian Council of World Affairs Conference Report*, 3–4 March 2011, <http://delhidialogue.org/images/stories/pdf/DelhiDialogueIII-report.pdf> (accessed 12 December 2012).

20 "Krishna's intervention at 19th ARF Ministerial Meet", *India Blooms News Service*, 12 July 2012, <http://www.indiablooms.com/NewsDetailsPage/2012/newsDetails120712c1.php> (accessed 12 December 2012).

ASEAN has always been careful in promoting any kind of defence and security cooperation with external parties. But as challenges to maritime security became more complex, ASEAN's reticence had given way to a more pragmatic approach toward pursuing defence cooperation with external parties like India. Given that India is a naval power, it is to the mutual interest of ASEAN and India to work together to ensure maritime security and freedom of navigation to all littoral and user countries, in accordance with international law and on the basis of open, inclusive, transparent and balanced multilateral arrangements in the region.

In 2012 alone, two table-top exercises on military medicine and maritime security were conducted in Tokyo and Langkawi. The ADMM-Plus Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief and Military Medicine Exercise—termed the AHMX, and multilateral exercises on counter terrorism, and maritime security are slated in 2013. In addition, the ADMM-Plus Expert Working Group on Maritime Security has also agreed to establish a webpage to serve as a “brain trust” or think tank to support the work of the EWG on MS. It will also serve as a network of maritime security practitioners, organisations and sea power centers and contribute to policy formulation and confidence building.

Economic cooperation

While India and ASEAN certainly share the goal of strengthening existing economic ties and to take economic relations to a higher plane, both parties are also cognizant of the challenges involved in realising this goal. There has been much talk about the vision of a combined market of 1.8 billion people with a combined GDP of US\$2.3 trillion through the ASEAN-India FTA, but unless more effort is put toward the early conclusion of the negotiations in the areas of services and investment under the ASEAN-India FTA—such vision will remain a dream.

Against the current financial gloom and prospects of slower growth for the global economy, the economic goals that the ASEAN-India FTA has set up are beset with difficult challenges. But many have argued to keep the momentum going given the fact that ASEAN will continue to be an economically dynamic region. Included in the

AIEPG are recommendations for India and ASEAN to work toward reaching a higher level of trade and investment under the proposed strategic partnership, by improved air, sea, land and digital connectivity between the two sides. And also through expanding trade facilitation initiatives, through collaboration in the SME sector which is vital to the economies of ASEAN as well as India, and by fostering business to business relations.

Aside from pushing for trade and investment, India and ASEAN are also encouraged to harness and pool resources to ensure that there is constant supply of talent within the ASEAN-India region. In this regard, both governments are encouraged to work towards providing such talents the opportunity to move seamlessly between ASEAN and India. To realise this, it is important that both sides work toward the facilitation of a mutually beneficial visa regime.

Socio-cultural cooperation

The importance of deepening cooperation in the socio-cultural sphere cannot be overstated. Given that ASEAN itself aims to deepen connectivity to provide both the foundation and the infrastructure to connect the ASEAN community better, the same can be said with ASEAN-India connectivity. This can certainly be achieved by building on the current activities and projects that fall within the socio-cultural pillar. Nonetheless, the AIEPG has pointed to the need to encourage more people-to-people exchanges between ASEAN and India through sports association, media and culture exchanges (films, performing arts, linguistics, libraries, textiles, etc.).

Another suggestion is to widen and deepen people-to-people through an ASEAN-India Knowledge Initiative which would include institution-to-institution linkages between the universities and centres of excellence in different fields. This type of initiative would go a long way in getting India more known to the various communities in ASEAN. Unlike many of ASEAN's dialogue partners—U.S., China, Japan and Korea, India is a lesser known entity to the wider ASEAN community. Yet, as the discussion had pointed out, India has a lot to offer ASEAN in education, training and cultural exchange. Like its eastern neighbours, India has a long history of association with ASEAN and much of the Indian culture is manifested in the cultural

practices of societies in ASEAN.

In sum, India is strategic to ASEAN for many reasons—aside from its strategic position in the power equation among major powers in Asia. To appreciate the expanse of this newly elevated relationship between ASEAN-India is to allow for a comprehensive appreciation of what this relationship can offer in meeting mutual interests and addressing shared challenges.

SOFT AND HARD POWER IN INDIA'S STRATEGY TOWARDS SOUTHEAST ASIA

Ajaya Kumar Das

India's pivot to Southeast Asia today attracts enormous interest in the context of systemic shifts in the global and regional structure of power. Its relatively efficacious interaction with Southeast Asian states in the last two decades under its "Look East Policy" (LEP) is based largely on the soft power of attraction rather than the hard power of coercion. Its growing military resources which engender its hard power have been utilised for soft power projection with relative success which in turn reinforces its hard power. The trajectory of the relationship has been discussed in great detail before.¹ This paper makes a systematic examination of how India's decision-makers have configured soft and hard power in their strategies towards these eastern neighbours in order to pursue India's naturally evolving economic, political, military, and cultural interests and to what extent they have been successful in producing the desired outcomes. While analysing how military resources have

1 See Amar Nath Ram (Ed.), *Two decades of India's Look East policy: Partnership For Peace, Progress And Prosperity* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2012); Sunanda K. Datta-Ray, *Looking East to Look West: Lee Kuan Yew's Mission India* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009); Isabelle Saint-Mézard, *Eastward bound: India's new positioning in Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2005); Frederic Grare and Amitav Matoo (Eds.), *India and ASEAN: The Politics of India's Look East Policy* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001); Kripa Sridharan, *The ASEAN Region in India's Foreign Policy* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1996); K. Kesavapany, A. Mani and P. Ramasamy (Eds.), *Rising India and Indian Communities in East Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, University of Singapore, 2008); and Jaffrelot Christophe, "India's look east policy: An Asianist strategy in perspective", *India Review*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (April 2003), pp. 35–68.

been utilised for soft power behaviour, this article also addresses how all the four non-military soft power instruments—economy, culture, political values and foreign policy—have been utilised for soft power behaviour. Notwithstanding economy which is a core component of hard power, culture, political values and foreign policy can also generate hard power resources. Soft and hard power can mutually reinforce each other. Thus, how should India optimise its soft power in the region and thereby enhance its hard power? In addressing these questions, this paper makes an argument that soft power based on sufficient military and non-military resources will serve as the best basis to support India's overall interests in the region including strong and beneficial defence and security relations.

This paper is divided into five sections. The first briefly defines the concept of soft and hard power, and concurrently analyses their components. In addition, it offers an analysis of the relationship between soft and hard power and addresses why soft power is important. Section two examines how India has utilised military and non-military resources vis-à-vis the Southeast Asian states for soft power behaviour. The third assesses the impact. The fourth section presents prescriptions for optimising India's soft power in the region in order to pursue both security and prosperity, while the final section offers some concluding remarks.

WHAT IS SOFT AND HARD POWER?

Why is soft power important? Besides its increasing use, which in itself signifies its relative value to hard power, "hard power exhibits a greater conflict of interests relative to soft power".² Moreover, contemporary factors in international affairs such as globalisation and interdependence, spread of nuclear weapons, the emergence of advanced technology, decline of "warrior ethics", spread of democracy, and growth in regimes and international organisations have contributed to the elevation of soft power's importance.³ As Gallarotti writes, "The exclusive use of hard power is risky and often

2 Giulio M. Gallarotti, "Soft power: what it is, why it's important, and the conditions for its effective use", *Journal of Political Power*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2011), p. 28.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 37–39.

self-defeating.”⁴ It can disempower a state. Other forms of power have in the past received less attention due to “preoccupation with military power”⁵ Giving equal attention to other forms of power can also help assess the present and future utility of military force. Military force does not remain the only source of power in inter-state relations. As Joseph S. Nye says, “the world is no longer as unconstrained as in nineteenth-century Europe.”⁶ The “use of force is more costly today than was the case in the past.”⁷ As addressed below, soft power also reinforces hard power and vice versa.

Soft power, like hard power, is a form of power. Nye who coined and popularised the concept argues that it should be defined both in terms of resources and behaviour.⁸ In terms of resources, hard power of coercion is based on military and economic power resources. As discussed below, military and economic resources can contribute to soft power behaviour which is also based on attractive culture, political values and foreign policy.⁹ In behavioural terms, soft power is the ability to get the preferred results by power of attraction and hard power is the ability to wield influence by coercion (also by sanction and inducement). Any type of resource can contribute to soft power behaviour, but any kind of behaviour is not soft power behaviour.¹⁰ There is a clear distinction between coercion and attraction.

Just as having military resources does not always guarantee success, a state's possession of soft power resources also does not guarantee the desired political outcome. Thus the relational approach to

4 Giulio M. Gallarotti, *Cosmopolitan Power in International Relations: A Synthesis of Realism, Neoliberalism, and Constructivism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 5.

5 David a. Baldwin, “Power and International Relations”, [http://www.princeton.edu/~dbaldwin/selected%20articles/Baldwin%20\(2012\)%20Power%20and%20International%20Relations.pdf](http://www.princeton.edu/~dbaldwin/selected%20articles/Baldwin%20(2012)%20Power%20and%20International%20Relations.pdf).

6 Joseph S. Nye, “Power and foreign policy”, *Journal of Political Power*, Vol. 4, No. 1(2011), p. 10.

7 Colin S. Gray, “Hard Power and Soft power: The utility of Military Force as an Instrument of Policy in the 21st century”, Strategic Studies Institute Monograph, April 2011, p. 21.

8 Joseph S. Nye, “Power and foreign policy”, pp. 12–13.

9 For detailed discussion, see Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), pp. 3–109.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

power suggests understanding power of an actor in relation to one or many subjects. It is necessary to identify the context and causation.¹¹ For policy relevance, it is necessary to identify “who gets what, how, where and when” while approaching power analysis.¹²

There are three aspects of behavioural or relational power which include both soft and hard aspects.¹³ A state can “change” the “existing preference” of another actor through attraction or persuasion and also by coercion. The former behaviour constitutes soft power and the latter is hard power.¹⁴ A state can also set the agenda to be followed by a subject by both attraction and coercion. And through the third face of power, an actor can “shape” another actor’s “initial preference” both by attraction and coercion. As Nye defines, “Fully defined, soft power is the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes.”¹⁵ Persuasion is also associated with attraction.¹⁶ Underlying attraction of any actor, there are three soft power currencies—“beauty”, “brilliance” and “benignity”. Beauty is “about the resonance that draws actors closer to each other through shared ideals, values, causes, or visions ... shared values and causes provide a push toward the perception that the other regime is beautiful, which in turn will encourage confidence, friendship, and cooperation”.¹⁷ Brilliance is about competence or “high performance” in actions of an agent.¹⁸ Benignity originates from “a wide spectrum of behaviours, ranging from doing no harm

11 For the discussion on the importance of ‘contexts’ in understanding power, see David A. Baldwin, “Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends versus Old Tendencies”, *World Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (January 1979), pp. 161–194.

12 See Harold Dwight Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, *Power and society: A framework for political inquiry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965).

13 See Nye, *The Future of Power*, p. 91.

14 For the three faces of power behaviour, see Nye, *The Future of Power*, p. 91.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

17 Alexandr Vuving, “How Soft Power Works”, Paper presented at the panel “Soft Power and Smart Power”, American Political Science Association annual meeting, Toronto, 3 September 2009, p. 11.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

to others to actively protecting and supporting others".¹⁹ Thus an actor through these soft power currencies creates attraction and favourable outcomes based on all the five pillars of soft power.²⁰

The mode and substance of a country's foreign policy can elicit beauty, brilliance and benignity by showing diplomatic skills in negotiation, "playing by rules", respecting commitments, defining interests broadly, embracing multilateralism, etc. Similarly, cultural excellence and similarity through the currencies of brilliance and beauty can lead to soft power of an agent. Beauty and brilliance can also be generated by pursuing universal political values or values that are beneficial to others. Although economic resources contribute to hard power, a country's economic success can indicate its brilliance leading to attraction and influence.²¹ Founded on that success, a country's human capital, technological prowess, and knowledge society can create attractive power. In an age of globalisation, economic liberalism is viewed as a universal value. Thus the economy of a country which is open to trade with other liberal economies will certainly generate its beauty and benignity and boost its attraction. Similarly, military power resources through the currencies of beauty, benignity and brilliance (or competence) can create soft power influence.²² By providing protection and assistance, a state can create attractive power. Credibility or trust also plays an important role in this process. The modalities of assistance in the form of joint exercises, training and education, and humanitarian assistance can enhance familiarity, trust, benignity and brilliance.²³ Fighting for an ally or a friend and providing protection through extended deterrence which is credible can contribute to soft power. Again, competence, trust and familiarity are closely related to benignity, beauty and brilliance. Military-to-military relations through the mechanisms of dialogues, exchanges, staff talks, etc., can also contribute to attraction and soft

19 Ibid., p. 9.

20 For discussion on these currencies, see Alexandr Vuving, "How Soft Power Works." See also Nye, *The Future of Power*, p. 92.

21 For further analysis of the relationship between economic resources and soft power, see Nye, *The Future of Power*, pp. 51–109.

22 Ibid., pp. 25–50.

23 Ibid., pp. 47–48.

power through the three soft power currencies.

While making a distinction between hard and soft power, it is very important to identify not only what the agent does but also how the subject perceives. As the adage goes, *beauty lies in the eye of the beholder*. If the subject is the beneficiary of hard power of coercion, then it becomes susceptible to the agent's attraction and soft power. India's rising hard power resources or their coercive use may not be attractive to China. But for Vietnam these hard power resources are benign and attractive due to the enmity between China and Vietnam. In the future, if India-Vietnam relations turn into military alliance, that can enhance India's hard power. A state can enhance its hard power resources if it can convert its soft power influence—based on both military and non-military resources—to access military bases, to increase trade and investment, to engage in joint research and production of weapons, to hold regular military exercises, to form military alliances, etc. Therefore soft power can also reinforce hard power and vice versa.²⁴ For greater effectiveness, each resource needs the other. In mutually reinforcing relationships, they can increase a state's influence. The next section traces how India has used both military and non-military assets for soft power influence.

UTILISING SOFT AND HARD POWER RESOURCES

Military

The discussion below describes how India's rising military resources, which augment its hard power, have been used for generating soft power by creating a militarily strong, credible and positive image, engaging in military assistance and diplomacy, and providing public goods.

Creating a strong, credible and positive image

India required military resources not only for its own survival but also to play a larger role commensurate with its history, size, and geographical location. Its nuclear ambiguity and the subsequent nuclear tests in 1998 were demonstrations of both. Its decision-makers linked

24 See, for more discussion, Giulio M. Gallarotti, *Cosmopolitan Power in International Relations*, pp. 32–38 and Chapter 4 and 6.

its tests to India's greater role in Asian geopolitics. At the July 1998 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF) meeting, India declared itself as a nuclear weapon power.²⁵ "A more powerful India will help balance and connect the oil-rich Gulf region and the rapidly industrialising countries of Southeast Asia," wrote Jaswant Singh, then Senior Adviser on Defence and Foreign Affairs to the Indian Prime Minister.²⁶ Following the tests, India concurrently showed its readiness to enter into an agreement on "no-first use" bilaterally or multilaterally, and voluntarily committed to follow a "no-first-use posture" and policy of non-use against a non-nuclear weapon state.²⁷ While engaging ASEAN, India maintained that it did not aim to engage in any arms race while pursuing a "minimum credible deterrence".²⁸ India also maintained military restraint as a responsible nuclear power during the Kargil conflict with Pakistan in 1999.

India has sustained its military modernisation since its nuclear tests, and has emerged as the world's third-largest armed force today.²⁹ It has launched inter-continental ballistic missiles and indigenously built nuclear submarine to boost its nuclear deterrence. With the purchase of airborne tankers, it can project air power outside the subcontinent. Similarly, it can deploy naval forces outside the Indian Ocean region (IOR). However only after consolidating first in the IOR, India may aim to match its public pronouncements about its maritime and strategic interests beyond the IOR by attaining the required force levels for sustained operations.³⁰ It has a "Maritime Capability Perspective Plan for 2012–2027". As the former Chief of

25 C. Raja Mohan, "India's gains from the ARF meet", *The Hindu*, 29 July 1998.

26 Jaswant Singh, "Against Nuclear Apartheid", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 5 (September/October 1998), p. 48.

27 "Paper laid on the table of the House on Evolution of India's Nuclear Policy", <http://www.indianembassy.org/inews/mayjune1598.pdf>; "Opening Remarks by National Security Adviser Mr Brajesh Mishra at the Release of Draft Indian Nuclear Doctrine", 17 August 1999.

28 Jaswant Singh, Minister of External Affairs, "India and ASEAN: Security Paradigm for AD 2000", IDSS, Singapore, 2 June 2000.

29 "Country Comparisons – force levels and economics", *The Military Balance*, Vol. 112, Issue 1(2012), pp. 467–474.

30 "Terror threats factored into Navy's preparations", *The Hindu*, 8 August 2012.

Naval Staff, Admiral Nirmal Kumar Verma has noted, “The Indian Navy has adopted a capability-based, rather than a threat based approach for future growth.”³¹

The Indian Navy is also increasing its force levels in India’s eastern seaboard.³² According to the Budget Estimates 2012–13, the Indian Navy accounts for 19.29 % of the total defence budget, up from about 12 % in 1991.³³ The Indian Air Force accounts for 24.93 % of the total defence budget in 2012–2013. Despite India’s military spending on the rise, it maintains restraint and is transparent unlike China. Nevertheless the current trajectory and the future planning of its naval and air power with expeditionary ambition strongly support India’s greater role in the Indo-Pacific if not the entire world.³⁴ Unless public expressions of geopolitical role are backed by development of military resources, they lack credibility and potential soft power utility. Similarly, other modalities of military-based soft power which are discussed in the following pages also originate from these actual and potential military resources and modalities. Therefore underlying the accretion of military hard power resources there is a purpose to structure expectations of ASEAN states through attraction and persuasion. As the *2009 Indian Maritime Doctrine* notes, “The success of strategic deterrence and the projection of a strong

31 Admiral Nirmal Kumar Verma, “Metamorphosis of Matters Maritime: An Indian Perspective”, IISS, 25 June 2012, <http://www.iiss.org/recent-key-addresses/metamorphosis-of-matters-maritime-an-indian-perspective/>

32 Sudha Ramachandran, “Indian navy pumps up eastern muscle”, *Asia Times*, 20 August 2011.

33 “Demands For Grants (2012–2013)”, Fifteenth Report Standing Committee on Defence, Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, April 2012, <http://164.100.47.134/lssccommittee/Defence/FINAL%20DFG%20%20REPORT%20-2012-13.pdf>.

34 “Demands For Grants (2012–2013)”; Farewell Press Conference of Admiral Nirmal Verma, 7 August 2012; Interview with Admiral Nirmal Verma, “Indian Navy: Towards Blue Water Capability”, *India Strategic*, December 2011, http://www.indiastrategic.in/topstories1309_Indian_Navy_towards_blue_water.htm; Nitin Gokhale, “How Indian Navy is expanding and modernising”, *NDTV*, 25 June 2012, <http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/how-indian-navy-is-expanding-and-modernising-235746>; Gurmeet Kanwal, “India’s Military Modernization: Plans and Strategic Underpinnings”, 24 September 2012, <http://www.nbr.org/research/activity.aspx?id=275#footnote11>.

national image both require a robust, credible defence posture and capability. Much of this is attained in peace time diplomacy, in the image portrayed by the armed forces to domestic and international audience.”³⁵ Similarly, as a leading Indian defence analyst puts it, “people might look at the Indian navy and say, now, why do we want to tie up with these guys? They haven’t got enough force. And if we need someone to hold our hand, let’s chose someone who really carries a big stick ... the Indian sticks aren’t big enough ... That’s what the Southeast Asians say. They are frightened of China but we don’t give them enough comfort.”³⁶ India became more strategic in its LEP in the aftermath of Pokhran II by focusing more on defence relations with ASEAN countries.³⁷ As a democracy, India has a solid record on civilian control over its military. Yet India’s military development, especially its naval build-up in the 1980s and the use of force at the same time in its immediate neighbourhood created some suspicion and negative reaction in some ASEAN states.³⁸ In order to check this, India, besides public diplomacy, began engaging in military assistance and diplomacy.³⁹

Military assistance and diplomacy

Providing military assistance, deploying forces overseas, showing flags, hosting friendly navies, providing training, conducting joint exercises, engaging in evacuations, employing in peace keeping, peace-making, peace building and peace enforcement, and engagement through the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) constitute the Indian Navy’s diplomatic and benign role.⁴⁰ One of the objectives of the benign role is to project India’s soft power.⁴¹

For soft power utility, India has extended military assistance in vari-

35 Integrated headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), India’s Maritime Doctrine, INBR 8, 2009, p. 107.

36 Raja Menon, “The Indian Ocean 2020: The Indian View”, Atlantic Council, 25 June 2010, <http://www.acus.org/event/indian-ocean-2020-indian-view/transcript>.

37 Isabelle Saint-Mézard, *Eastward Bound*, pp. 412–420.

38 *Ibid.*, 280–286.

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 292–295.

40 *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 2009, p. 105–122.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

ous forms to ASEAN countries to augment their hard power capabilities. India's support, however, varies from one country to another. Among all, India has substantive defence engagements with Singapore. Under the Army and Air Force Bilateral agreements, India has for the first time ever allowed the Singapore Armed Forces to train on Indian soil.⁴²

India's naval exercises with ASEAN countries are bilateral and multilateral.⁴³ Besides holding the annual joint naval exercise, Singapore-Indian Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX) held since 1994, it has carried out regular joint patrolling exercises with the Indonesian and Thai navies, and has offered its assistance to the multilateral initiative *Compulsory Pilotage* to safeguard the Malacca strait in 2006.⁴⁴ These exercises not only ensure interoperability, but also help in building hard power capability of all the parties involved. At the 14th ARF meeting, India offered all the member states its assistance "in building capacity to ensure the safety and security of sea lanes passing through the region".⁴⁵ Indian naval ships have increased port visits to ASEAN countries, engaged in "passing exercises" and shown flags by deployments in the South China Sea (SCS) and the Malacca Strait.⁴⁶ The Indian Army has also engaged in bilateral exercises with

42 Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's Statement to the Media after the MoU Signing Ceremony at Hyderabad House, New Delhi, India, 11 July 2012.

43 Annual Reports 1999–2012, Ministry of Defence, Government of India.

44 "India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol", 11 April 2012, http://www.moneycontrol.com/news/wire-news/india-indonesia-coordinated-patrol_691458.html; "Indian, Thai Navies perform joint exercise in Andaman sea", *ZeeNews. Com*, 25 April 2012, http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/indian-thai-navies-perform-joint-exercise-in-andaman-sea_771709.html; Address by Mr Pranab Mukherjee, Defence Minister of India, Fifth IISS Asia Security Summit (Shangri-La Dialogue), Singapore, 2–4 June 2006; Ministry of Defence, Government of India, Annual Report 2011–2012; "Indian naval ships to arrive in RI", *The Jakarta Post*, 28 January 2008.

45 Interventions by External Affairs Minister Shri Pranab Mukherjee at 14th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) meeting in Manila, 2 August 2007.

46 "Visit of Indian Naval Ships Ranjit and Kuthar to Bangladesh and Myanmar", 16 December 2005, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/AdvSearch.aspx>; Ministry of Defence, Government of India, Annual Reports, 1999–2012.

some ASEAN countries.⁴⁷

India has been a source of military training for the ASEAN states.⁴⁸ All the ASEAN countries are partners under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme which offers defence training among others.⁴⁹ India's military assistance to some ASEAN states also involves defence supplies and maintenance support.⁵⁰ India's defence agreements with Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Philippines have broadened the scope of future defence cooperation.

Also, India used its military as an instrument of potential soft power during the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. Its naval forces were deployed for disaster-relief operation in the affected countries, which included

47 Rajat Pandit, "India and Thailand kick off their joint combat exercise, Maitree, at the Sikh Regimental Centre in Ramgarh, with the focus being on counter-insurgency operations in urban and rural terrain," *Times of India*, 11 September 2012; Annual Report 2011–2012, Ministry of Defence, Government of India; Vivek Raghuvanshi, "1st Indian-Malaysian Exercise Ends This Week", *DefenseNews*, 22 October, 2012, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20121022/DEFREG03/310220005/1st-Indian-Malaysian-Exercise-Ends-Week>; "Emerging Triumphant out of Chakravayuh, Indian and Indonesian Troops Train together to Fight Terror", Ministry of Defence, Press Information Bureau, India, 1 March 2012.

48 Brian K. Hedrick, "India's Strategic Defense Transformation: Expanding Global Relationships", November 2009, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/files/pub950.pdf>; Vivek Raghuvanshi, "1st Indian-Malaysian Exercise Ends This Week"; "Exercise Bold Kurukshetra", 27 March 2012, <http://indianarmy.nic.in/Site/PressRelease/frmPressReleaseDetail.aspx?n=niEtbb09LN7kb4q3kupGg==&NewsID=9Q/WE4XtxpOEI1Fw2G3XTg==>; "Antony to Visit Indonesia", Ministry of Defence, Press Information Bureau, India, 12 October, 2012; "Training to Foreign Military Personnel", Ministry of Defence, Press information Bureau, India, 2 August 2011; "Defence cooperation with Singapore", Ministry of defence, Press Information Bureau, 21 July 2004; "India and Singapore sign pact for joint air exercises and training", 28 May 2008, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/AdvSearch.aspx>; "Antony leaves new Delhi on Sunday for a 3-day official visit to Vietnam", 14 December 2007, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/AdvSearch.aspx>; "India and Vietnam announce measures to boost Defence Cooperation", 17 December 2007, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/AdvSearch.aspx>; Ministry of Defence, Government of India, Annual Reports 1999–2012.

49 ITEC Partner Countries, <http://itec.mea.gov.in/partners-itec.html>.

50 SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, <http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>; Pankaj Kumar Jha, "India's Defence Diplomacy in Southeast Asia", *Journal of Defence Studies*, Vol. 5, No 1 (January 2011), pp. 47–63.

Indonesia. Following the 2006 earthquake in central Indonesia, the Indian Navy diverted INS Rajput from the SCS for relief operations.⁵¹ In another mission for a benign role, Indian naval ships were despatched to reach out to Myanmar hit by Cyclone Nargis in 2008 for relief operations.⁵² The Indian Army also participated in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping in Cambodia between 1992 and 1993, sending 1373 troops.⁵³

According to the *2009 Indian Maritime Doctrine*, “Naval diplomacy entails the use of naval forces...to build ‘bridges of friendship’ and strengthen international cooperation on the one hand, and to signal capability and intent to deter potential adversaries on the other.”⁵⁴ Under naval diplomacy, the Indian Navy initiated the IONS in 2008 in which Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar participate as members. It was aimed at developing “friendship, cooperation and mutual understanding.”⁵⁵ MILAN is another Indian initiative. India has become part of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against ships in Asia (ReCAAP) with the Indian Coast Guard representing India. The Western Pacific Naval Symposium provides another forum for India to engage the Southeast Asian navies for cooperative security.

In 2001, Indian Navy hosted an International Fleet Review with the theme “Building Bridges of Friendship” in which Southeast Asian navies participated. Besides port visits and hosting warships from ASEAN countries, the Indian Naval Chief in September 2012 flagged off the Sail Training Ship “Sudarshini” “on an expedition to ASEAN countries along the route of the monsoon trade winds.”⁵⁶ During its port calls to ASEAN countries, it aimed at building navy-to-navy relations and people-to-

51 Annual Report 2006–2007, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, p. 32.

52 “Indian Navy ships Despatched for disaster relief operations – Myanmar”, Ministry of Defence, Press Information Bureau, 5 May 2008; “Indian Air Force aircraft to carry relief material to ‘Nargis’ affected Myanmar”, Ministry of Defence, Press Information Bureau, 6 May, 2008; “Indian Ships Arrives at Myanmar – First Ships to Arrive with Relief Supplies”, Press Information Bureau, 7 May 2008; “Operation Sahayata: IAF IL-76 Airlifts more Relief to Myanmar”, Press Information Bureau, 12 May 2008.

53 “India And United Nations: India’s Contribution to UN Peacekeeping Missions”, <http://www.un.int/india/india%20&%20un/contribution.pdf>.

54 *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 2009, p. 105.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 109.

56 PM’s statement at the 9th ASEAN-India Summit, Bali, Indonesia, 19 November 2011.

people relationship.⁵⁷ For expanding defence cooperation with friendly ASEAN countries, India has also bilaterally engaged in institutionalised dialogues, high-level visits, and staff talks.⁵⁸

Protection of public goods

The first part of the title of India's maritime strategy published in 2004 is *Freedom to use the Seas* which in itself is a soft power exercise. India has emphasised freedom of navigation on the sea including in the SCS.⁵⁹ Anti-piracy, anti-poaching, counter infiltration and anti-trafficking underpin the Indian Navy's constabulary role.⁶⁰ These tasks are India's potential soft power bases even though they involve the use of force.

India has compatible interests with ASEAN states in freedom of navigation and tackling non-traditional issues like piracy and terrorism.⁶¹ It signed a Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism in October 2003. While reiterating to implement effectively the agreement on combating terrorism, India has committed to engage in greater security cooperation on traditional security issues, and has agreed to enhance maritime cooperation including through the ASEAN Maritime Forum on issues ranging from piracy to freedom of navigation.⁶²

Economic resources

Economic resources can be utilised for hard power of inducement and sanction, and soft power of attraction as well. India's economic engagement with ASEAN countries over the last two decades involves more potential soft power currencies of brilliance, benignity and beauty than hard power modalities of inducement or sanction. India's steady move

57 Speech by Ambassador Shyam Saran at flag off of INS Sudarshini, 15 September 2012, <http://www.aseanindia.com/press-release/2012/09/15/speech-by-ambassador-shyam-saran-at-flag-off-of-ins-sudarshini>.

58 See Ministry of Defence, Government of India, Annual Reports 2001–2012.

59 "India backs freedom of navigation in S China Sea", *The Indian Express*, 13 July 2012.

60 *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, p. 116.

61 Vision Statement ASEAN India Commemorative Summit, 21 December 2012; Addressed by H.E. Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India, "India's Perspective on ASEAN and the Asia Pacific Region", Annual Singapore Lecture, 9 April 2002.

62 Vision Statement ASEAN India Commemorative Summit.

to integrate its economy with ASEAN renders less room for inducement. India's economic success, engagement in free trade, connectivity efforts, sub-regional cooperation and efforts at assistance and capacity-building are its potential soft power bases. An accumulation of wealth through economic interdependence provides basis for hard power.

Economic success

India's economic liberalisation process which began in 1991 eliminated one real area of estrangement with ASEAN states creating trade and investment opportunities for enhanced commercial relationships. India's economic growth rate, high-tech sector, scientific and technological success, emergence of knowledge society became India's soft power bases. India's favourable economic and demographic projections complement the currency of brilliance. Indian leaders and officials emphasised India's emerging economy and the reform process while engaging ASEAN in order to highlight India's interest in free trade and investment.⁶³

63 See P. V. Narasimha Rao, "Forging a new relationship with the Asia-Pacific", Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 8 September 1994; ASEAN Political-Security Community : ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) : AMM : The 30th AMM/PMC, 24–29 July 1997 : Statements at the Dialogue Sessions – H.E. Mr P. Chidambaram, India, <http://www.asean.org/component/zoo/item/asean-political-security-community-asean-ministerial-meeting-amm-amm-the-30th-ammPMC-24-29-july-1997-statements-at-the-dialogue-sessions-he-mr-p-chidambaram-india>; Statement by Deputy Chairman Planning Commission of India Jaswant Singh on the Occasion of the ASEAN 31st Post Ministerial Conferences(PMC 9+10) Plenary Session. 28 July 1998, Manila, <http://www.asean.org/communities/asean-political-security-community/item/statement-by-deputy-chairman-planning-commission-of-india-jaswant-singh-on-the-occasion-of-the-asean-31st-post-ministerial-conferencesPMC-910-plenary-session-july-28-1998-manila>; Joint Press Release The 1st Meeting of the ASEAN-India Joint Sectoral Cooperation Committee, Bali, Indonesia, 7–8 January 1994, <http://www.asean.org/news/item/joint-press-release-the-1st-meeting-of-the-asean-india-joint-sectoral-cooperation-committee-bali-indonesia-7-8-january-1994>; Joint Press Conference by Disinvestments Minister Arun Shourie and Minister of Trade and Industry George Yeo, Istana Palace, Singapore, 8 April 2002; Speech of Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Singapore – India Business Forum, Singapore, 8 April 2002 ; Keynote Address by Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh at Special Leaders' Dialogue of ASEAN Business Advisory Council, Kuala Lumpur, 12 December 2005; PM's address at the 5th India-ASEAN Summit, 14 January 2007; Statement by Prime Minister at the 6th India – ASEAN Summit, 21 November 2007; PM's remarks at the fifth East Asia Summit, 30 October 2010.

Engaging in free trade

One of the primary goals that prompted the launch of its LEP was to pursue wealth. For greater and more beneficial economic interdependence, India signed a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in 2009 relating to goods following the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation in the second summit in 2003. India proposed an FTA in the very first annual summit with ASEAN in 2002. In 2003, India inked the Open Skies agreement with ASEAN and finalised the negotiations on FTA on services and investment in December 2012.

Bilaterally, India has signed a comprehensive economic partnership agreement with Singapore and with Malaysia. While the India-Thailand Free Trade Agreement is being negotiated, they have implemented the Early Harvest Scheme under the FTA Framework Agreement in October 2003. India has commenced negotiations with Indonesia on a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement. Singapore and Indonesia are among the top ten export markets for India in 2012. Similarly, Indonesia was among the top ten import sources in 2012.⁶⁴ In Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Equity Inflows to India for the year 2012–13, Singapore ranks second.⁶⁵ India's total trade with ASEAN is about US\$80 billion in the Indian financial year 2012 up from US\$2.4 billion in 1990 with the target of US\$100 billion by 2015.

Enhancing connectivity

To promote trade and integration, India has put physical connectivity between India and ASEAN as a “strategic objective and thereby complementing the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity”.⁶⁶ It has taken initiatives both at the national and regional levels which include among others Delhi–Mumbai Industrial Corridor, India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport

64 “India's Trade and Commercial Relation”, Ministry of External Affairs, Investment and Technology Promotion (ITP) Division, http://www.indiainbusiness.nic.in/trade/trade_commercial_relation.html.

65 Ibid.

66 PM's statement at the 9th ASEAN-India Summit, 19 November 2011, <http://pmindia.gov.in/speech-details.php?nodeid=1085>.

Project, and Mekong–India Economic Corridor.⁶⁷ India’s car rallies and ship expedition to ASEAN countries “highlight the importance and the potential for connecting India and ASEAN by sea, surface and air links.”⁶⁸

Sub-regional cooperation

Another complementary process to enhance soft power is India’s engagement with ASEAN states in sub-regional groupings like Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation Initiative (MGCI). India also engages Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand in the Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Cooperation.

Development assistance and capacity-building

As ASEAN has sought to minimise the development gap between Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam (CLMV) and other ASEAN states, India has engaged in development assistance and capacity building in CLMV states through its ITEC programme and other initiatives as soft power tools.⁶⁹ India was one of the top five non-ASEAN countries to fund Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) in 2006.⁷⁰ The Plan of

67 “ASEAN-India Connectivity Report: India Country Study”, Research and Information System for Developing Countries, 2012, http://www.ris.org.in/images/RIS_images/pdf/Executive_summary_ASEAN_India.pdf.

68 PM’s opening remarks at the 10th India-ASEAN Summit, 19 November 2012.

69 “ITEC Programme for Entrepreneurship Development In CLMV Region: Case Study”, Task Team on South-South Cooperation, 16 August 2011, http://www.southsouthcases.info/pdf/asia_05.pdf; Information for Media, <http://www.mea.gov.in/outoging-visit-detail.htm?20159/Prime+Minister+Shri+Atal+Bihari+Vajpayees+Visit+to+Singapore+amp+Cambodia+711+April+2002#1>; Lao-India Joint Press Statement, 8 November 2002; Joint Statement by India and Myanmar on the State visit of Prime Minister of India to Myanmar, 28 May 2012; Joint Ministerial Statement on the 6th Mekong Ganga Cooperation Meeting, 4 September 2012, <http://mealib.nic.in/?2010201219991>; PM’s statement at the 9th ASEAN-India Summit, 19 November 2011.

70 Opening Remarks by H.E. Ong Keng Yong, Secretary General of ASEAN, Seminar on “Accelerating Development in the Mekong Region-The Role of Economic Integration, Siem Reap, Cambodia, 26–27 June 2006, <http://www.imf.org/external/np/seminars/eng/2006/mekong/okk.pdf>.

Action adopted for 2010–2015 between India and ASEAN also included capacity development and human resource development.⁷¹ India also launched India-CLMV Quick Impact Projects (QIP) Revolving Fund to which it will contribute US\$1 million annually.⁷² It has involved in various projects like preserving heritage sites in MGC countries, promotion of traditional Textiles, human resource development and offering scholarships under its Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme.⁷³ Additionally, India has announced to contribute to ASEAN-India Co-operation Fund to support ASEAN-India Science & Technology Development Fund and ASEAN-India Green Fund.⁷⁴

Foreign policy

An attractive foreign policy not only contributes to a state's soft power, it also helps build friendly relations and allies that can complement a country's hard power. It is traced below how India has sought to utilise its foreign policy to endear itself to ASEAN states.

Initiating LEP

India's formulation of LEP itself was a major foreign policy initiative to end its estrangement with ASEAN countries since the Sino-Indian War of 1962 and this has been increasingly embraced by successive governments. It was a "strategic shift"⁷⁵ and its partnership with ASEAN is defined as the foundation of India's LEP.⁷⁶ India has appointed an ambassador to ASEAN, and has engaged as a full dialogue partner and at the summit level. In major foreign policy align-

71 "Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity", <http://www.asean.org/asean/asean-summit/item/plan-of-action-to-implement-the-asean-india-partnership-for-peace-progress-and-shared-prosperity>.

72 Joint Ministerial Statement on the 6th Mekong Ganga Cooperation Meeting, 4 September 2012.

73 Ibid.

74 "History", ASEAN-India: progress and Prosperity, <http://www.aseanindia.com/about-history>.

75 PM's speech at the Asian Corporate Conference, "Driving Global Business: India's New Priorities, Asia's New Realities", Mumbai, 18 March 2006, <http://pmindia.nic.in/speech-details.php?nodeid=287>.

76 Statement by Prime Minister At The 9th ASEAN-India Summit, 19 November 2011, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=77320>.

ment with ASEAN, India supports for an “open, balanced, inclusive and rule-based” regional architecture.⁷⁷

Harmonising with ASEAN norms of peace and stability

India explained its rationale for rejecting the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) while supporting ASEAN in its “quest for establishing a stable, predictable and balanced political security order in the Asia-Pacific region” as a “constructive and stabilising factor” with “no history of direct involvement in the conflicts of the region.”⁷⁸ Post-Pokharan II, India related its nuclear tests with balance of power in Asia in the context of potential Chinese hegemony.⁷⁹ While reiterating India’s past record of absence of any territorial aggression and export of “destabilising ideology”, India continued to link its nuclear tests to stability in the region.⁸⁰ Jaswant Singh in Singapore in June 2000 remarked, “The engagement of a militarily stronger, economically prosperous, democratic and secular India imparts greater stability to the region.”⁸¹ India also offered its readiness to convert its commitment to respect the Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in Southeast Asia into a “legal obligation.”⁸² In order to strengthen its benign image, India acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia, thereby identifying with ASEAN norms. Additionally, it signed the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity in 2004 which emphasises among others the “Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence.”⁸³ In the first ASEAN-India Summit in November 2002, India in a joint state-

77 PM’s statement at Plenary Session of 7th East Asia Summit, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 20 November 2012, <http://pmindia.nic.in/speech-details.php?nodeid=1251>.

78 Statement by External Affairs Minister, I. K. Gujral at the Post-Ministerial Conferences of ASEAN (PMC07+1), 24 July 1996.

79 Jaswant Singh, “Against Nuclear Apartheid.”

80 Jaswant Singh, “India and ASEAN: Security Paradigm for AD 2000.”

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.

83 ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity, 30 November 2004, http://www.asean.org/news/asean-statement-communicues/item/asean-india-partnership-for-peace-progress-and-shared-prosperity-vientiane?category_id=26.

ment committed to these norms to promote peace and stability in the region besides welcoming the entry into force of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone.⁸⁴ It has reiterated its commitment towards a “stable and peaceful regional environment” in the region in the joint *Vision Statement* made in December 2012.⁸⁵

Supporting ASEAN's centrality

India has consistently emphasised ASEAN's centrality in the evolving regional architecture.⁸⁶ Even in its “phase II” of LEP which encompasses other East Asian countries, India considers “ASEAN at its core”.⁸⁷ By pursuing both bilateralism and multilateralism in its foreign policy, it has sought not to appear as a threat to the ASEAN-centric regional order and has enmeshed in it. In alignment with ASEAN states, it seeks to preserve balance of power in the region. In the 2012 *Vision Statement*, India has reaffirmed its commitment to support ASEAN for realising the ASEAN Community in 2015.⁸⁸

Less conflict of interests

India's major economic and security interests in the region are compatible with all the major regional and extra-regional actors with the exception of China. Its bilateral engagements with the ASEAN states are not zero-sum games. India in December 2012 hosted the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit with the theme “ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace and Shared Prosperity”. This was a good public diplomacy initiative to project its soft power.

84 Joint Statement of the First ASEAN-India Summit Phnom Penh, 5 November 2002, <http://www.asean.org/news/item/external-relations-india-asean-india-free-trade-area-joint-statement-of-the-seventh-aem-india-consultations-bangkok-13-august-2009>.

85 Vision Statement ASEAN India Commemorative Summit.

86 PM's remarks at the fifth East Asia Summit, 30 October 2010; PM's opening remarks at the 10th India-ASEAN Summit; Vision Statement ASEAN India Commemorative Summit.

87 Speech by External Affairs Minister Shri Yashwant Sinha at Harvard University, 29 September 2003; Statement by PM at the 6th East Asia Summit Plenary Session, 19 November 2011.

88 Vision Statement ASEAN India Commemorative Summit.

Culture

Culture is also an important tool of India's soft power. Past Indian efforts at Asian unity on cultural and spiritual grounds have seen limits. The idea of "Greater India" based on the early Indianisation of Southeast Asia was a "difficult legacy" for independent India's foreign policy.⁸⁹ Even the thesis of "Asian values" has been challenged.⁹⁰ Similarity in culture can, however, attract practical cooperation. India has been wise in rejecting the cultural hubris that is rooted in the idea of "Greater India". But it continues to invoke civilisational links, and utilise the cultural elements to strengthen its relationship with the region and thereby its soft power. Narashimha Rao's outreach to the Buddhist Order during his visit in 1993 to Thailand and the declaration to liberalise India's visa regime for visiting monks are indeed part of India's soft power investment.⁹¹ Equally importantly, India has extended its assistance for restoration of the Angkor Vat and Ta Prohm temples in Cambodia, Cham monuments in My Son, and Ananda Temple in Bagan.⁹² Every successive government in India since the initiation of its LEP has emphasised India's civilisational links with Southeast Asia through public diplomacy.

In order to promote cultural relations and thereby project India's soft power, the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) has established cultural centres in Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand, and is in the process to establish such centres in Vietnam and Singapore. The ICCR has also been involved in organising exhibitions, organising and supporting seminars and conferences in

89 See T. A. Keenleyside, "Nationalist Indian Attitudes towards Asia: A Troublesome Legacy for Post-Independence Indian Foreign Policy", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (Summer 1982), pp. 210–230.

90 Amartya Sen, "Democracy as a Universal Value", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (1999), pp. 3–17.

91 Amar Nath Ram (Ed.), "The First Decade of India's Look East Policy: An Insider's Account", Amar Nath Ram (Ed.), *Two Decades of India's Look East Policy*, p. 68.

92 "Restoration work in Cambodia", Embassy of India, Cambodia, <http://www.indembassyphnompenh.org/index.php/bilateral-relations/restoration-work-in-cambodia>; "India – Vietnam Relations", August 2012, <http://meaindia.nic.in/meaxpsite/foreignrelation/vietnam.pdf>; Joint Statement by India and Myanmar on the State visit of Prime Minister of India to Myanmar, 28 May 2012.

Southeast Asian states and India in the subject of culture, ideology and Buddhism, and hosting cultural troupes from Southeast Asian countries to perform in India and also sending cultural delegations to these countries to showcase Indian culture.⁹³

Besides awarding fellowships to scholars specialising in Indian studies, the ICCR receives distinguished visitors from ASEAN states, and has bestowed their leaders with Nehru award for the cause of international understanding.⁹⁴ It also offers various scholarships to Southeast Asian nationals to pursue studies in India in various disciplines including traditional medicine.⁹⁵ It has established visiting professorships of Indian studies and culture, and Indian Chairs to familiarise India to nationals in ASEAN countries.⁹⁶

India has also held the “Festival of India” in various ASEAN countries to showcase Indian culture, thereby expanding bilateral cultural relations.⁹⁷ Another initiative “India show” with the support of the Indian government has sought to promote brand India in some ASEAN states.⁹⁸ At the bilateral level, India has agreed to engage in cultural exchange programmes with ASEAN states. In the 2012 *Vision Statement*, it agreed to increase the socio-cultural cooperation including intensifying “efforts to preserve, protect and restore symbols and structures representing civilisational bonds between ASEAN and India.”⁹⁹

India launched the India–ASEAN Eminent Person Lecture Series

93 Annual Reports 1990-2010, Ministry of External Affairs, India; “Programmes & Events”, ICCR, <http://www.iccrindia.net/programmes.html>.

94 Annual Reports 1993–2006, Ministry Of External Affairs, India; “Chairs & Fellowships”, ICCR, <http://www.iccrindia.net/chairs.html>; “Programmes & Events; Awards & Lectures”, ICCR, <http://www.iccrindia.net/awards.html>.

95 For various types of scholarships, see “Students and Scholarships”, ICCR, <http://www.iccrindia.net/students.html>.

96 For the List of ICCR's Chairs Abroad, see “Chairs & Fellowships”; Annual Reports 1991–2011, Ministry Of External Affairs, India.

97 K. P. Nayar, “Redrawing The World – Fresh air and plain-speaking in the MEA”, *The Telegraph*, 25 August 2004; Kanupriya Kapoor, “Festival of India kicks off with colorful dance and music”, *The Jakarta Post*, 17 October 2009; Annual Report 1995–1996, Ministry Of External Affairs, India.

98 For details, see <http://www.madeinindiashow.in/exhibitor-information-aboutshow.html>.

99 Vision Statement ASEAN India Commemorative Summit.

in December 1996 to enhance people-to-people interaction. In collaboration with Southeast and East Asian states, India is reviving the ancient Nalanda University aimed at “pan-Asian cooperation in education and intellectual pursuits”.¹⁰⁰ There have been other initiatives to enhance people-to-people relations such as ASEAN-India Students Exchange Program, ASEAN-India Youth Exchange Programme and ASEAN-India Media Exchange Programme.¹⁰¹ During the third Meeting of the ASEAN-India Tourism Ministers, India signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on Strengthening Tourism Cooperation.¹⁰² India now provides visa on arrival to nationals from seven ASEAN countries.

It has established a Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs in 2004 to connect with the Indian Diaspora. It organises Pravasi Bharatiya Divas annually since 2003 involving them in India and has taken various other initiatives to reach out them.¹⁰³ The overseas Indian communities in ASEAN countries are potential soft power sources.¹⁰⁴ The image they create through their enterprise and cultural practices contributes to India’s soft power.

Political values

In order to optimise its influence through attraction, India has also used its relatively successful pluralist democracy vis-à-vis ASEAN states. Notwithstanding the cultural roots of Indian democracy, its relative success reaffirms the belief that democracy is a universal

100 Shreeya Sinha, “Q&A: Nobel Prize Winning Economist Amartya Sen on Reviving Nalanda University”, 23 September 2011, <http://asiasociety.org/blog/asia/qa-nobel-prize-winning-economist-amartya-sen-reviving-nalanda-university>.

101 For details, see “ASEAN–India Commemorative Summit 2012”, 2 August 2012, <http://mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?20292/ASEAN++India+Commemorative+Summit+2012>; “ASEAN-India Students Exchange Programme”, <http://www.aseanindia.com/students-exchange-programme>.

102 PM’s opening remarks at the 10th India-ASEAN Summit.

103 “Initiatives for Overseas Indians”, [HTTP://WWW.INDIANCONSULATEATLANTA.ORG/PAGE/55](http://WWW.INDIANCONSULATEATLANTA.ORG/PAGE/55).

104 For number of overseas Indians in Southeast Asia in 2011, see <http://www.indembassyuriname.com/31.pdf>.

value.¹⁰⁵ Indian democracy is imperfect. Yet India's economic success is rooted in that. In 2006, India ran the campaign as the "fastest growing free market democracy".¹⁰⁶ While rejecting any kind of "political interventionism", India has engaged bilaterally and multilaterally for the cause of democracy promotion.¹⁰⁷

India is a co-founder and the second biggest donor to the UN Democracy Fund which is involved in various projects to promote democratic values and processes in ASEAN countries.¹⁰⁸ It is also a founding member of the Community of Democracies with similar aims and hosted the inaugural assembly of the World Movement for Democracy in February 1999.¹⁰⁹ India has also participated in the Asia-Pacific Democracy Partnership and is a founding member of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) for the cause of democracy promotion. The IDEA also aims at "the realisation of the democracy and governance elements of the ASEAN Political and Security Blueprint".¹¹⁰ The Election Commission of India (ECI) has signed an MoU with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems for "promoting democratic processes and good governance around the world".¹¹¹

Bilaterally, the ECI has shared its experiences with ASEAN states

105 Amartya Sen, "Democracy as a Universal Value", pp. 3–17; According to the *Freedom House*, India is a "free" country, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/country/india>; India scores 9 out of 10 on democracy in the Polity IV dataset Polity IV dataset, <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/inscr.htm>.

106 Aparna Ramalingam, "Brand India: Now shining everywhere", *Times of India*, 13 August 2006.

107 Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, "India and the World: A Blueprint for Partnership and Growth", Speech at the HT Leadership Initiative Conference, 5 November 2004.

108 "Donor contributions to UNDEF", http://www.un.org/democracyfund/Donors/donors_index.html; For project data base, see http://www.undemocracyfund.org/opps/proposal.list.php?record_type=project.

109 "World Movement for Democracy", <http://www.wmd.org/about>.

110 "IDEA Work Programme", http://www.idea.int/asia_pacific/work_programme.cfm.

111 "IFES, Indian Election Commission Sign Agreement for Increased Global Collaboration", 17 May 2012, <http://www.ifes.org/Content/Publications/Press-Release/2012/IFES-Indian-Election-Commission-Sign-Agreement-for-Increased-Global-Collaboration.aspx>.

like Indonesia and Thailand on Indian electoral processes.¹¹² It has signed an MoU with its Indonesian counterpart to cooperate in the areas of electoral management and administration and is in process to sign one with Thailand.¹¹³ India has trained parliament officials of ASEAN countries under its ITEC programme.¹¹⁴ India and Singapore have launched a “Friendship Group” consisting of parliamentarians from both the sides. It has also formed a similar group together with Thailand. Besides bilateral engagements, Indian Parliamentarians have engaged the members of the ASEAN Inter Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA).¹¹⁵

ASSESSING THE IMPACT

After identifying India’s soft power resources and modalities in the above section, this section traces the successful impact of both military and non-military resources and modalities on soft power behaviour through the currencies of beauty, benignity and brilliance in the domains of political-security, economic and cultural. In addition, this section addresses how these soft power processes are reinforcing hard power resources.

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- 112 “International Co-operation”, Indian Election Commission, http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/the_setup.aspx; Press Note, Election Commission Of India, 11 October 2011, http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/current/PN11Oct11.pdf; Press note, Election Commission Of India, 3 May 2011, http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/current/pn03052011.pdf; Memorandum Of Understanding between the Election Commission of India and the General Election Commission of the Republic of Indonesia on cooperation in the field of electoral management and administration, http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/mou/indonesia.pdf; Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, Annual report 1999–2000, <http://mealib.nic.in/reports/ar19992000.pdf>.
- 113 Memorandum Of Understanding between the Election commission of India and the General Election Commission of the Republic of Indonesia; “ECI to extend Electoral Management Assistance to South Asian and other Developing Countries”, Press Release, the Election commission of India, 27 January 2011.
- 114 See *Warta India*, Vol. IV, Issue, IX, June 2012; “Meira Kumar applauds Myanmar parliament’s new look”, *Daily News*, 4 July 2012.
- 115 “History”; “India–Thailand Relations”, <http://www.aseanindia.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Thailand-February-2012.pdf>; “Visitors To Parliament”, <http://164.100.47.132/estudy/visitors.pdf>.

Political and security domain

India's public diplomacy and concurrent initiation of defence cooperation with some ASEAN states helped in checking negative reactions towards its naval build up in the late 1980s.¹¹⁶ India's opposition to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the CTBT did not prevent India's entry to ARF and admission as a full dialogue partner in 1996. India's objection to nuclear discrimination had some resonance among ASEAN countries.¹¹⁷ Even ASEAN states may have found in India's undeclared nuclear status a beneficial balancing factor vis-à-vis a potentially aggressive China.¹¹⁸ Thus in the ARF India was expected to play a more proactive role.¹¹⁹ The ASEAN took a "moderate approach" towards India's nuclear tests, thanks to India's public diplomacy and private diplomatic dialogues explaining its rationale for the tests and future role of its nuclear weapons.¹²⁰ As a leading analyst in India wrote, "India's nuclear tests have not changed that basic assumption of the key ASEAN States...if India is seen as having its economic and political act together, some in ASEAN could even argue that a nuclear India could be beneficial for Asian balance of power...It is the solid support from Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and Laos that allowed India to emerge relatively unscathed from the ARF meeting here."¹²¹ Outside the ASEAN framework, Singapore and Vietnam did not take any unfavourable position towards India's nuclear tests unlike others.¹²² The perceived competence based on nuclear tests, and benign image based on persuasion complemented by beauty related to commonality on NPT and CTBT reinforced India's attraction and soft power.

Post-Pokhran II, India as a rising power was also seen as a "part" of the "new equilibrium or security architecture or geopolitical balance" in Asia and the world.¹²³ India's economic and military rise was

116 Sait-Mezard, *Eastward Bound*, pp. 287–335.

117 Statement by I. K. Gujral, Minister of External Affairs in the Indian parliament, 31 July 1996; Saint-Mezard, *Eastward Bound*, pp. 366–373.

118 Saint-Mezard, *Eastward Bound*, pp. 373–374.

119 *Ibid.*, pp. 374–376.

120 *Ibid.*, p. 405.

121 C. Raja Mohan, "India's Gains from the ARF Meet".

122 Isabelle Saint-Mezard, *Eastward Bound*, p. 405.

123 P. S. Suryanarayana, "Wahid casts a wider net", *The Hindu*, 4 June 2000.

not only enhancing its competence as a major power in Asia, it was increasing its endearment based on the perceived beauty and benignity. Its responsible behaviour during the Kargil conflict following its Lahore peace initiative was convincing for ASEAN states about its commitment to peace in South Asia. It contributed towards a benign image. On a more positive note, the ASEAN ministers during the conflict called for maintaining restraint, engaging in dialogue and reviving the Lahore peace process.¹²⁴ During the 2001–2002 crises, they called on Pakistan to end cross-border terrorism to ease tension.¹²⁵ Indian peace initiatives were recognised by ministers of ASEAN countries during their 36th meeting.¹²⁶ India got somewhat equal status with China with its up-gradation to summit level partnership in 2002.

Rodolfo C. Severino, Jr., then as Secretary-General of the ASEAN in 2001 noted that “on strategic, economic and political grounds, India has a rightful place in the ASEAN dialogue system as it is today, with as strong a claim to that position as any of the other Dialogue Partners”. He recognised India’s civilisational influence, its constructive role in Indo-China through the UN, its contribution to the ARF and the “resolute efforts to strengthen ties with ASEAN as a group”.¹²⁷ India’s inclusion in the East Asia Summit (EAS) received strong support from Indonesia and Singapore.¹²⁸ Besides its benign image rooted in its early peaceful commercial and cultural relations, India’s economic and political competence to bring equilibrium was complemented by the beauty of India’s foreign policy alignment with ASEAN that seeks a central role within an open and balanced

124 Joint Communique of the 32nd ASEAN Ministerial Meeting Singapore, 23–24 July 1999; Chairman’s Statement the Sixth Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum, Singapore, 26 July 1999.

125 Chairman’s Statement the Ninth Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum, Bandar Seri Begawan, 31 July 2002.

126 Joint Communiqué of the 36th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting Phnom Penh, 16 June 2003.

127 Rodolfo C. Severino, Jr., Secretary-General of the ASEAN, “ASEAN and India –A Partnership for Our Time”, India-ASEAN Eminent Persons Lecture, New Delhi, 9 January 2001.

128 Address by H.E. Dr R. M. Marty M. Natalegawa, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Indonesia, “Indonesian View of the World”, Indian Council of World affairs, New Delhi, 2012.

regional architecture.¹²⁹ “This is a rare instance where India’s strategic posture is aligned with almost all the major actors in the Asia-Pacific,” writes Shyam Saran, a former foreign secretary of India.¹³⁰ As Singapore’s Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew said,

“Abdullah Badawi ... Offered to host an East Asia summit: ASEAN plus three...China’s premier, Wen Jiabao, then offered to host the second summit. That would move the centre of gravity away from Southeast to Northeast Asia and make some countries anxious. We agreed that we should also invite India, Australia and New Zealand and keep the centre in ASEAN; also, India would be a useful balance to China’s heft. This is a getting-together of countries that believe their economic and cultural relations will grow over the years. And this will be a restoration of two ancient civilisations: China and India. With their revival, their influence will again spread into Southeast Asia. It would mean great prosperity for the region, but could also mean a tussle for power. Therefore, we think it best that from the beginning, we bring all the parties in together ... It’s a neater balance.”¹³¹

India has a shared cause and vision with ASEAN to maintain balance and stability. This is the beauty of India that does not disturb the open regional order. India’s accession to TAC, and support to Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone and the ARF have contributed to its image as a benign military power.¹³² The Heads of ASEAN states in the 2012 *Vision Statement* appreciated “India’s role in ensuring regional peace and stability” for its accession to the TAC, and “active contribution” in the ASEAN+1, the ARF, the EAS

129 Ibid. See also Chairman’s Statement of the 8th ASEAN-India Summit, Ha Noi, 30 October 2010; Chairman’s statement of the 10th ASEAN-India summit, Phnom Penh, 19 November 2012.

130 Shyam Saran, “Time for just looking East over: India should actively engage the East”, *Business Standard*, 17 November 2010.

131 “Lee Kuan Yew Reflects”, *Time*, 12 December 2005.

132 H.E. Ong Keng Yong, Secretary-General Of ASEAN, “Advancing the ASEAN-India partnership in the new millennium”, India-ASEAN Eminent Persons Lecture Series, 18 October 2004, New Delhi; Joint Statement of the First ASEAN-India Summit Phnom Penh, 5 November 2002; Press Statement of the Chairperson of the ASEAN + China Summit, the ASEAN + Japan Summit, the ASEAN + Republic of Korea Summit and the ASEAN-India Summit, Bali, Indonesia, 8 October 2003.

and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) Plus.¹³³ "Since the beginning of its 'Look East' policy, India has played an active part in the East Asia regional architecture, including the ASEAN-centred frameworks," noted Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong in 2012. He further recognised that "A key pillar of India's 'Look East' policy is its engagement with ASEAN".¹³⁴ This is the line emphasised by Indian leaders. This also finds echo in Singapore's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Masagos Zulkifli. "India's presence in ASEAN is helping to create a more open, prosperous, peaceful and stable region. With India emerging as a global power, this partnership has become even more indispensable for ASEAN," said Zulkifli.¹³⁵ Thus India's increasing interaction with the regions is seen beneficial.

George Yeo, former foreign minister of Singapore in 2007 noted, "India's growing influence in the world is very positive. It's good for Singapore, it's good for the region...India has very legitimate interests in South East Asia ... We see India's presence as being a beneficial and beneficent one to all of us in Southeast Asia."¹³⁶ "India is naturally very interested in East Asia and we welcomed India into the East Asian Summit forum and expect you to play a proactive and substantive role in it," said Ambassador Tommy Koh.¹³⁷ Thus there is a perceived benignity in the region about India's strategic role. According to the Gallup's 2007 Voice of the People ©, 33 % of respondents in the Asia Pacific (the highest among all) were in favour of India's power to increase "for the world to become a better place".¹³⁸

133 Vision Statement ASEAN India Commemorative Summit.

134 Special Address by Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong at the Confederation of Indian Industries Summit, Hyderabad, India, 12 January 2012.

135 Keynote Address by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Masagos Zulkifli at the Inaugural Session of the Delhi Dialogue IV, New Delhi, India, 13 February 2012.

136 Amit Baruah, "India and China are key to peace in Asia," Interview with George Yeo, *The Hindu*, 24 January 2007.

137 "India is naturally interested in Asia, and we welcome this," Tommy Koh's interview with Deep K. Datta-Ray, *Times of India*, 20 April 2011.

138 Ivan Krastev and Mark Leonard, "New World Order: The Balance of Soft Power and the Rise of Herbivorous Powers," The European Council of Foreign Relations, 24 October 2007, <http://www.cls-sofia.org/uploads/files/ecfr-paper-mark-ivan-oct-2007.pdf>.

Singapore “has been called a ‘Mother Hen’ promoting India in Asian affairs”.¹³⁹ India’s military assistance to Singapore has been appreciated by its government reinforcing its commitment to further progress in bilateral defence relations.¹⁴⁰ Singapore and India renewed their Air Force Bilateral Agreement in 2012. As Prime Minister Lee remarked, “Our air forces can continue to train with, and learn from, each other. These interactions are not just professionally valuable; they build mutual trust and contribute to regional peace and stability. We therefore look forward to renewing the Army Bilateral Agreement next year.”¹⁴¹ The “successful completion” of training for the SU 30 MKM imparted by the Indian Air Force to their Malaysian counterparts enhances the scope for “joint collaboration” in the field of defence.¹⁴² India has been appreciated for its humanitarian assistance to Myanmar in the past and efforts in releasing Thai nationals from piracy.¹⁴³ Myanmar has “agreed to conduct periodic coordinated land and maritime patrols”.¹⁴⁴ It has held a first ever joint naval exercise with India in March 2013. In 2011, India and Thailand agreed to establish “a regular High-Level Dialogue on Defence Cooperation” and increase “duration and frequency” of their “coordinated patrols”.¹⁴⁵ India’s humanitarian assistance to Indonesia during Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004–2005) was also appreciated by

139 Sunanda K. Datta-Ray, *Looking East to Look West*, p. 6.

140 Toast by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the official dinner hosted by His Excellency Dr Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, 12 July 2012.

141 Ibid.

142 Joint Statement on the Framework for the India-Malaysia Strategic Partnership, 27 October 2010.

143 Joint Statement during the visit of Chairman, State Peace and Development Council of Myanmar, 27 July 2010; Joint Statement on the occasion of the State Visit of the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to India, 14 October 2011; Joint Statement on the State Visit of Prime Minister of Thailand, 5 April 2011.

144 “Antony on A Two-Day official visit to Myanmar”, *Press Information Bureau*, Government of India, 21 January 2013.

145 Joint Statement on the State Visit of Prime Minister of Thailand, 5 April 2011.

its leaders.¹⁴⁶ Such benign image contributes to enhance bilateral defence relations. India-Indonesia held their first ministerial-level defence dialogue in 2012 to strengthen defence relations.

The ASEAN heads of states while celebrating the 20th year of ASEAN-India dialogue partnership in 2012 issued a *Vision Statement* expressing their satisfaction about ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations and declared that the “Partnership stands elevated to a strategic partnership”.¹⁴⁷ The perceived benignity and beauty led ASEAN to increasingly consider India as security partner with the *Vision Statement* reiterating joint commitments to cooperate on terrorism and maritime security.

Political values like democracy have also contributed to India’s attraction in ASEAN states.¹⁴⁸ Countries like Indonesia, Thailand and Myanmar are engaged with India for democracy development which has been discussed in the previous section. Also, India was accorded the “Observer Status” in the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) in 2010. Common values have led India and Indonesia to identify themselves as “natural partners”.¹⁴⁹ India’s democracy with its “checks and balances” also supports its benign image.¹⁵⁰

Economic domain

In the economic domain, beneficial economic relations through increasing trade, investment and integration remain another shared goal for India with ASEAN which elicits its beauty to be an economic

146 Vibhanshu Shekhar, “India-Indonesia Relations: Overview”, IPCS Special Report, No. 38, March 2007, http://www.ipcs.org/pdf_file/issue/477138183IPCS-Special-Report-38.pdf.

147 Vision Statement ASEAN India Commemorative Summit.

148 Address by R. M. Marty M. Natalegawa, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Indonesia, “Indonesian View of the World”; Joint Communiqué of the 37th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting Jakarta, 29–30 June 2004; Rodolfo C. Severino, Jr., Secretary-General of the ASEAN, “ASEAN and India – A Partnership for Our Time”; Speech by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the business summit hosted by the Confederation of Indian Industry, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India, July 2012.

149 Joint Statement: Vision for the India-Indonesia New Strategic Partnership over the coming decade, 25 January 2011.

150 Lee Kuan Yew, “India’s Peaceful Rise”, *Forbes.com*, 24 December 2012.

partner. India's limited economic interaction with ASEAN excludes coercive hard power element from the relationship which is not the case with China. Thus India is encouraged to advance towards faster economic integration to bring balance to the region. India's failure in the past has led to some revulsion.¹⁵¹ However the heads of the states of ASEAN are "inspired" by "progress made in realising the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement", and the trade volume which exceeded the expected target in 2012.¹⁵² While India is currently ASEAN's 6th largest trading partner, the latter is India's 4th largest trading partner. Indonesia and Singapore are among the top ten trading partners of India. The 2012 *Vision Statement* also recognises the "successful conclusion of the first Plan of Action for the period 2005–2010 and the implementation of the new Plan of Action for the period 2010–2015".¹⁵³ The finalisation of FTA in Services and Investment has been welcomed by ASEAN leaders which will increase greater beneficial economic cooperation.¹⁵⁴ India has also been received positively for representing the interests of the developing countries in international bodies like the UN, World Trade Organization (WTO) and Group of Twenty (G20) in collaboration with ASEAN.¹⁵⁵

India's economic growth and future, size, private sectors like software, "demographic dividend", human capital, science and engineering sector and commitment towards free trade have reinforced

151 See Chairman's Statement of the Fourth ASEAN-India Summit, Kuala Lumpur, 13 December 2005; P. S. Suryanarayana, "India and the East: time for a reality check", *The Hindu*, 15 December 2010; "India, ASEAN form strategic partnership", Interview with Ian Storey, ABC Radio Australia, 21 December 2012.

152 Vision Statement ASEAN India Commemorative Summit.

153 Ibid.

154 Ibid.

155 Chairman's statement of the 9th ASEAN-India summit, Bali, Indonesia, 19 November 2011; Chairman's Statement of the 8th ASEAN-India Summit, 30 October 2010.

its attraction in ASEAN states.¹⁵⁶ In 2002, in the face of India's slow reform process, George Yeo then as Minister of Trade and Industry of Singapore remarked that "it is one where we position ourselves strategically to be a long-term friend and partner".¹⁵⁷ And as Prime Minister Lee remarked in 2012 citing the signing of CECA, "It was India's first such free trade agreement with a foreign country and it was a strategic agreement which showed the direction which India was going and which signalled Singapore's commitment to developing our ties with India."¹⁵⁸ Equally importantly, India's support to the ASEAN-India Fund, the ASEAN-India Green Fund, the ASEAN-India Science and Technology Development Fund, capac-

156 There are positive views by ASEAN leaders and officials about India's economic success. See "ASEAN, China And India", Special Address by Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong at the Confederation of Indian Industries Summit; "ASEAN And India – A Growing Convergence", Address by Rodolfo C. Severino, Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, at the Partnership Summit 2001, Hyderabad, 11 January 2001; Remarks by H.E. Ong Keng Yong, Secretary-General of ASEAN at the Inaugural Session of the Third India-ASEAN Business Summit New Delhi, India, 19–21 October 2004; Address by Ong Keng Yong, Secretary-General of ASEAN, "Advancing the ASEAN-India partnership in the new millennium", India-ASEAN Eminent Persons Lecture Series, New Delhi, 18 October 2004; Rodolfo C. Severino, Jr., Secretary-General of the ASEAN, ASEAN and India – A Partnership for Our Time"; Speech by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the business summit hosted by the Confederation of Indian Industry, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India; Keynote Address By Deputy Prime Minister Of Singapore, Mr Lee Hsien Loong At The Standard Chartered Bank's Singapore Conference On 16 January 2004, Mumbai, India; Special Address by Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong at the Confederation of Indian Industries Summit; Keynote Address By Minister Of State For Foreign Affairs Masagos Zulkifli at the Inaugural Session of the Delhi Dialogue IV; "Mediating from Middle Ground: ASEAN, China And India", An Interview with Surin Pitsuwan, *Journal of International Affairs*, , Vol. 64, No. 2 (Spring/Summer 2011), pp. 227–233; Atul Aneja, "Firm up look-east policy, Singapore tells India", *The Hindu*, 16 January 2000.

157 Joint Press Conference by Disinvestments Minister Arun Shourie and Minister of Trade and Industry George Yeo, Istana Palace, Singapore, 8 April 2002.

158 Speech by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the business summit hosted by the Confederation of Indian Industry, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India.

ity building and development in CLMV, and the establishment of the India-CLMV Quick Impact Projects (QIP) Revolving Fund and transportation networks are recognised and appreciated by leaders and officials of ASEAN countries.¹⁵⁹ These efforts contributed among others to the vision of integration and community building process in ASEAN.¹⁶⁰ Indonesia has also appreciated India's assistance through its ITEC programme.¹⁶¹ India's ability to fulfil expectations by these states makes it a beautiful and benign partner.

Cultural domain

According to a BBC World Service poll in 2010, 50 % of the people of Indonesia viewed India's influence positively. Positive views in Indo-

159 See Address by Hor Namhong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cambodia during Delhi Dialogue IV, New Delhi, 13 February, 2012; "ASEAN-India Eminent Persons' Report To The Leaders", October 2012; Vision Statement ASEAN India Commemorative Summit; Chairman's Statement of the 3rd ASEAN + India Summit Vientiane, 30 November 2004; Chairman's Statement of the Fourth ASEAN-India Summit, Kuala Lumpur, 13 December 2005; Joint Communique of the 38th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting Vientiane, 26 July 2005; Chairman's Statement of the Fifth ASEAN-India Summit, Cebu, Philippines, 14 January 2007; Chairman's Statement of the 6th ASEAN-India Summit, Singapore, 21 November 2007; ASEAN Chairman's Statement on the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conferences (PMC) +1 Sessions Singapore, 23 July 2008; Chairman's Statement of the 7th ASEAN-India Summit, Thailand, 24 October 2009; Chairman's Statement of the 8th ASEAN-India Summit, Ha Noi, 30 October 2010; Chairman's statement of the 9th ASEAN-India summit Bali, Indonesia, 19 November 2011; Chairman's Statement Of The 10th ASEAN-India Summit, Phnom Penh, 19 November 2012; India-Cambodia Joint Statement during the Visit of Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee India to Cambodia 9-11 April, 2002, 11 April 2002; Joint Declaration between the Republic of India and the Republic of Indonesia, 23 November 2005; Joint Statement during the visit of Chairman, State Peace and Development Council of Myanmar, 27 July 2010; Joint Statement on the occasion of the State Visit of the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to India, 14 October 2011; Joint Statement on the occasion of the visit of the President of Vietnam, 12 October 2011.

160 Vision Statement ASEAN India Commemorative Summit; Special Address by Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong at the Confederation of Indian Industries Summit.

161 Joint Declaration between the Republic of India and the Republic of Indonesia, 23 November 2005.

nesia have increased to 55% in 2012, according to the same poll.¹⁶² Among the 10 % of the whole Indonesian respondents, 48 % viewed positively owing to India's culture and traditions. These public opinions in democratic countries like Indonesia can be enabling factor for India's soft power. It is also important to note that whereas there is a growth in positive attitude towards India, the trajectory of the bilateral relationship is also positive. Besides the existing symbols and practices, the leaders of ASEAN states publicly recognise India's civilisational and cultural links with Southeast Asia and the similar value of pluralist society.¹⁶³ The revival of ancient Nalanda University is also linked to this shared cultural and historical past.

Tourist arrivals from ASEAN countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) in recent years have increased which is a potential source for India's soft power.¹⁶⁴ In 2011, Malaysia ranked among top ten sources.¹⁶⁵ However major tourist arrivals in India are from Western Europe, North America and South Asia.

In sum, India has enhanced its positive image and influence through attraction in the last two decades. All the five military and non-military components have reinforced each other. Concurrently, India's rising soft power in the region has also broadened the scope of its hard power resources. The Indian Navy being offered permanent berthing rights in Vietnam is caused by India's soft power. Such facility also contributes to India's force projection. India's joint exercises also contribute to its military competence and hard power.

162 BBC world service poll, 18 April 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/160410bbcwspoll.pdf>; BBC world service poll, 10 May 2012, http://www.globescan.com/images/images/pressreleases/bbc2012_country_ratings/2012_bbc_country%20rating%20final%20080512.pdf.

163 "Vision Statement ASEAN India Commemorative Summit"; Fareed Zakaria, "Culture is destiny – A Conversation with Lee Kuan Yew", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (March/April 1994), p. 113; Joint Statement of the First ASEAN-India Summit Phnom Penh, 5 November 2002.

164 For Tourism statistics, see "Market Research", Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, <http://tourism.gov.in/TourismDivision/AboutDivision.aspx?Name=Market%20Research%20and%20Statistics>

165 India Tourism Statistics at a Glance, 2011, [http://tourism.gov.in/writereaddata/CMSPagePicture/file/marketresearch/INDIATOURISMSTATICS\(ENGLISH\).pdf](http://tourism.gov.in/writereaddata/CMSPagePicture/file/marketresearch/INDIATOURISMSTATICS(ENGLISH).pdf).

Similarly, the increase in trade and investment benefits India's growth in hard power resources. The other three non-military soft power elements indirectly help the growth in hard power resources. In the background of the benign image of its rising military power, India without inviting revulsion can expand its hard military power.

PRESCRIPTION FOR OPTIMISING SOFT POWER

Whereas India has produced soft power behaviours through attraction and persuasion from both military and non-military sources as discussed above, it is however still limited and can be optimised. To this end, India's decision-makers need to pay attention to power both in terms of resources and behaviours. As soft power enhances hard power, India needs to pay attention to the optimal use of military and non-military sources for enhancing soft power behaviour.

First, India's ability to project military force into the Western Pacific is currently limited.¹⁶⁶ Therefore India can neither effectively provide military protection to its interests in SCS nor can it extend deterrence to friendly countries like Vietnam vis-à-vis a potentially hostile China. "India's military role will be confined to South Asia and she cannot project her forces into the Pacific," noted Lee Kuan Yew in 2010.¹⁶⁷ The perception matters. Whereas India's role of a military protector is limited in the SCS, it can effectively provide military assistance to states like Vietnam in terms of training, joint exercises and sharing of technology and hardware and thereby help in its capacity-building. It needs to minimise the gap between the expectation from a friendly country and its response and thereby

166 See "ORF South China Sea Interview series", *South China Sea Monitor*, Vol. I, Issue 2, February 2012, http://www.observerindia.com/cms/sites/orfonline/modules/southchina/attachments/fissue_1328857322394.pdf; James R. Holmes, "Inside, Outside: India's 'Exterior Lines' in the South China Sea", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (May – June 2012), pp. 358–363.

167 "On power and stabilising forces", *The Straits Times*, 17 May 2010.

enhance the perception of competence and benignity.¹⁶⁸ Any self-restraint inflicted by a self-fulfilling prophesy of antagonising China is not going to give India much soft power influence. However, only after establishing sufficient sea-based nuclear deterrence vis-à-vis China, should India's naval force planning aim beyond the Indian Ocean Region. As an effective nuclear balancer to China, India's promise of military protection with increasing military presence in the Indo-Pacific will be more credible to ASEAN states.

India's ability in delivering assistance in terms transferring hardware and technology will be constricted due to the plain fact that India imports more than 70% of its defence equipment from foreign countries. By 2010, India was the world's largest importer of conventional arms.¹⁶⁹ In 2011, India as an arms exporter ranked 33 even below Brunei.¹⁷⁰ India needs to be on a war footing to reverse this dependency and progress towards indigenisation in order to strengthen its military assistance capacity and its "strategic autonomy". Equally importantly, India's defence acquisition process and industrialisation should offer scope for joint production and trade with friendly ASEAN states to create benign dependency. It has like ASEAN states the advantage of the forward military presence of the U.S. in the Pacific which provides balance and stability. Utilising the U.S. "rebalancing", India should engage in providing military assistance to ASEAN states as they expect while engaging concurrently in proactive naval diplomacy. India's competence in providing humanitarian assistance alone or in cooperation with others in the Indo-Pacific will increase the currency of benignity and soft power. India's soft power based on the military modalities can also contribute to its hard power by helping to access bases and turn over facilities in friendly ASEAN states like Vietnam.

168 See Indrani Bagchi, "Asean nations lap up Navy chief's South China Sea comment", *Times of India*, 18 December 2012; "South China Sea Row: Vietnam Seeks India's Support", *India Today*, 20 December 2012; Transcript of media Interaction of External Affairs Minister following the conclusion of the plenary session of the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit 2012, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 20 December 2012.

169 "6. International arms transfers," <http://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2012/06>.

170 "TIV of arms exports from the top 50 largest exporters, 2011-2011", SIPRI, 23 November 2012.

Second, India has so far emerged peacefully in the region by accepting ASEAN norms of peace and security and ASEAN's centrality. In the face of changing great power relations in East Asia, India should continue to support ASEAN's centrality while building special relationship with some of its key members-states. Again as the objective of ASEAN has been to establish a balanced and open regional architecture, India's main foreign policy aim should continue to be equilibrium. While emphasising balance of power, it must pro-actively support freedom of navigation in SCS in ASEAN forums in alliance with key regional states. The Emeritus Senior Minister, Goh Chok Tong recently suggested that India can further help promote the agenda of the ARF, and address issues of "maritime security, counter-terrorism, training and disaster management" through ASEAN-led forums.¹⁷¹ According to Ng Eng Hen, Singapore's Defence Minister, "...in the security issue of ADMM-Plus, Singapore will welcome India's greater participation and leadership role ... There is no reason why India cannot choose to lead Experts Working Groups because it is very much in the interest for India to do so."¹⁷²

Third, notwithstanding India's external democracy promotion efforts, its increasingly successful experiment of combining political freedom and economic development at home will bring more respect and attraction towards its democracy and elicit cooperation. The question will always be asked: how well has it served India's economic performance in comparison with China which is more successful with a different political system and with whom India prefers hyphenation? Also, what is the future of both the models?

Fourth, some argue that India needs to improve its cultural diplo-

171 Special Address By Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong At The CII Summit, 12 January 2012.

172 "Q& A: Security Cooperation in a Changing Strategic Landscape", IDSA, New Delhi, India, 20 November 2012, http://www.news.gov.sg/public/sgpc/en/media_releases/agencies/mindef/press_release/P-20121120-1/AttachmentPar/00/file/Question%20and%20Answer%20Transcript.pdf.

macy in ASEAN states.¹⁷³ But unless India's own cultural practices are very much associated with its material success, these resources cannot contribute much to its soft power.¹⁷⁴ A more proactive cultural diplomacy in the background of a more open and successful economy can create greater soft power influence in an age of globalisation. There is however underutilisation of cultural and historical links for practical cooperation, which is mutually beneficial. India could use *Bālijātrā*¹⁷⁵ to invite cultural troops from Indonesia and even arrange an international trade fair involving Indonesia and others. This can help relations at both people-to-people and government-to-government level and increase the prospect of trade.

Fifth, the prospect of an attractive "Mumbai Consensus" supported by the idea of a "democratic developmental state" is subject to among others effective and responsible governance and prosperity which is inclusive.¹⁷⁶ Also, it helps India that it never controlled the ASEAN states under any "tributary system". The recent conclusion of negotiations on FTA in service and investment between India and ASEAN reaffirms India's interest in greater economic integration with the region and thereby helps the process of its soft empowerment.

According to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank, India was ranked 132 overall in the "ease of doing business" ranking in 2012 up 6 places since its first edition in 2006. It was placed at 119 in the Heritage's "Index of economic freedom" in 2013 overall down 15 places since it received

173 Shyam Saran, "Re-engaging the Neighbourhood: a personal perspective on India's look East Policy", in Amar Nath Ram (Ed.), *Two decades of India's Look East policy*, p. 138; Saurabh Shukla, "Soft Power", *India Today*, 30 October 2006, <http://archives.digitaltoday.in/indiatoday/20061030/diplomacy.html>; John Lee, "Unrealised Potential: India's 'Soft Power' Ambition in Asia", *Foreign policy analysis*, No. 4, 30 June 2010, <http://www.hudson.org/files/publications/Unrealised%20Potential%20-%20India's%20Soft%20Power%20Ambition%20in%20Asia.pdf>.

174 For similar arguments, see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 91–95.

175 Lalit Mansingh, "The look East Policy and its implications for eastern India", in Amar Nath Ram (Ed.), *Two decades of India's Look East policy*, p. 195.

176 Lawrence H. Summers, "India and the Global Economy", Remarks at The Asia Society, Mumbai, India, 15 October 2010.

its highest ranking in 2007. In the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index, India was placed at 59 in 2012 among 144 countries, down 17 places since 2006, while in all the three subindexes (basic requirements, efficiency enhancers, and innovation and sophistication factors) it was down since 2006 (since its first edition in its current form). It was ranked 100 in 2012 overall in the World Economic Forum's "Enabling Trade Index", down 29 places since its first edition in 2008. But it has gone 25 positions up from 2008 in the sub index of market access. In the World Economic Forum's "Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index", it was ranked 68 overall in 2011, down 3 places since its first edition in 2007, while in the subindex of travel and tourism regulatory framework, India was down to 114 from 62 in 2007. India needs to bring in reforms and improvements in different areas related trade and investment in order to appear as an open trading country to enhance its attraction which in turn will empower its hard power.

Various trade facilitating connectivity projects (on-going and prospective) need to be completed and developed at a faster rate.¹⁷⁷ As the ASEAN-India Eminent Persons' report to the Leaders recommends, India needs to accelerate the process of concluding the remaining agreements on Open Skies.¹⁷⁸ India has only direct air connection from Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Myanmar among ASEAN countries. Besides contributing to growth in trade and development, greater connectivity will balance potential Chinese hegemony in the evolving economic order, thereby contributing to freedom, security and stability in Asia and the world. Parallel to greater trade and connectivity, India's developmental assistance and capacity building efforts in CLMV countries should be sustained with visible results.

CONCLUSION

India needs to constantly assess the preferences of Southeast Asian state in advance to optimise its soft power influence. While military force is fundamental for survival, the same hard power resources

177 "ASEAN-India Connectivity Report: India Country Study".

178 "ASEAN-India Eminent Persons' Report to the Leaders".

can create attractive power if employed wisely by considering who the actor at the receiving end is and what its preferences are. Military hard power of India is not in conflict with its soft power in the region. Rather, India's soft power is based on those military hard power resources. While its military power resources can be used to provide assistance, India in its long-term strategy needs to develop and use hard coercive power for providing deterrence and protection to friendly ASEAN states, thereby enhancing its attraction and influence. Besides, a strong defence and security relationship with Southeast Asia can be optimised by integrating both defence and non-defence bases of soft power. "Soft power shapes perceptions of hard military power, obviates its use and endows it with legitimacy when the use becomes inevitable," maintained former external affairs minister, Pranab Mukherjee.¹⁷⁹ Soft power reinforces hard power and vice versa.

179 "Pranab Mukherjee, Inaugural Address during International Seminar on Aerospace Power: calls for Strengthening of International Legal Regime for the peaceful use of outer space", *Press Information Bureau*, Government of India, 4 February, 2007.

CHINA IN INDIA'S SOUTHEAST ASIA STRATEGY

Rahul Mishra

There is an emerging consensus that the twenty-first century belongs to Asia. The first decade of this century has evidently showcased the return of Asian nations as major powers and decisive players in global politics. Needless to say that in the twenty-first century, the nucleus of global politics has shifted from Europe to Asia. Many important nation-states in contemporary international system, including China, Japan, India and Indonesia, fall in this part of the world. Asia has, arguably, become the most prominent arena of geo-economics and geopolitics today as it also houses three of the five biggest economies of the world, viz. China, Japan and India. As Joseph S. Nye says, “In 1750, Asia had roughly three-fifths of the world’s population and accounted for three-fifths of global output. By 1900, after the Industrial Revolution in Europe and America, Asia’s share of global output had shrunk to one-fifth. By 2050, Asia will be well on its way back to where it was 300 years earlier.”¹

Spectacular rise of China and India in recent years have made Asia all the more important in world politics. According to the United States National Intelligence Council Report titled “Mapping the Global Future”, by 2020, China and India will emerge as the major military and economic powers.² Interestingly, as per the Goldman Sachs study, by 2040, India will overtake the G-6 economies and in all likelihood, will surpass that of the U.S. before 2050, to become the second largest economy in the world after China.³ However, it

- 1 Joseph S. Nye, “Obama’s Pacific Pivot,” *Project Syndicate*, 6 December 2011, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/obama-s-pacific-pivot>.
- 2 “Mapping the global future,” *Report of the National Intelligence Council’s 2020 Project*, December 2004, www.foia.cia.gov/2020/2020.pdf.
- 3 “Dreaming With BRICs: The Path to 2050,” *Goldman Sachs*, Global Economics Paper No: 99, October 2003, <http://www.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/topics/brics/brics-reports-pdfs/brics-dream.pdf>.

is beyond the shadow of doubt that between the two Asian giants—China and India, China’s growth has been remarkably high and consistently impressive by all standards. China has already become the world’s second biggest economy with a formidable military prowess. It has been speculated that in all probabilities, China will surpass the U.S. economy to become the biggest economy of the world by 2025.⁴ Japan’s military rise, ASEAN’s attempts in anchoring of a multilateral dialogue mechanism amidst intensifying South China Sea dispute, and augmentation of Indonesian economy are other significant evidences substantiating Asia’s rise in a comprehensive manner.

In the Westphalian system, as a nation state rises to superpower status, it attempts to alter the existent balance of power in its favour, leading to ruptures in the international system at the systemic and sub-systemic levels. The process has never been frictionless and often leads to conflicts. Germany and Japan during the time of First and Second World Wars have been considered apt case studies in this regard.⁵ Similarly, China’s unprecedented rise in Asia has started showing remarkable impacts on contemporary international politics and dangers of its hegemonic ambitions loom large on its neighbouring countries. China’s assertive postures and hegemonic designs have forced its neighbours to re-think their strategies, leading to convergence of interest among themselves on several issues.

Thus, there exists a possibility of China becoming a catalyst for countries of the region, including India and Japan, coming together to mitigate the challenges posed by an increasingly assertive China.⁶ The *Pivot or Rebalancing toward Asia Strategy* of the Obama administration has only brightened the chances of such a possibility.⁷ Moreover, the other two big Asian powers India and Japan are locked in territorial and maritime disputes with China,

4 “China overtakes Japan as world’s second biggest economy,” *BBC News Service*, 14 February 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-12427321>.

5 Brahma Chellaney talks about this phenomena at length in his book. See Brahma Chellaney, *Asian Juggernaut: The Rise of China, India, and Japan* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2008).

6 Rahul Mishra, “Locating Singapore in India’s Strategic Radar,” *IDSA Comments*, 1 April 2010, http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/LocatingSingaporeinIndiasStrategicRadar_rmishra_010410.

7 Christian Le Mière, “America’s Pivot to East Asia: The Naval Dimension,” *Survival*, Vol. 54, No. 3, (June – July 2012), pp. 81–94.

the possibility of peaceful resolution of which continues to remain bleak. Additionally, escalation of tensions in the South China Sea, which involves four Southeast Asian countries viz. Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam along with Taiwan and China, indicates that notwithstanding immense possibilities of regional cooperation and peaceful co-existence, there does exist a strong possibility of conflict, military or otherwise, in the region.⁸ For the records, it may be mentioned that while China had fought wars with India and Vietnam over the boundary issues, countries of Southeast Asia such as Indonesia, Brunei, the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore remain wary of China's intentions on territorial matters, expansionist policies and its hegemonic designs. As J. Mohan Malik opines, "How to adapt to China's growing power and influence is a question that dominates the foreign policy establishment of nearly every country in the world. Among the regional countries, China arouses unease because of its size, history, proximity, potential power and more importantly the memories of the *middle kingdom syndrome*."⁹

Considering the track record of China's relations with its neighbours, it is widely believed that a militarily stronger and assertive China poses imminent security threats to countries falling in its neighbourhood. Malik further adds, "With the exception of a few, most Asian countries show little or no desire to live in a China-led or China dominated Asia. Instead they seek to preserve existing security alliances and pursue sophisticated diplomatic and hedging strategies desired to give them more freedom of action while avoiding overt alignment with major powers."¹⁰ A closer look at foreign policy priorities and practices of Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries substantiates that point.¹¹

8 Rahul Mishra, "India's antipodean neighbours: Why engaging Australia matters?," *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, Vol. 3, No 4 (October – December 2008), pp. 55–69.

9 J. Mohan Malik, *China and India: Great Power Rivals* (New Delhi: Viva Books, 2012), p. 372.

10 Ibid.

11 See, for details, Alexander L. Vuving, "Strategy and evolution of Vietnam's China policy," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 46, No. 6 (November – December 2006), pp. 805–824 and Kuik Cheng-Chwee, "The essence of hedging: Malaysia and Singapore's response to a rising China," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (August 2008), pp. 159–185.

Clearly, China's assertive postures have posed daunting challenges to the East Asian region. India, Japan and the countries of Southeast Asia are no exceptions to that. India's protracted territorial deadlock with China and latter's attempts to cap India in the Indian subcontinent have certainly proved as major challenges draining off India's resources and time.¹² As India's engagement with the Southeast Asian region is intensifying, role of China is only gaining salience in the tone and tenure of India's two decades old Look East Policy. Evidently, China had been a factor in India's relations with countries of the Southeast Asian region even during the Cold War years. As Mohammad Ayooob points out:

New Delhi's renewed preoccupation with China has... boosted the importance of Southeast Asia in the eyes of the Indian decision-making elite because of the region's close proximity to both India and China and the fact that it has been long considered a meeting ground of Chinese and Indian cultural and political influence. Just as the Indian obsession with the 'Pakistan factor' had enhanced the importance of West Asia in New Delhi's calculations in the 1950s and the 1960s, the increasing Indian concern with the 'China factor' in in 1970s and 1980s has worked to enhance the strategic and political importance of Southeast Asia in New Delhi's perceptions.¹³

Ayooob's argument is as relevant in the twenty-first century as it was at the dawn of 1990s, when Ayooob produced his seminal research work. Indeed, China's massive military and economic growth has been a matter of prime attention for India that has propelled it to robustly engage with the Southeast Asian countries as well as those falling in the wider East Asian region. Interestingly, in the post-Cold War years, while China has become a bigger determinant in shaping India-Southeast Asia engagement. India, equipped with impressive economic and military might, is shedding inhibitions in engaging the Southeast Asian countries and therefore encountering China in

12 John W. Garver and Fei-Ling Wang, "China's Anti-encirclement Struggle," *Asian Security*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (2010), pp. 238–261.

13 Mohammed Ayooob, *India and Southeast Asia: Indian Perceptions and Policies* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 28.

the region, in ways both positive and negative.

It is in this context that this paper examines India's Southeast Asia strategy vis-à-vis China. Opening of the Indian economy in 1991 and adoption of the Look East Policy in 1992 heralded the change in India's approach towards the region. India's economic growth accelerated at a rate higher than six percent after 1992. Consequently, "the Indian economy grew at 8.8 percent between 2003 and 2007, and thereby transformed itself into one of the fastest growing economies in the world along with China. Recognising this fact, the World Bank-International Monetary Fund (IMF) Annual Meeting in Singapore was dedicated to the rise of China and India."¹⁴ Over the past two decades, India has strengthened its politico-military and economic engagements with Southeast Asian countries and their flagship organisation—ASEAN. India's efforts have led to its recognition as a major power and its acceptance by the ASEAN member countries in the East Asian regional politics. The success of 2012 ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit, held on 20–21 December 2012, can be considered a paragon in that regard.

INDIA LOOKS EAST

India's interactions with countries of the Southeast Asian region have deep roots in history. Historical evidences, both oral and written, show that India has not only been 'Looking East' for the past two millennia, but has also engaged the East during this period, though intermittently.¹⁵ India's cultural, religious, societal and economic

14 Sumit Ganguly and Rahul Mukherji, *India Since 1980* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 60.

15 One of the strongest proponents of such a view is S. D. Muni who argues that there are two popular myths around India's Look East Policy; first, about its initiation in the 1990s and second, its focus on economic, trade and investment relations. He argues, "If one is concerned only with the nomenclature of the 'Look East Policy' then surely it is a post-1990 expression. However, if one means by this policy, the substance of India's engagement with the countries on its east, then both these assumptions, which have become the integral part of the policy and intellectual discourse on the subject, are erroneous and deserve to be redefined in the interest of a correct and historically rooted perspective." For details, see S.D. Muni, "Look East Policy: Beyond Myths," in A.N. Ram (Ed.), *Two Decades of India's Look East Policy* (New Delhi: ISEAS and Manohar, 2012), pp. 205–220.

impacts on countries of Southeast Asia have been enormous. In fact, cultural and people-to-people connections from the past along with trade ties in the contemporary times have formed the bedrock of this association.¹⁶ In the twentieth century, especially during the post-Cold War era, India's comprehensive engagement with the Southeast Asian region started with the Look East Policy, formulated in 1992 by the then Prime Minister of India, P.V. Narasimha Rao. Launching of the Look East Policy, in the words of India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, "(was) not merely an external economic policy, it was also a strategic shift in India's vision of the world and India's place in the evolving global economy. Most of all, it was about reaching out to our (India's) civilisational Asian neighbours."¹⁷

With the initiation of Look East Policy, India hoped to attract countries of the Southeast Asian region and display a new 'Asian consciousness'.¹⁸ G.V.C. Naidu argues that the policy was driven by three objectives: one, to institutionalise linkages with ASEAN and its affiliates (Dialogue Partnership, ASEAN Plus One Summit Meetings and membership on the ARF); two, to strengthen bilateral relationships with member states of ASEAN; and three, to carve a suitable place for itself so that Southeast Asia will not come under the influence of any one major power, especially China.¹⁹ Clearly, India has been striving hard and has achieved some success in realising those goals. In any case, it can be said that the Look East Policy has played a vital role in enabling India to become one of the major powers of the Asia-Pacific.²⁰ Evidently, Look East Policy has been the essence of India's relations with countries of the Southeast Asian region and beyond.

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- 16 For a comprehensive account of evolution of India-ASEAN engagement, see Tan Tai Yong and See Chak Mun, "The evolution of India-ASEAN relations," *India Review*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (January – March 2009), pp. 20–42.
- 17 "Address by the Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh at Asia Society Corporate Conference," *Press Information Bureau*, 18 March 2006, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=16679>.
- 18 Rodney Tasker, "Rao's Look-East Policy," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 156, No. 16 (22 April 1993), p. 16.
- 19 G. V. C. Naidu, "Whither the Look East Policy: India and Southeast Asia," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (April – June 2004), pp. 331–349.
- 20 *Ibid.*

Right from the beginning, India strived to strengthen ties at both the regional as well as bilateral levels. Keeping bilateral ties robust was indeed a definitive part of India's Look East Policy.²¹ Apart from shared visions for economic growth and development, and common concerns on pressing regional issues, countries of Southeast Asia and India share a common prism on strategic matters such as defence and maritime security across Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, manifested through cooperation at various levels. India and the Southeast Asian countries have been conducting joint maritime patrol exercises, disaster management operations, and regular exchange of officials for defence training purposes. From 1991, India has conducted several naval exercises with Indonesia. With Singapore, India conducted the first-ever naval exercise in 1993, which has become an annual feature now. Additionally, since 1995, India has been holding joint naval exercises with Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries that are Bay of Bengal riparian states. Indonesia, along with Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia, has been participating in 'MILAN' (Meeting of the Littorals of Bay of Bengal Andaman & Nicobar) the biennial gathering of navies hosted by India.²² India's relations with Singapore, Vietnam and Japan have been driven by the China factor to a great extent.²³ However, the profoundest example of China's role in India's Southeast Asia strategy is Myanmar. China's increasing presence in Myanmar in the early 1990s and attempts to gain access to the Indian Ocean emerged as major challenges to India. Consequently, India felt vulnerable at both northern and eastern sides of its borders. Reports regarding Pakistan's military

21 Preet Malik, "India's Look East Policy: Genesis", in A. N. Ram (Ed.), *Two Decades of India's Look East Policy*, pp. 37–38.

22 Praful Kumar Singh, "Multi-nation Exercise Milan Concludes Successfully in Andaman," *Thaindian News*, 8 February 2010, http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/india-news/multi-nation-exercise-milan-concludes-successfully-in-andaman_100316958.html.

23 Some notable and insightful readings on this issue include: See Chak Mun, *India's Strategic Interests in Southeast Asia and Singapore* (New Delhi: ISAS & Macmillan, 2009); David Brewster, *India as an Asia-Pacific Power* (London: Routledge, 2012) and Bertil Lintner, *Great Game East: India, China and the Struggle for Asia's Most Volatile Frontier* (New Delhi: Harper Collins & India Today Group, 2012).

aid to Myanmar, China developing the Hainggyi port and setting reconnaissance facilities in Coco Island further strengthened India's threat perception. Indian policy makers inadvertently realised what K. M. Panikkar had said way back in 1944, "the defence of Burma is in fact the defence of India...no responsibility can be considered too heavy for India when it comes to the question of defending Burma."²⁴ India's policy reversal towards Myanmar was in consonance with the ASEAN and its member countries, which were equally concerned about China's increasing footprints in the country sitting at the tri-junction of India, China and Southeast Asia. Intriguingly, Thailand and India suddenly found their interests converging on the issue, which led to bolstering of Indo-Thai relations. The 1994 annual report of India's Ministry of Defence and the first ever defence White Paper of Thailand, *The Defence of Thailand 1994*, almost echoed each other's concerns on China-Myanmar ties.²⁵ Apprehensions of China brought India closer to Indonesia, Japan, Singapore and Vietnam, and subsequently, India signed strategic partnership and military cooperation agreements with all of them.

So far as India's institutional engagement with ASEAN is concerned, from ASEAN's Sectoral Dialogue Partner in 1992, India made a quantum leap to the Full Dialogue Partner status in December 1995. India joined the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1996. The relationship matured further with the convening of the ASEAN-India Summit in 2002 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.²⁶ Since 2002, ASEAN member countries and India have been engaged in regular dialogue processes through the ASEAN-India annual summits. Following

24 Cited in V. Suryanarayan, "India and Southeast Asia: Shared Destiny," in Nancy Jetly (Ed.), *India's Foreign Policy: Challenges and Prospects* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1997).

25 See Ministry of Defence, Government of India, *Annual Report 1994-95* and Thai Ministry of Defence, *The Defence of Thailand 1994* (Supreme Command Headquarters, Bangkok, 1994).

26 Press statement by the Chairman of the ASEAN-Japan summit, the ASEAN-Republic of Korea summit, the first ASEAN-India summit and the South African president's briefing, 5 November 2002, Phnom Penh, *ASEAN Secretariat*, 5 November 2002, <http://www.asean.org/news/item/press-statement-by-the-chairman-of-the-asean-japan-summit-the-asean-republic-of-korea-summit-the-first-asean-india-summit-and-the-south-african-president-s-briefing-5-november-2002-phnom-penh-2>.

China, India acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) on 8 October 2003 during the second ASEAN-India Summit at Bali, Indonesia. ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity, which sets out the roadmap for long-term ASEAN-India engagement, was signed at the 3rd ASEAN-India Summit on 30 November 2004 in Vientiane, Lao PDR.²⁷ A Plan of Action (2004–2010) was also developed to implement the Partnership. Subsequently, the new ASEAN-India Plan of Action for 2010–2015 was developed and adopted at the 8th ASEAN-India Summit in October 2010 in Ha Noi, Viet Nam.²⁸

Another significant achievement for India was the invitation to participate in the first East Asia Summit (EAS) in 2005. India is also a member of ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM Plus) since 2010, which focuses on a host of non-traditional security issues. India's Look East Policy has certainly yielded rich dividends. ASEAN-India trade has strikingly increased from US\$7 billion in 2000 to US\$58 billion in 2011.²⁹ India had signed a Free Trade agreement (FTA) in goods with ASEAN in 2003, which became operational in 2010. In December 2012, during the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit, the two sides finalised the Free Trade Agreement in services and investment as well.

The 2012 ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit marked the successful completion of two decades of India's Look East Policy and ASEAN-India dialogue relationship.³⁰ It also celebrated ten years of ASEAN-India Summit level partnership. It goes without saying that over the years, ASEAN members have found a congruence of interests with India, given its dramatic economic growth lately and potential for further significant growth as also its implicit potential

27 "ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations," *ASEAN Secretariat*, <http://www.asean.org/asean/external-relations/india/item/asean-india-dialogue-relations>.

28 *Ibid.*

29 "International Trade Statistics 2011," *World Trade Organization*, 10 November 2011, www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/its2011_e/its2011_e.pdf.

30 "Vision Statement ASEAN India Commemorative Summit," *ASEAN Secretariat*, 21 December 2012, <http://www.asean.org/news/asean-statement-communicues/item/vision-statement-asean-india-commemorative-summit>.

to balance—if not rival—China. India’s successful showcasing of its diplomatic acumen and security approaches to the regional powers juxtaposed with growing regional insecurity vis-à-vis China has helped India’s projection as a responsible international stakeholder. Obama Administration’s support to India’s Look East Policy (underscored in Obama’s speech to a joint session of the Indian parliament during his visit to India in November 2010) and the suggestion to not just ‘look East, but to engage East’ also indicates that New Delhi’s strategic perspective on Southeast Asia is in consonance with the U.S. and ASEAN views on the regional security milieu.³¹ In Obama administration’s *Rebalancing toward Asia* strategy, India is being considered a major partner. In fact, the former Secretary of Defence Leon Panetta, during his visit to India in June 2012, termed India as the “linchpin” in this strategy.³² This has significantly boosted the efficacy of India’s acceptability as a major responsible power in Southeast Asia. The key to India’s success has rested on its ability to persuade key ASEAN members of its non-threatening, credible and benign role. This voluntary acceptance of India underscores the achievement of Indian diplomacy in the Southeast Asian region.³³

In the past two decades, while countries of Southeast Asia, Japan, South Korea and the U.S. have been upbeat about India’s increasing interest in the region, China has not been very supportive. In fact, it has criticised India’s engagement with Southeast Asia, calling the Look East Policy a complete fiasco and a desperate attempt to countervail China’s increasing influence in the region. China is mindful of the fact that though India has not shown active interest in overt balancing to China, there are clear signs of India’s soft institutional balancing efforts. China’s concern is that in the long run, India might align with the U.S. and its allies in Asia. For instance, commenting

31 Remarks by the President to the Joint Session of the Indian Parliament in New Delhi, India, The White House Press Release, 8 November 2010, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/11/08/remarks-president-joint-session-indian-parliament-new-delhi-india>.

32 “Partners in the 21st Century,” Leon Panetta’s address at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, 6 June 2012, <http://idsa.in/keyspeeches/LeonEPanettaonPartnersinthe21stcentury>.

33 Author’s e-mail interview with Dr Mahmood Ali, Director of Research, Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies, 6 June 2011.

on India's Look East Policy, Li Hongmei says, "(It) was borne out of failure—the failure of India's Cold War strategy of playing both ends against the middle ... today, India is harping on the same string..."³⁴ The article is just one of numerous writings in the Chinese media that holds sceptical views on India's Look East Policy and predicts that India's attempt to 'contain' China is bound to fail. If popular discourse in the media is any signal of a country's mainstream thinking, it clearly tells us that China is uneasy about India's bolstering of ties with ASEAN and the Southeast Asian countries. Such views have also been echoed in Chinese official media several times.

Even at the multilateral diplomatic level, China has been expressing its disagreement with regard to India's engagement with ASEAN. For instance, in 2005, when it was invited to the EAS, India's growing influence in the Southeast Asia and the potential for enhanced cooperation was substantiated. However, China's anxieties were apparent during the time when ASEAN members were considering India as a potential member of the grouping. Nevertheless, in April 2005, with the strong advocacy of Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand for India's inclusion in the EAS, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers endorsed India's membership.³⁵ "With the exception of Kuala Lumpur, Beijing did not find any takers for its stance. Nearly all Southeast Asian countries supported India's participation in the EAS, seeing it as a useful counterweight to China's growing power."³⁶

Japan, the other major Asian power, is getting increasingly suspicious of China's long-term intentions in the region. It is particularly apprehensive about what it perceives to be the growing Chinese military power, and thus views the military alliance with the U.S. as an important bulwark against Chinese aggres-

34 Li Hongmei, "India's 'Look East Policy' means 'Look to encircle China?'" *Peoples' Daily*, 28 October 2010.

35 Isabelle Saint Mezard, *Eastward Bound: India's New Positioning in Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar and Centre De Sciences Humaines, 2006), pp. 311–323.

36 J. Mohan Malik, "China and East Asian Summit: More Discord than Accord," *Brief Analytical Reports*, February 2006, www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA493763.

sion.³⁷ Japan's interest in India noticeably increased after China's April 2005 anti-Japanese mob protests, which reminded Japanese business of the risks they face in China.³⁸ Japan-China spat over Senkaku Islands in recent past has only intensified Japan's attempts to look for partners in the region and prepare itself for any eventuality involving China at loggerheads. Japan and India concluded a security pact on 22 October 2008 that can be seen as a consequence of increasing concerns about China's rise.³⁹ The two countries have been holding annual strategic dialogue to mull over further possibilities of cooperation to face common challenges. The sixth round of strategic dialogue was held in May 2012.⁴⁰ Taking note of rising Indo-Japan strategic cooperation, Hongmei argues, "India is viewed by Japan as an ideal partner to establish the strategic cooperation in security, based on the assumption that both of them are being threatened by China's military assertiveness in East China Sea as well as in the India Ocean. On this basis, Japan and India have both placed high expectations upon each other in combining strengths to counterbalance China."⁴¹

Clearly, China's unease is not just about Southeast Asia, it is also about India's engagement with Japan and Australia—the two Asian allies of the U.S. According to Malik, "China has been apprehensive of India's great power pretensions and attempts to extend its influence in China's backyard, while regarding New Delhi's Look East Policy as part of wider 'congeal China' strategy."⁴² Evidently, what causes more unease to China is the rising Indo-U.S. strategic bonhomie. In the age of shifting coalitions, the U.S. increasingly regards China as

37 Richard A. Bitzinger, "Transforming the US Military: Implications for the Asia Pacific," *ASPI Report*, December 2006.

38 Brahma Chellaney, *Asian Juggernaut*.

39 Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between Japan and India, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Japan, 22 October 2008, http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/india/pmv0810/joint_d.html.

40 "India, Japan Hold 6th Round of Strategic Dialogue," *CRI English*, 1 May 2012, <http://english.cri.cn/6966/2012/05/01/3241s696541.htm>.

41 Li Hongmei, "India's 'Look East Policy' means 'Look to encircle China'?"

42 Malik, "China and East Asian Summit".

the key potential rival in the region.⁴³ The U.S. government's support for Dalai Lama, continued criticism of Chinese policies in Tibet, U.S. support to Taiwan and the above-mentioned recent 'rebalancing' strategy in Asia, have been seen by Beijing as challenging China's territorial integrity.⁴⁴ The U.S. objectives lead Washington to support a multi-polar Asia (with strong Japan and powerful India to balance China) but a uni-polar world (with the United States as the sole super power without any peer). In contrast, Beijing prefers a uni-polar Asia-Pacific (with China as the sole super power without any peers) and a multi-polar world (with the U.S., Russia, European Union and China as four major powers).⁴⁵

The U.S., which was considered the resident super power in the region during the Cold War years, is coming back to the region in a formidable manner. The rebalancing strategy of the U.S. clearly has tackling China as part of a long-term plan. Additionally, the U.S. has repeatedly shown its eagerness to 'help' India play a bigger role in the region with a clear aim to tether China. Former Assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, Kurt Campbell's statement points towards that. He said:

One of the most important aspects of our Asian Pacific strategy is to help put meat on the bones of India's desire to play a prominent role in the Asian-Pacific region going forward.⁴⁶

A closer look at the Indian response to this unfolding strategic scenario and India's diplomatic practices towards the region reveals that its objectives in engaging the countries of East Asia have been waver-

43 Jonathan Fenby, "Age of Shifting Coalitions," *The Japan Times online*, 29 March 2003, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/eo20030329a2.html>.

44 Li Heng, "What is US Vessel up to in Chinese waters?," *China Daily*, 30 September 2002.

45 J. Mohan Malik, "Testimony Before The US-China Economic and Security Review Commission on The Strategies And Objectives of China's Foreign Affairs & Asian Reactions to China's Rise," www.uscc.gov/hearings/2008hearings/written_testimonies/08_03_18_wrts/08_03_18_malik_statement.php.

46 Robert O Blake Jr, "Looking Ahead: U.S.-India Strategic Relations and the Transpacific Century," Department of State, USA, 28 September 2011, <http://www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rmks/2011/174139.htm>.

ing. For one, in 1998 when India conducted nuclear tests, it cited China and its prolonged weapon supply to Pakistan as reasons for conducting the tests. Yet, ten years later, India was indecisive on the issue of joining a 'quadrilateral alliance' with the U.S., Australia, and Japan. In fact, sensing China's reservations on the alliance proposal, India decided to conduct a joint bilateral defence exercise *Hand in Hand 2007* with China.⁴⁷

India's interest in South China Sea and joint oil exploration venture with Vietnam is another such example. While Indian policymakers have repeatedly said that India has huge stakes in South China Sea,⁴⁸ India, at one point, had decided to withdraw from Vietnam venture on its own.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Indian intention of extending its naval power up to Malacca Strait is difficult to explain in terms of economic and commercial interests only. So far as China's role in India's Southeast Asia strategy is concerned, there are three visible trends that help us comprehend India's evolving strategy: balancing China, competing and eventually catching-up China, and a long-term goal of playing the role of a 'swing state'.

BALANCING CHINA

Many East Asia watchers and policymakers would respond in affirmative if asked whether India has been trying to balance China in East Asia. From Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Henry Kissinger, a range of policymakers and scholars believe that India's Look East Policy, especially the 'Phase Two', has more to do with balancing China than doing business in the region.⁵⁰ It has been speculated

47 "Hand in hand: China, India arimes inch closer with optimism," *Xinhua*, 26 December 2007. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-12/26/content_7312696.htm.

48 "Ready to protect Indian interests in South China Sea: Navy Chief," *The Indian Express*, 4 December 2012, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/ready-to-protect-indian-interests-in-south-china-sea-navy-chief/1040119>.

49 "ONGC Videsh Limited pulls out of block in South China Sea," *The Times of India*, 16 May 2012, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-05-16/india-business/31725940_1_ovl-oil-exploration-ongc-videsh-limited.

50 Ong Keng Yong, "Advancing the ASEAN-India Partnership in the New Millennium," *RIS Discussion paper* 96 (2005), <http://www.eaber.org/node/22129>.

that India's policies are aimed at curtailing the influence of China and establish it as a major player.⁵¹ Towards that end, India has been trying to partner with the U.S. and Japan—countries with which it shares many values and interests in the region. Considering India's unsettled border disputes with China, China's so called 'string of pearls' strategy and China's alliance with Pakistan, Kissinger argues that it is highly possible that India would like to prevent the rise of China between Singapore and Aden.⁵² Instances given in support of India's overt balancing to China are: India's establishing of the Andaman & Nicobar naval command in September 2001 and tireless efforts to develop Inter Continental Ballistic Missiles that can reach beyond 3,000 kilometers. Closely associated with this stream of thought are those who believe that rather than India, it is the U.S. which is attempting to manoeuvre India in an attempt to balance China.⁵³ Thus, India is only responding to the situation and in effect covertly balancing China as long as it gets enough support from the U.S. For instance, according to Bill Emmott, the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal made a huge exception of India, endorsing its status as a nuclear-weapon state and granting it a more lenient regime of inspections of its nuclear power facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) than is normal.⁵⁴ Emmott spells out the main reason for such a decisive step:

The answer is China. Neither the U.S. nor the Indian government wants to say so, but the basic reason to make India an exception and to bring it closer to the United States is the desire to balance the rising power of China in Asia.⁵⁵

Arthur Herman goes a step further in arguing that India's covert balancing should be backed by the U.S. for strategic benefit of both India and the U.S. He argues that to some in Washington, a partner-

51 Henry Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), pp. 14–34.

52 Ibid.

53 Harsh V. Pant, "India in the Asia-Pacific: Rising Ambitions With an Eye on China," *Asia-Pacific Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (May 2007), pp. 54–71.

54 Bill Emmott, *Rivals: How the Power Struggle between China, India and Japan will Shape the next decade* (London: Penguin, 2008), pp. 21–32.

55 Ibid.

ship with a rising India is potentially capable of performing the same role in anchoring the global order as America's special relationship with Britain. Herman argues, "A century ago, America found its destiny by forging a partnership with the British lion; tomorrow, the same can—and should—happen with the Indian elephant."⁵⁶ The U.S. has indeed been trying really hard to bring India into the balance of power politics in the region, which is evident from its undeterred support to India during the passing of India-specific provisions at the IAEA and Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) meetings amongst a range of instances. In fact, it would be naive to believe that it was only due to India's commitment for non-proliferation and economic interests that the U.S. agreed to share nuclear energy technology with India. It is also believed that the deal was part of George W. Bush government's effort to roll India into an alignment with Australia, Japan and other likeminded countries to forestall China's primacy in Asia; Australia's support to the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal was part of this agenda.⁵⁷ India's participation in the Malabar and 'Cobra Gold' exercises, increasing defence cooperation with Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Australia and other U.S. allies amply substantiate that point.

Bringing a 'new power' into the balance of power politics to balance the 'rival' is not a new practice in the American diplomacy. The U.S. has done it in the past—during the Nixon era when the U.S. normalised its relations with China to balance the USSR. Nevertheless, one cannot deny the point that there does exist trends showing 'balancing China' strategy in India's Look East Policy. Strategic rivalry with China is a tacit element of India's Look East Policy, through which it attempts to balance China in the region.⁵⁸ Preuher, an ex-commander-in-chief of U.S. pacific-command, says, "India is a rising regional player ... its long-term security anxiety is clearly China ... India is definitely looking east...India's economic and military position is now stronger. ASEAN would certainly like to

56 Arthur Herman, "The Eagle and the Elephant", *Wall Street Journal*, 7 March 2006.

57 Mishra "Locating Singapore in India's Strategic Radar".

58 Anindya Batabyal, "Balancing China in Asia: A Realist Assessment of India's Look East Strategy," *China Report*, Vol. 42, No. 2,(2006), pp 179–197.

use it as a counterweight in its relations with China.”⁵⁹ In fact, India probably is the only country in the region that has the capability to counter-balance China. India's rising economy, its strong record as a democracy and its role as a responsible power with regard to nuclear non-proliferation has made U.S.-India ties closer than ever. China remains largely intractable on Spratly Islands question and determined to pursue formidable military power projection capabilities—all factors that undermine the benevolent image it often wishes to cultivate.⁶⁰

Considering its security concerns vis-à-vis China, it makes all sense for India to attempt to overtly or covertly balance China. New Delhi not only confronts China along a long, disputed land frontier, but Beijing's strategy for a forward naval presence around peninsular India also represents a direct challenge to India's strategic, energy and commercial interests.⁶¹ Chinese virtual control over Myanmar in the past and its acting like a 'province of China' had certainly made India wary.⁶² India's apprehensions of China had heightened to such an extent that India overlooked the human rights violations and brutal suppression of democratic movement in Myanmar and restored ties with the Junta in 1993 that were severed earlier with Junta's coming to power in Myanmar. India's immediate security concern at that time was insurgency in its north-eastern provinces, which could not be tackled without Myanmar's support.

Another watershed event in the context of India-China relations was India's 1998 nuclear explosion at Pokharan. When India conducted the series of nuclear tests on 11 and 13 May 1998, China reacted furiously. The Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a statement on 12 May 1998. It stated, “The Chinese government is seriously concerned about the about the nuclear tests conducted by India...

59 Testimony of Adm. Joseph W. Prueher Commander in Chief, United States Pacific Command before The Armed Services Committee, United States House of Representatives, 6 March 2006, <http://russia.shaps.hawaii.edu:8000/security/97-3-6prueher.html>.

60 William Tow, *Asia-Pacific Strategic Relation: Seeking Convergent Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. xi-xxv.

61 Manoj Joshi, “Beware the Dragon,” *India Today*, April 27, 1998.

62 However, of late situation in Myanmar has drastically changed to the disadvantage of China. See also Joshi, “Beware the Dragon.”

the tests run counter to the current international trend and are not conducive to peace and stability.”⁶³ China’s reaction came as a surprise to India as China was instrumental in providing support to Pakistan’s nuclear programme, and hence partly responsible for destabilising the peace in the subcontinent. Within a month since India conducted the nuclear tests, Pakistan followed suit on 28 May 1998. Nevertheless, India responded to China’s criticism by asserting that India’s nuclear weapons were only for deterrence purposes, particularly from Pakistan’s nuclear development and the China threat. The then defence minister of India, George Fernandes went on record stating China as India’s ‘number one’ security threat.⁶⁴

In the past few decades, Sino-Pakistan alliance has emerged as one of the dominant factors affecting India-China relations. The foundation for enduring Sino-Pakistani *entente* is China’s designs to project Pakistan as a ‘balancer’ against India. As Garver writes, “Beijing’s interests are best served by maintaining a fragmented structure of power in South Asia, by ensuring, in other words, that India remains confronted by an independent-minded Pakistan with aggregate national capabilities sufficient to defy India and pose significant security challenges to it. It is in China’s interest to keep Pakistan strong enough to remain independent of Indian domination, and independent-minded enough to challenge India’s domination of South Asia.”⁶⁵ Throughout the Cold War years, the Sino-Pakistan alliance boxed India in the Indian subcontinent, thereby crippling India’s capabilities to look beyond the region. However, with the initiation of Look East Policy, India hoped to transcend the limitations posed by the sub-continental politics and find new friends in the Southeast Asian region. India’s frustrations with the apparent failure of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) also played a

63 “Statement on China’s reaction to India’s nuclear tests,” *Embassy of India in the US*, 16 May 1998, <http://www.indianembassy.org/prdetail1433/statement-on-china’s-reaction-to-india’s-nuclear-tests>.

64 “Fernandes’s statement focuses again on threat from China,” *Rediff News*, 28 May 1998, <http://www.rediff.com/news/1998/may/28george.htm>.

65 John W. Garver, “The Future of the Sino-Pakistani Entente Cordiale,” in Michael R. Chambers (Ed.), *South Asia in 2020: Future Strategic Balances and Alliances* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 2002), pp. 389–390.

key role in India's eager attempts to engage Southeast Asia.⁶⁶

Apart from the desire to use Pakistan as a balancer against India, another factor that has been shaping China's perception of India is: the Tibet issue—China's control over Tibet and presence of thousands of Tibetan refugees in India along with the existence of unrecognised Central Tibetan Administration (Tibetan Government in-Exile) located in Dharmshala, an Indian city. Tibet under China's control bears several direct security implications for India and has been a critical feature in India-China bilateral equation. In fact, any discussion involving India-China relations remains incomplete without factoring-in the issue of Tibet.⁶⁷ With Tibet under its complete domain, China now finds itself militarily in a stronger and more strategic position vis-à-vis India; diplomatically too; it is in a favourable environment with considerable scope for diplomatic manoeuvring to its advantage.⁶⁸ The already estranged India-China relations are bound to get worse with China controlling Tibet and claiming Indian territories. Repeated instances of China issuing stapled visas to Indians hailing from Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir has irked India and exacerbated the already existent trust deficit with China. In late 2012, India once again found itself in an awkward situation when Beijing started showing Arunachal Pradesh, Aksai Chin and South China Sea as its territories in its new e-passports.⁶⁹ Additionally, China's installation of Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) in Tibet, converting the Himalayan region into a military base, attempting to control rivers flowing from China to India and laying the railway line along the border has made India jittery of China's intentions. As China has been making calculated strategic moves, it believes that naturally India might also be doing its bit to respond to the challenges posed. India's Look East Policy has been seen by China as such an endeavour on India's part. Trust deficit

66 J. N. Dixit, *My South Block Years* (New Delhi: UBSPD, 1996), pp. 14–23.

67 Dawa Norbu, *China's Tibet Policy* (Richmond Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), p. 4.

68 Dawa Norbu, "Tibet in Sino-Indian relations: the Centrality of Marginality," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 37, No. 11 (November 1997), pp. 1078–1095.

69 "India, China in Passport, Map Row Again," *The Indian Express*, 24 November 2012, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/india-china-in-passport-map-row-again/1035633>.

between India and China, therefore, is a critical factor, which leads to China's repeated criticism of India's engagement with Southeast Asia. Fearing India's motives, China has also warned India asking it to withdraw from proposed India-Vietnam joint oil exploration venture in the South China Sea.⁷⁰ In 2011, China harassed India's naval ship INS Airavat that was on a routine port call at the Vietnam port.⁷¹ These instances clearly demonstrate China's restlessness about India's mounting engagement with the Southeast Asian countries. It also tells us about China's perception that India is trying to balance it in the region while supporting and cooperating with its adversaries—Japan and Vietnam.

COMPETING WITH CHINA

Numerous reasons can be cited for India's eagerness to bolster ties with ASEAN and its member countries. Prominent amongst them include: India's quest for new friends in post-Cold War world, reviving the economic conditions of the country, developing India's northeastern region and meeting the challenges of globalisation effectively. On that count, China has influenced India's engagement with the 'East' in numerous ways.

There are also enough evidences, which prove that India has been trying to compete with China. China's remarkable economic growth has not left any country in the world unimpressed. It is noteworthy that India and China started their journeys as nation-states almost simultaneously. However, India took longer time to transform its sluggish mixed economy into a buoyant one, while China's economic reforms and opening up of the economy started in the 1980s. Resultantly, the Chinese economy moved far ahead of India. India has been taking note of China's impeccable economic growth and equally remarkable attempts to engage its neighbourhood for trade

70 "China warns India on oil exploration," *The Telegraph*, 6 December 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/india/9726916/China-warns-India-on-oil-exploration.html>.

71 "China harasses Indian naval ship on South China Sea," *The Times of India*, 2 September 2011, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-09-02/india/30105514_1_south-china-sea-spratly-ins-airavat.

and investment relations. Attempts to ensure mutual growth have paid-off in case of China's economic relations with the Southeast Asian countries. Moreover, both India and the world were awestruck by China's unexpectedly positive leadership role in saving the Southeast Asian economies in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis. For ASEAN-China relations, the setting up of ASEAN Plus Three was a watershed event. China's remarkable economic growth was the reason why, despite lingering apprehensions, Southeast Asian countries are more economically inclined towards China. During the same time when ASEAN-China economic relations began to prosper, India's poor show of not even managing to achieve Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) membership called for a rethinking in policy.

Nevertheless, due to India's first and second generation economic reforms, the economic growth pegged to more than six percent by the end of the twentieth Century. Consequently, India tried to 'catch-up' with China in terms of economic engagement with Southeast Asia. India's attempts to seek parity with China almost reached the level of obsession when it rushed into FTA with ASEAN soon after China signed Initial Framework Agreement with ASEAN in November 2002. In regard to FTA, India, to a larger extent, was unable to emulate China in a sense that China signed FTA exactly after a year of its signing of Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation (CEC) in 2001 whereas India took long six years for signing FTA after inking Framework Agreement on CEC in 2003. Later at the negotiation stage, it put forward an impractical and long negative list of items, showing not only the relative weakness of its economy but also the lack of preparedness which bagged harsh criticism from Southeast Asia. These instances exhibit India's ambitious goal of catching-up China to a great extent, particularly in the economic domain.

The case of India's institutional engagement with the ASEAN member countries clearly shows that China has certainly influenced Indian thinking on institutional matters in the post-Cold War world. Intriguingly, both China and India attempted to strengthen institutional engagement with ASEAN only in the post-Cold War years. China's good neighbourly policy, agreeing to sign the Code of

Conduct (CoC) on South China Sea and tireless efforts to normalise relations with Southeast Asian countries certainly inspired India to 'travel more than half' in dealing with its smaller neighbours and countries of East Asia. However, as India's engagement with these countries progressed, emulation paved way to the desire to compete with China. Interestingly, more than India, the Southeast Asian countries (and other regional stakeholders such as Japan and South Korea) perceived India as a potential competitor to China in the regional institutional and security dynamics. A closer look at India's institutional engagement with the Southeast Asian countries and its economic cooperation with ASEAN block in the 1990s tells us that India started off with the goal to emulate China in the region, as China was an impressive success in regional institutional diplomacy. India made steady progress in executing the Look East Policy, and countries of the region accepted and appreciated its overtures.

As India found itself comfortably placed in the ASEAN propelled institutional mechanisms, it started nurturing a number of sub-regional initiatives. With India's attempts in shaping and supporting of sub-regional organisations emerged the trend indicating competition with China in terms of institutional engagement with the region. The consistent feeling that it could not afford to lag behind in taking regional initiatives motivated India to take initiatives such as Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC). Interestingly, these initiatives overlap with China-led Greater Mekong Sub-region initiative, which involves Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and Yunnan province of China. For China, the prime reason behind supporting the Greater Mekong initiative has been promoting growth in its underdeveloped Yunnan province. India's attempt to catch-up China is obvious from the fact that like China, India too is keen to develop its somewhat alienated north-eastern region through sub-regional initiatives such as BIMSTEC and MGC. Also interesting is the fact that while India is not involved in China-led Greater Mekong initiative, China has also not been invited in India-led initiatives despite the fact that there is enough scope and ample rationale for both China and India to work together as Yunnan province of China is not far from India's north-eastern states.

Thus, it is clear that India has been competing with China in terms of wooing the Southeast Asian countries, which fall in its immediate maritime neighbourhood (including Myanmar with whom India shares a long porous land and coastal border). Moreover, India has also tried to keep China away from such sub-regional groups. Interestingly, the countries, which are members of both the groups, have quietly accepted China and India's initiatives and are enjoying benefits from both.

India has also learnt a lot from China in terms of projecting and making use of the 'soft power' capabilities. However, China's so-called 'good neighbourly policy' has been damaged lately because of its assertive claims on Spratly and Paracel Islands of the South China Sea. Conversely, since India has no territorial/ maritime disputes with the Southeast Asian countries, its soft power projections are paying-off well.

INDIA AS A 'SWING STATE'

Another interesting trend emerging in India's Look East Policy has been India's desire to play the role of a 'swing state'. Interestingly, India is perhaps the only country that is in a position to enact such a role.⁷² If the United States National Intelligence Council Report is to be believed, India is likely to become a key 'swing state' and the fourth most important player in the international system by 2015.⁷³ The prime reason for such an assumption is that India's policies towards the region are still fluid and can change without much efforts. Like several Southeast Asian countries, India has kept its option of engaging both the U.S. and China open. However, it is the only country that can make a 'big difference' by deciding to side with one of the two superpowers in the ongoing balance of power politics in East Asia. India has been religiously practicing non-alignment in its foreign policy, avoiding alliances and bloc politics even at the rhetorical level, while strengthening its economic and military capabilities. According to the United States National Intelligence Council report, "As

72 Rajiv Sikri, "Debate: India's Look East Policy," *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (October – December 2007), pp 1–29.

73 "Mapping the global future."

India's economy grows, governments in Southeast Asia—Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and other countries—may move closer to India to help build a potential geopolitical counterweight to China. At the same time, India will seek to strengthen its ties with countries in the region without excluding China.”⁷⁴ India's rapidly growing military and economic capabilities have provided it with more tools to keep such a policy intact. In fact, while tracing the evolution of India's Look East Policy, one notices that it was more a result of India's desire to find new friends and reap the benefits of growth in the region. However, systemic factors have certainly influenced India's engagement with the region: collapse of the Soviet Union, globalisation and now the overall U.S.-China equation, all have impacted India's Southeast Asia strategy.

Thus, the third visible trend in India's Look East Policy and involvement with the ASEAN member states is enhancing cooperation with them while not getting entangled in a rivalry with China.⁷⁵ At the macroscopic level, the strategy is similar to the one that many Southeast Asian states seem to be applying with regard to India and China. Defining the broad objectives of 'India's Look East Policy in the new millennium,' India's former Minister for External Affairs, Yashwant Sinha said, "Phase-II is characterised by an expanded definition of 'East' extending from Australia to China and East Asia with ASEAN as its core. Phase-II marks a shift in focus from exclusively economic issues to economic and security issues including joint efforts to protect sea lanes, coordination on counter terrorism etc. On the economic side, Phase-II is also characterised by arrangements for FTAs and establishing of institutional economic linkages between the countries of the region and India.”⁷⁶

C. Raja Mohan also believes that India's Look East Policy in 'phase two' is not driven by a fear of China nor a desire to become a

74 Ibid.

75 Lalit Mansingh, "India as a Great Power," Lecture at Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, 27 March 2008.

76 "Remarks by Shri Yashwant Sinha External Affairs Minister of India at The Plenary Session Second India-ASEAN Business Summit," *Press Information Bureau*, 4 September 2003.

frontline state against it.⁷⁷ India's growing self-confidence arising out of its success, both in meeting the challenges posed and in taking advantage of the opportunities offered by globalisation, has given it a new perspective on the importance of East Asia.⁷⁸ The U.S.'s attempts to re-engage countries of the region in its wider Asia-Pacific strategy include its ties with India as well. China has been apprehensive of India's growing partnership with the U.S. It is worth noting that India conducts more than fifty military exercises annually with the U.S. alone, which has certainly sharpened its military preparedness in dealing with future military eventuality along the borders. India's cooperation with U.S. has transcended military domain and the two countries find themselves on the same page in terms of envisioning the future of East Asia and the world, though not without differences. As mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs, when India was looking for the NSG waiver and IAEA clearances regarding the nuclear deal with the U.S., China vehemently opposed India's case while the U.S. tried to gather support in India's favour. Yet, during the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and United Nations (UN) Climate Change negotiations, India found its interests convergent with China and against those of the U.S. Such instances provide India with a unique situation where it has the option to play the role of a 'swing state', which essentially means that over the years India might try to benefit from both China and the U.S. by way of its two pronged strategy; expanding its prowess on one hand, while offering issue-based support to the two superpowers. India might find itself in a position to tactfully support one or the other party on specific issues defined by its own national interests. However, India's swing state role is yet to take a concrete shape though one cannot deny its nascent presence. These early signs of India willing to play the role of a swing state are certainly in China's interests—and China is cognisant of that. For instance, the recent Chinese statements appreciating India's reluctance to militarily align with the U.S. have been remarkable. Still, China's uncompromising attitude on India-China boundary dispute poses massive challenge to its foreign and security policy. As Sandy Gordon states:

77 C. Raja Mohan, "Look East Policy: Phase Two," *The Hindu*, 9 October 2003.

78 Rajiv Sikri, "India's 'Look East' Policy," *Asia-Pacific Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2009), pp. 131–145.

India's capabilities and intentions to act as 'swing state' in the East Asian security dynamics and the ongoing China-U.S. rivalry at the global scale is an issue which is still unanswered and demands more time. So far, India has pursued an independent foreign policy, steering clear of the controversy; India has reputedly maintained that it is not keen to join alliances with any country against anyone. However, The U.S. is conscious that it will lose whatever power it has left with in Asia soon and at later stage, even globally to China...Washington remains unabashed that its intention is to build India over this century as a major strategic factor in for the simple fact that India is non-threatening to the U.S. while China is certainly is.⁷⁹

As a major power possessing formidable military and nuclear capabilities, India is unofficially regarded as a potential 'swing state' in the global and regional balance of power politics. Countries of Southeast Asia, Japan, and South Korea see closer ties with India as providing a useful balance and a hedge against China's current economic dominance and future uncertainties, while China sees India's insistence on 'autonomy' and 'independence' in foreign policy as a positive sign for itself. Smaller countries of the region, fearing unilateralism by the big powers like China and the U.S., see India, by default, "as a potential security provider, even though it obviously cannot match China's military and economic power and presence in the region".⁸⁰

A closer look at India's engagement with Southeast Asia and beyond proves that India's greater presence in the region is an outcome of its own rise to big power status. In the years of India's balance of payment crisis of 1991, India tried to learn from the rising Southeast Asian economies. However, at that time, due to India's miserable economic conditions, it was not attractive enough for the ASEAN and other East Asian economies. India's unsuccessful attempts in joining the APEC can be seen as a case in point in that regard. Additionally, India's applications to join ARF during its first

79 Sandy Gordon, "India: which way will the 'swing state' swing?," *East Asia Forum*, 2 June 2012, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/06/24/india-which-way-will-the-swing-state-swing/>.

80 Ibid.

meeting also failed as apprehensions kept lingering in the Southeast Asian countries about India's capabilities and real motives. As has been mentioned earlier, India did have intentions but limited capabilities to project itself as an alternative to China in East Asia. India's rise as a major power in Asia, its increasing involvement in East Asian security dynamics offered substantive dividends. For instance, in 2002 the Indian Navy worked with the U.S. Navy to ensure the safe transit of high value units through the Straits of Malacca. Indonesia and Malaysia were initially hesitant; however, later they supported the Indian and U.S. Navy escort operations in the Straits of Malacca in 2001 and 2002.⁸¹ The incident strengthened India's naval acceptability in the region.

In the aftermath of the 2004 Tsunami disaster, which inflicted damage to Southeast Asian countries falling in India's maritime neighbourhood, India acted swiftly to reach out to its maritime Southeast Asian neighbours to help them fight the crises. India's Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) efforts, and lately, the coordinating efforts in early warning systems have been commendable. Tackling of natural disasters has proved Indian Navy's reliability, and has diminished whatever little apprehensions maritime Southeast Asian neighbours had about India. India's leadership in fighting trans-national and non-traditional security challenges has also provided it with the status of a responsible big power and a reliable stakeholder in the wider East Asian region.

CONCLUSION

The above account makes it clear that no single trend completely explains India's strategy towards Southeast Asia with regard to China in the past two decades. However, as mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs, there are three distinct trends in India's Southeast Asia strategy vis-à-vis China: balancing, competing and catching-up China, and finally, aiming to play the role of a swing state in the long run. As explained earlier, India's objectives in its Southeast Asian engagement are

81 John Bradford, "Southeast Asian Maritime Security in the Age of Terror: Threats, Opportunity, and Charting the Course Forward," *IDSS Working paper*, No. 75, April 2005, pp. 70–74.

wavering and a number of goals have guided its strategy. Nevertheless, a logical gradation of objectives is indispensable, if strategic choices are to be consistent and coherent. It remains to be seen whether India lays out a set of clearly defined facets in its Southeast Asia strategy or whether it keeps showing multiple trends in dealing with the region.

One may argue that China's role in India's engagement with the 'East' would largely depend on three interlinked variables: the overall trend in the U.S.-China relations, China's relations with the Southeast Asian countries and Japan (particularly in the context of South China Sea dispute), and India's bilateral relations with China. Owing to its non-aligned posture and cherished goals of keeping its foreign policy autonomous and independent, India has militarily not aligned with the U.S., which is keen to rope India into its grand strategy. The possibility of China being a partner with India depends more on China's strategic behaviour as China's relations with Southeast Asia, Japan and the U.S. will also influence the India-China ties. A rigid posture on part of China will only lead to more frictions and might push India to look for less preferred option of overtly siding with the U.S. Considering India's rising military competency and economic strengths accompanied with a protracted boundary dispute with China, it may be argued that India's stand in a worsened situation between China and the East Asian countries would be decisive and might eventually intensify frictions between China and the rest. While balancing China is still at a nascent stage in India's Southeast Asia strategy, it might remain covert and further strengthen a friendly and healthy competition if China values the apparent convergence of interest with India. Such a situation might also enable India to become a swing state. That, however, will also depend on India's success in terms of developing its own military and economic prowess.

INDIA'S DEFENCE STRATEGY AND THE INDIA-ASEAN RELATIONSHIP

David Brewster

India's defence strategy towards Southeast Asia can be understood in terms of two broad sets of strategic objectives which drive India's relationships in the region. The first is a perceived imperative to be the predominant power in the northeast Indian Ocean. The second is India's objective to assume a greater strategic role in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. India's aspirations to increase its defence presence in the region are broadly consistent with the perspectives of many Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) states, which mostly see India as a positive factor in the Southeast Asian balance of power. But India is yet to demonstrate itself as a useful and consistent security partner for the region.

India has several strategic imperatives to exercise control over the northeast Indian Ocean. For India, the northeast represents a key defensive space against potential threats that may emanate from or through the Southeast Asian archipelago. The ability to control the sea lines of communication that cross the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea and enter the Pacific Ocean through the Malacca Strait would also provide India with considerable strategic leverage in dealing with rival powers. The area also has numerous immediate security issues that may either directly threaten India's interests or otherwise require it to act as a regional maritime security provider, including piracy and smuggling, maritime terrorism, the activities of separatist movements in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand and India, and territorial disputes over offshore energy resources.

India's second set of strategic objectives in Southeast Asia stems from its desire to expand its strategic role in Southeast Asia and further into the Pacific. India is driven by an imperative to balance China's growing influence in Southeast Asia as well as its aspirations

to expand its own strategic space. India has been relatively successful in recent years in expanding its influence in Southeast Asia in a cooperative and relatively benign manner. It has little choice but to proceed in that way. India's lack of strength compared with other major powers, particularly China, means it must remain flexible and discreet in its engagement with Southeast Asia with the expectation that its relative power will grow in coming decades.

India's initial focus in expanding its influence into Southeast Asia has been on Singapore, which historically recognised India as being a *natural* security provider to the region. India has also had a political alliance with Vietnam stemming from the Cold War era, but which has been revived in recent years. But India will need to develop other partners in the region, some of which have been more hesitant in recognising India's regional security role. India's most important potential partner is Indonesia, which has the potential to transform India's regional role. The prospects for significant developments in India's other relationships in Southeast Asia seem limited for the moment.

INDIA'S LEADING MARITIME SECURITY ROLE IN THE NORTHEAST INDIAN OCEAN

India has a leading maritime security role in the northeast Indian Ocean, as a function of its geographic advantages and relative capabilities. India has dominated the northeast since at least 1971, when the separation of Bangladesh from Pakistan removed any realistic challenge to its position. India's successful naval blockade of East Pakistan severely inhibited Pakistan's ability to defend the territory and was an important reminder of the strategic consequences of control over the bay.

In recent years, India has been reinforcing its capabilities in the northeast Indian Ocean. Much of India's naval modernisation program over the last decade has focussed on improving its capabilities in the northeast. There has been a considerable "rebalancing" of defence resources from the Indian Navy's Western Command to its Eastern Command, reflecting relatively reduced conventional maritime threat perceptions in relation to Pakistan and increased threat perceptions in relation to China. This rebalancing includes the

planned construction of a major new base for the Eastern Fleet south of Visakhapatnam on India's east coast, with capacity for two aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines, among other things. According to Lawrence Prabhakar, an Indian naval analyst, the proposed base will have "comprehensive anti-air, anti-submarine and amphibious capability, meaning a greater allocation of priority to the emergent Chinese naval force posture in the Myanmar region".¹

India's dominant strategic position in the northeast Indian Ocean is underpinned by its possession of the Andaman and Nicobar islands, which run north-south through the Andaman Sea near the western end of the Malacca Strait. As K. M. Panikkar once commented, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands potentially give India strategic bases "which if fully utilised in coordination with air power can convert the Bay of Bengal into a secure area".² These islands also form a natural base for India to project power into the Malacca Strait and beyond into the South China Sea. They have been described by a Chinese naval writer as constituting a "metal chain" that could lock the western end of the Malacca Strait tight.³

Beginning in the mid 1990s, India developed extensive military facilities in the Andaman Islands, including port facilities to service elements of the Eastern Fleet and air bases for surveillance and strike aircraft. The operational radius of aircraft based in, or staging through, the Andamans encompasses the Malacca Strait and large portions of the South China Sea.⁴ Under a plan announced in 2010, there will be a major development of military infrastructure, including runway upgrades and the development of port infrastructure for use by major vessels. In addition, there will be a permanent deployment of UAVs and an expansion of the 3,500 strong army brigade to

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- 1 Sudha Ramachandran, "India navy drops another anchor", *Asia Times*, 17 October 2006.
 - 2 K. M. Panikkar, *India and the Indian Ocean: An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1945), p. 96.
 - 3 Zhang Ming, "The Malacca Dilemma and the Chinese Navy's Strategic Choices", *Modern Ships*, No. 274, October 2006, p. 23.
 - 4 A. K. Dhar, "Indian Air Force Carries out Exercise from Andaman Islands Base", *Press Trust of India*, 15 April 2005.

divisional strength.⁵ In July 2012, the Indian Navy opened a new forward air base on Great Nicobar, at the northern end of the Malacca Strait, which will be used primarily for maritime surveillance. However, the Indian air force has not yet permanently deployed frontline strike aircraft in the islands.

Over the last two decades, the Indian Navy has played a leading role in developing cooperative security relationships with ASEAN states bordering the Bay of Bengal/Andaman Sea, including through conducting joint naval patrols, bilateral exercises and hosting the biennial MILAN “gathering” of regional navies at Port Blair in the Andaman Islands. This is an opportunity to increase military to military relationships with Southeast Asian navies and other selected regional navies. The absence of the United States and China from the MILAN meetings is a none-too-subtle reminder of India’s assertion of regional leadership. At the same time, the Indian Navy has made considerable efforts to prove itself the leading provider of public goods to the region, providing maritime security in areas such as piracy, smuggling, refugees, terrorism and separatism. The Indian Navy has also demonstrated its capabilities to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, including following the 2004 Tsunami, which affected much of the northeast Indian Ocean, the 2007 Cyclone Sidr in Bangladesh and 2008 Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar.

Myanmar and a Chinese presence in the northeast Indian Ocean

Over the last two decades, the only potential threat to India’s leading position in the northeast Indian Ocean has come through Myanmar. Some see Myanmar as an essentially “contested space” in which India and China vie for it as a strategic “prize”. But it is probably more accurate to see Myanmar as a buffer state—i.e. although it may lean one way or another, it is unlikely to allow itself to be permanently incorporated into any sphere of influence. While Myanmar has tilted towards China, the political reforms that have occurred there over the last year or so may signal that it takes a more balanced approach in future years.

5 Rajat Pandit, “Strategically-important A&N Command to get a boost”, *Times of India*, 6 February 2010.

The most immediate security issue between India and Myanmar is the ethnic-based separatist insurgencies in India's Northeast States and western Myanmar. Many separatist groups live on both sides of the border and both India and Myanmar have attempted to use these insurgencies as strategic leverage against the other, from time to time supporting or condoning insurgencies in the other's territory. Since the 1990s there has been intermittent and largely ineffective cooperation between India and Myanmar in cross-border counterinsurgency operations. Over this period, and particularly since 2006, India provided intelligence and limited training and equipment to Myanmar intended to either bolster the Tatmadaw's counterinsurgency capabilities or was given as *quid pro quo* for taking on insurgent groups. But elements of the Tatmadaw are suspected, among other things, of having significant commercial interests in the smuggling activities undertaken by Indian separatist groups and are particularly reluctant to interrupt that trade, and as a result India has little to show for its efforts. The failure of both India and Myanmar to take effective action against separatist insurgents sheltering in their territories continues to be a significant irritant in the relationship.

But India's principal long term strategic concern with Myanmar stems from the extent of China's strategic influence there. The international isolation of Myanmar after the military junta took power in 1988 led it to turn to China as an international partner, and many analysts were concerned that this might involve the development of a Chinese strategic presence in the Northeast Indian Ocean. For more than a decade there have been claims that China was involved in the development or upgrading of several commercial ports or naval facilities, as well as the establishment of a signals intelligence facility on Great Coco Island. Although the Indian Navy has now conceded that there was no Chinese intelligence facility on Great Coco Island and nor were there any Chinese naval bases anywhere in Myanmar, the issue remains a matter of significant concern for many in the Indian security community.⁶

The recent reforms by the Myanmar government under President

6 "Interview with Admiral Arun Prakash, Chief of Naval Staff, Indian Navy", *Asian Defence Journal*, October 2005, p. 22.

Thein Sein appear to signal an important strategic shift by Myanmar, opening its relationship with the United States and India while distancing itself somewhat from China, and making the potential for a Chinese security presence in the northeast Indian Ocean much less likely. Myanmar could well revert to an isolationist “prickly” neutralism that characterised the first four decades after independence, although the current signs are that it will move closer to the ASEAN economic and political model. But either result will likely to reduce China’s influence in Myanmar and mitigate or remove a potential challenge to India’s predominant strategic position in the northeast Indian Ocean.

India’s maritime security ambitions in the Malacca Strait

A focal point of India’s maritime security ambitions in the northeast Indian Ocean is its ambitions in the Malacca Strait, which is identified by the Indian Navy as part of its “primary area of interest”.⁷ The Malacca Strait is the primary route for sea traffic between the Indian and Pacific Oceans and one of the world’s busiest waterways, including a projected 140,000 ship movements per annum by 2020. It is transited by around one third of global trade and the bulk of energy supplies from the Middle East to East Asia. An ability to exert negative control over the Strait would have major significance for India’s strategic role in Southeast Asia, and indeed the entire Indian Ocean. Some claim that for India the Strait represents a rough counterpart to the strategic importance of the Panama Canal to the United States.⁸ Kaplan describes the strait as being as strategically significant in coming decades as was the Fulda Gap during the Cold War.⁹

The ability to exert control over the Strait has both defensive and offensive implications for India. A role in Strait security is an important element in India’s ability to protect its sea lines of commu-

7 Indian Navy, Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence, *Freedom to Use the Seas: India’s Maritime Military Strategy*, May 2007.

8 James R. Holmes, Andrew C. Winner and Toshi Yoshihara, *Indian Naval Strategy in the Twenty-First Century* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p. 154.

9 The most likely invasion route of the Soviet Union into West Germany. Robert D. Kaplan, “Center Stage for the Twenty-First Century”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 2 (2009), p. 25.

nication into the Pacific Ocean. But negative control over the Strait could also provide India with considerable strategic leverage in any potential conflict. The Indian Navy's 2004 Maritime Doctrine argues, "Control of the choke points could be useful as a bargaining chip in the international power game, where the currency of military power remains a stark reality."¹⁰ The Indian Ocean is the one area in which India holds a clear military advantage over China and the potential to control the Malacca Strait reinforces that advantage. As Admiral Mehta, commented, "The weak area for China today is the Indian Navy. We sit in the Indian Ocean and that is a concern for China and they are not happy as it is not so easy for them to come inside."¹¹ John Garver, an expert on Sino-Indian relations, comments: "... in the event of a PRC-ROI conflict, India might be tempted to escalate from the land dimension, where India might suffer reverses, to the maritime dimension, where it enjoys substantial advantages, and employ those advantages to restrict China's vital Indian Ocean trade."¹²

As noted previously, India's defence facilities in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands provide it with considerable measure of control over the western approaches to the Malacca Strait. Over the last decade India has also sought to develop an active security role inside the Strait. In 2002, following an unsolicited request from the United States, India provided naval escorts for high-value commercial traffic through the Strait as part of the U.S.-led Operation *Enduring Freedom*. India's participation in the operation was supported by Singapore (which hosted Indian naval vessels), and India is believed to have consulted Malaysia and Indonesia as well as the Philippines and Australia on the initiative. As the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Pace, commented in 2006, the United States was "very comfortable with the fact that India has offered its assistance" in providing security in the Strait.¹³

10 India, Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 2004, p. 64.

11 "China afraid of India's presence in the Ocean", *Zeenews.com*, 13 August 2009.

12 John W. Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2001), p. 277.

13 *India Defence*, 7 June 2006.

Since the turn of this century there has been considerable controversy over moves by the United States and others to take a role in providing maritime security in the Strait. This included the Regional Maritime Security Initiative under which the United States proposed to provide security in the Malacca Strait in partnership with littoral states, which was strongly opposed by Indonesia and Malaysia. Indonesia and Malaysia have also refused to formally participate in the Japanese-sponsored multilateral Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) initiative involving the voluntary exchange of information on piracy and other security threats in the Strait. In light of these controversies, India positioned itself as a potential benign security provider in the Strait. According to one Indian naval officer: "Our role [in the Malacca Strait] is being perceived as that of a responsible nation, which can create a balance in the region. Also, everyone realises that India has no ambitions of hegemony."¹⁴ India publicly distanced itself from the United States over the Regional Maritime Security Initiative and has insisted that any initiatives must be subject to the unanimous consent of littoral states.¹⁵ At the same time, India has consistently lobbied littoral states for an active role in the Strait both at the political and military level.¹⁶

While Singapore has generally encouraged India's offers to take a security role, Indonesia has been somewhat ambivalent, while Malaysia has opposed it. In June 2007 Indonesian Defence Minister, Juwono Sudarsono, deflected renewed requests from the Indian Defence Minister for a role in patrolling the Strait, claiming that Jakarta was keen that India, South Korea, China and Japan "pitch in to provide infrastructure" in the Strait.¹⁷ In March 2009, a meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in Jakarta produced an invi-

14 Gurpreet S. Khurana, "Safeguarding the Malacca Straits", *IDS Comment*, 5 January 2005.

15 Gurpreet S. Khurana, "The Malacca Straits 'Conundrum' and India", in N. S. Sisodia and Sreeradha Datta (Eds.), *Changing Security Dynamics in Southeast Asia* (New Delhi: Magnum Books, 2008), p. 134.

16 Shiv Aroor, "Centre approves Navy's Malacca Plan", *Indian Express*, 11 January 2006.

17 P. S. Suryanarayana, "Indonesia for defence tie-up with India", *The Hindu*, 5 June 2007.

tation to Thailand to join with Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore in coordinated patrols of the Strait¹⁸ and an Indonesian military spokesman reportedly requested India to take part in maintaining security in the Malacca Strait, on the basis that “all approaches to the strait will be more secure for international shipping”.¹⁹ Similarly, the Indonesian Defence Minister, Purnomo Yusgiantoro, was reported in June 2010 as commenting that Indonesia had “no reservations at all” about India maintaining security in the Malacca Strait.²⁰ Malaysia has generally been opposed to allowing an Indian security role in the Strait, although its views may have softened a little in recent years. In 2008, Malaysia consented to Indian assistance in the “Eye in the Sky” project to provide air surveillance over the Strait.²¹

There seems little prospect at the moment that all the littoral states will agree to giving India a direct security role in the Strait in the current security environment—there are few immediate security threats to be resolved and an Indian presence may be regarded as a provocation by China. But if the littoral states come under increased pressure to take action on Strait security they may allow India to participate in Strait security on their terms. Any security role for India would be a significant, not only for Strait security, but also in legitimising India's claims to be a benign security provider to the region as a whole.

INDIA'S DEFENCE ENGAGEMENT WITH SOUTHEAST ASIA

The second set of strategic objectives in Southeast Asia relate to India's ambitions to expand its political and security role in Southeast Asia and East Asia as a whole. India is driven not only by an imperative to balance China's growing influence in Southeast Asia

18 “Thai to join RI patrolling Malacca Strait”, *The Jakarta Post*, 16 March 2009. This conveniently extended the definition of the Malacca Strait north towards Indian waters.

19 “Indonesia asks India to help maintain Malacca Strait security”, *Xinhua*, 5 March 2009.

20 P. S. Suryanarayana, “Indonesia to ‘learn’ from India's defence sector”, *The Hindu*, 18 June 2010.

21 P. S. Suryanarayana, “India, Malaysia to step up defence ties”, *The Hindu*, 8 January 2008; and “Indian Air Force Chief to Visit Malaysia; Boost in Military Ties”, *India Defence*, 17 August 2008.

but also by its aspirations to expand its own strategic space into the region. Several Southeast Asian states are encouraging India to play a greater role in the region.

Although India has close historical links with Southeast Asia, its inward turn following Independence severely undermined its influence in the region. Although many in Southeast Asia saw India as a natural strategic partner and a potential security guarantor, consistent with its principles of nonalignment, India refused to participate in any regional security arrangements. During the latter years of the Cold War, India's relationship with the Soviet Union, and its support for the Soviet Union's regional ally, Vietnam, reinforced India's political estrangement from the region and was a source of considerable political irritation through much of the 1980s. It is only in the last two decades that India has really sought to comprehensively engage with Southeast Asia. In the depths of India's post-Cold War economic and political crisis in 1992, the Rao government launched the "Look East Policy" which was designed to expand economic, political and security ties with Southeast Asia. India's most immediate motivation was the need to expand trade and investment links with Southeast Asia in the face of a major economic crisis.

At the political level, India's policy is to promote the 'centrality' of ASEAN in the region, which has caused it to focus on developing links with ASEAN-based organisations. India became a full dialogue partner to ASEAN in 1995 and an annual India-ASEAN summit has been held since 2002. India has also sponsored new subregional organisations in the northeast Indian Ocean, including the BIMSTEC grouping²² to promote technical and economic cooperation among states in the Bay of Bengal (including Malaysia, Thailand and Myanmar), and the Mekong Ganga Cooperation group, to promote greater east-west transport connectivity between South Asia and Indochina. India's reliance on ASEAN in extending its influence into the region also means that it is an important supporter of ASEAN's continued

22 The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation organisation.

role as the organisational focus of Asia Pacific groupings.²³ But any reduction of the relevance of ASEAN-centred institutions due to the rise of China may lead India to opt to transcend existing regional organisations and deal directly with other major powers of the Asia Pacific.²⁴

India has also been a strong supporter of ASEAN-centred security arrangements. India joined the ARF in 1996 and effectively acceded to two ASEAN-sponsored security treaties: the Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty (through announcing in 2000 that it would abide by the Treaty Protocol—as a non Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) state it could not formally accede to it) and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (formally acceding in 2003). India also participates in the meetings of Defence Ministers of ASEAN plus Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Korea and the United States (known as ADMM + 8). But while India will likely continue to support the 'centrality' of ASEAN institutions, ASEAN has only a limited role in regional security and is unlikely to assume a more significant role any time soon. This means that for the foreseeable future security engagement will largely occur at the bilateral level.

The majority of ASEAN states have, to a greater or lesser degree, welcomed an increased regional role for India, including in maritime security. Many now see India as potentially playing an important role in the regional balance of power through helping to ensure a balanced *distribution* of power in the region, alongside other key extra-regional powers such as the United States, China, Japan and Australia. Singapore, in particular, has consistently welcomed and encouraged a balanced role for external security providers on the basis that competition between major regional powers "must be squarely confronted and cannot be wished away".²⁵ Singapore's

23 Something acknowledged by Singapore's current Prime Minister. Sunanda K. Datta-Ray, *Looking East to Look West: Lee Kuan Yew's Mission India* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), p. 328.

24 Sandy Gordon, "India 'Looks East' as History", *East Asia Forum*, 17 July 2010, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2010/07/17/india-looks-east-as-history/> (accessed 6 November 2012).

25 Goh Chok Tong, "Constructing East Asia", Speech to Asia Society, 15th Asian Corporate Conference, Bangkok, 9 June 2005.

conception of a “balance of power” involves a multipolar balance that provides freedom to smaller states. As the Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has argued, Singapore’s concept of a balance of power “depends on the competing interests of several big powers in the region, rather than on linking the nation’s fortunes to one overbearing power. The big powers can keep one another in check, and will prevent any one of them from dominating the entire region, and so allow small states to survive in the interstices between them.”²⁶ But aside from Singapore, a broad consensus on the importance of India’s engagement in the region as a balance to China has not yet translated into close defence relationships.

The United States is also encouraging India to assume a greater role in Southeast Asian balance of power, including through developing its defence relationships with U.S. allies and friends in the region. Washington is also actively promoting the idea of the “Indo-Pacific” as a single security region, which justifies India playing a greater political and defence role in East Asia/Pacific. This includes potentially assuming a direct security role in the Malacca Strait and the South China Sea. The United States hopes that India might become an important political partner in East Asia, which can help bolster its efforts to temper China’s strategic ambitions.

India’s security partnership with Singapore

Over the last two decades, Singapore has positioned itself as the hub of India’s economic, political and strategic relationships in Southeast Asia.²⁷ When India announced its Look East policy in 1992, Singapore responded with enthusiasm and quickly positioned itself as India’s *de facto* regional sponsor. Singapore now unquestionably plays a pivotal role in India’s ambitions: it is India’s regional advocate, its economic and political gateway into Southeast Asia and its most enthusiastic security partner. As Indian Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee commented in 2006, Singapore has become “the hub of its

26 *Straits Times*, 6 November 1984.

27 See generally, David Brewster, “India’s Security Partnership with Singapore”, *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 22, No. 5 (December 2009), pp. 597–618.

political, economic and security strategy in the whole of East Asia”²⁸

Singapore has made several attempts to draw India into a security role in Southeast Asia. In what was probably his first act as leader of an independent Singapore in August 1965, Lee Kwan Yew requested Indian assistance in training the newly-established Singaporean army, to which New Delhi did not respond. In the following decade, Lee continued, unsuccessfully, to lobby New Delhi to take over Britain's role as a “protecting” power for Singapore. Singapore's attempts to develop an Indian security role in the region were revived after the end of the Cold War. As K. Kesavapany, a former senior Singaporean diplomat, put it: “India has *de facto* inherited the British security role” stretching from Aden to Singapore.²⁹

In 2003, India and Singapore entered into a comprehensive defence cooperation agreement which has facilitated annual defence policy dialogues, joint exercises, intelligence sharing and cooperation in defence technology. Over the last decade or so, the Indian and Singapore Armed Forces have developed a close relationship. The army and air forces have conducted annual exercises since 2004. The Singapore Air Force was given long-term use of the Indian Kalaikunda air base and India has agreed to the stationing of Singaporean army personnel and equipment at its Babina and Deolali firing ranges. While such arrangements are of obvious benefit to Singapore, which possesses few training areas of its own, India also gains benefits from being able to conduct extended training with Singapore forces. The use of Indian territory by foreign defence forces represents a major policy shift for India which since independence fiercely opposed any foreign military bases anywhere in Asia. Maritime security is at the core of the security relationship, particularly given the position of Singapore at the head of the Malacca Strait. The Singapore and Indian navies exercise together frequently, mostly in the Bay of Bengal but also in the South China Sea. Indian naval vessels are frequent visitors to Changi Naval Base, and the development of a

28 Pranab Mukherjee, Address to the 5th IISS Asian Security Summit, 3 June 2006.

29 K. Kesavapany, *India's Tryst with Asia* (New Delhi: Asian Institute of Transport Development, 2006), p. 48.

semi-permanent Indian logistical presence seems not beyond the realms of possibility.³⁰

From India's perspective, Singapore's size, economic role and geographic position makes it an almost ideal partner for extending its influence in Southeast Asia. Singapore's role as a trading and services hub gives India an expeditious way of expanding its economic presence in the region. Singapore's clear-sighted approach to its own needs and those of the region allows the relationship with India to develop without the historical or ideological baggage that could be a factor in some of India's other relationships. In strategic terms, access to Singapore's port and air facilities, in combination with India's bases in the Andaman Islands, places India in an excellent position to potentially control the Malacca Strait and project power into the South China Sea.

There are, however, some important limitations to the relationship. The ease and convenience for India of the Singapore relationship may to some extent have reduced or delayed the development of other security relationships in the region. Indeed, India faces the risk of Singapore shaping its agenda for the entire region, especially in light of India's very limited diplomatic resources. In the longer run, Singapore's small size and its omnidirectional foreign policy means the relationship can only be a stepping stone for India to develop stronger economic, political and security relationships with larger states if India wishes to have a major strategic role in the region.

India's security relationship with Vietnam

India's other key defence relationship in Southeast Asia is with Vietnam. For more than 40 years, India has stood with Vietnam, its "most trusted friend and ally",³¹ in resisting external domination. In recent years, India has been seeking—with only limited success—to develop Vietnam as a key security partner in the Asia Pacific. Some in New Delhi see an "alliance" with Vietnam, essentially aimed at China, as a quid pro quo for China's alliance with Pakistan. According to Bharat

30 C. Raja Mohan, "India's Geopolitics and Southeast Asian Security", *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2008), pp. 43–60.

31 According to Defence Minister George Fernandes. See "India must not ignore S.E. Asia: Fernandes", *The Hindu*, 28 March 2000.

Karnad, a noted Indian nuclear strategist, “by cultivating a resolute Vietnam as a close regional ally and security partner in the manner China has done Pakistan, India can pay Beijing back in the same coin”.³² But while Vietnam wants to develop India as political and economic balance to China, India is yet to prove itself as a credible security partner to Vietnam.³³

The first significant steps in developing a defence relationship with Vietnam were taken in 2000 with the formalisation of a wide-ranging defence cooperation agreement. This provided for regular exchange of intelligence, joint coastguard training to combat piracy, jungle warfare and counterinsurgency training for the Indian Army, repair of Vietnamese MiG aircraft, training of Vietnamese pilots and Indian assistance on small and medium arms production. Indian Defence Minister, George Fernandes also offered to supply Vietnam with anti-ship and air defence missiles.³⁴ Hindustan Aeronautics and Bharat Electronics were contracted to repair and overhaul up to 125 of the Vietnam People's Air Force's (VPAF) Russian-built MiG-21s, including new avionics and radar to support Russian anti-aircraft missiles.³⁵ The Indian Navy also supplied surplus spares for Vietnamese Osa II-class missile gunboats and other Russian built warships and the Vietnamese requested submarine training for its navy.

But in the following years, India turned out to be a less than reliable weapons procurement partner. While Vietnam was initially keen on sourcing spares for Soviet-vintage equipment from India, the Indians found themselves undercut by cheap suppliers from Belarus, Ukraine and Russia. Other deals have been lost through payment-related problems and Indian bureaucratic bottlenecks. One Indian observer complained of excessive bureaucracy coupled with highly

32 Bharat Karnad, “China uses Pak, Vietnam opens to India”, *Express India*, 3 October 2005.

33 See generally, David Brewster, “The strategic relationship between India and Vietnam: The search for a diamond on the South China Sea?” *Asian Security* Vol. 5, Issue 1, (January 2009), pp. 24–44.

34 Micool Brooke, “India Courts Vietnam with Arms and Nuclear Technology”, *AsiaPacific Defence Reporter*, Vol. 25, no. 5 (2000), p. 20.

35 Ian Storey and Carlyle A. Thayer, “Cam Ranh Bay: Past Imperfect, Future Conditional”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (December 2001), p. 468.

complex and uncoordinated procedures required to export military goods.³⁶ There was also a significant element of political caution on the part of India, particularly in relation to the supply of advanced missile technology. Vietnam has formally requested the supply of Indian Prithvi intermediate range ballistic missiles and BrahMos anti-ship cruise missiles (both of which can be supplied under the Missile Technology Control Regime).³⁷ The supply of BrahMos missiles was blocked by India's Russian partners. Although the Indians reportedly agreed "in principle" to the sale of Prithvi missiles, they have since stalled.³⁸

India and Vietnam are continuing to develop their security relationship. A 'New Strategic Partnership' was declared in 2007, which paved the way for annual security dialogues at defence secretary level. Although defence cooperation is constrained by the limited capabilities of the Vietnamese armed forces and its limited acquisition budget, India is well placed to providing training and maintenance services in relation to Russian-sourced equipment such as Vietnam's new Sukhoi aircraft and Kilo class submarines.

But the key to the defence relationship is the potential for security cooperation in the South China Sea. Indian strategists have long recognised the potential role of Vietnam in controlling the South China Sea and blocking Chinese naval penetration of the Indian Ocean.³⁹ In March 2000, Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes offered Indian assistance in policing the South China Sea and in "containing" local conflicts, commenting: "A strong India, economically and militarily well endowed, will be a very solid agent to see that the sea lanes are not disturbed and that conflict situations are contained."⁴⁰ Such a presence would allow it to respond to China's "String of Pearls" strat-

36 Rahul Bedi, "Despite India's Protests, Vietnam buys arms from Pakistan", *India News*, 17 August 2007.

37 "India Defence Consultants, "What's Hot? – Analysis of Recent Happenings – Indian Navy Update", *IDC Analysis*, 20 November 2005, <http://www.indiadefence.com/navyupdate.htm> (accessed 6 November 2012).

38 Rahul Bedi, "Strategic Realignment", *Frontline*, Vol. 20, Issue 13, 21 June – 4 July 2003.

39 Panikkar, *India and the Indian Ocean*, p. 85.

40 Nayan Chanda, "After the Bomb", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 13 April 2000, p. 20.

egy in the Indian Ocean, and signal an expansion of India's area of strategic interest. Vietnam sees an Indian security presence as giving it the support of another major power in its disputes with China. Vietnam has also encouraged India to take a stake in the South China Sea dispute through the acquisition by the Indian state-owned oil company, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), of oil exploration permits in waters claimed by Vietnam to be within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), but which are also claimed by China. But while both countries are keen to form an alignment neither wishes to take steps that might be overly provocative to China. As a result, India and Vietnam have conducted a dance for more than a decade, each running hot and cold over a possible Indian naval presence.

Vietnam considers Cam Ranh Bay as a strategic trump card of great domestic and international sensitivity. It was developed as a huge naval and air base by the Americans during the Vietnam War and then used by the Russians. Since the departure of the Russians, Vietnam has sought to use Cam Ranh Bay in what has been called a "subtle game" in balancing its relations with various powers and seeking to increase its strategic options and leverage in its relations with the United States, Japan, Russia and India. In October 2010, in the wake of increasing Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea, Vietnam announced that facilities at Cam Ranh Bay would be available for use by all navies on a commercial basis. This is seen as an effective way to improve Vietnam's strategic position vis-à-vis China without being overly provocative.

In June 2011, Vietnam announced that the India Navy would be given regular access to the small port of Nha Trang, which is very close to Cam Ranh Bay. This was likely intended to signify something more than ship visits and something less than a permanent facility, and its proximity to Cam Ranh Bay was no accident. According to an Indian official, the Indian Navy would create what he called a "sustainable presence" presence in the South China Sea.⁴¹ For a while it appeared that India may have taken a decision to become a significant player in the South China Sea dispute. But for India, there

41 Sridhar Kumaraswami, "India eyes South China Sea pearl", *Asian Age*, 26 June 2011.

are limits to even a symbolic presence in the South China Sea. In July 2012, the retiring Indian Naval Chief of Staff, Admiral Verma, commented that any active deployment of the Indian Navy to the Pacific and South China Sea “is not on the cards”.⁴² It may be that a tacit understanding will be reached between China and India not to trespass on each other’s “patch”—China would refrain from developing a permanent naval presence in the Indian Ocean, while India refrained from developing a presence in the South China Sea. All in all, it seems unlikely that India will never be more than a secondary security partner to Vietnam.

India’s other defence relationships in Southeast Asia

India has been slower to develop security relationships with larger states in archipelagic Southeast Asia, such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. While they have been more or less tolerant of India’s strategic ambitions in the northeast Indian Ocean, they have been cautious about seeing an expanded security role for India beyond the Andaman Sea. This will likely inhibit the expansion of India’s security role in Southeast Asia unless there is a significant change in the security environment.

India’s relationship with Indonesia, though relatively undeveloped, may be key to its strategic role in Southeast Asia in coming years.⁴³ New Delhi has long perceived Indonesia, the dominant state in archipelagic Southeast Asia, as being a linchpin of any strategy to constrain Chinese influence in Southeast Asia.⁴⁴ Indonesia is by far the largest state in Southeast Asia and is regarded as *primus inter pares* in ASEAN. It represents a big market for Indian exports as well as a major supplier of resources. A close relationship with Indonesia would enhance India’s role in the region as well as helping India to develop its other relationships across Southeast Asia. Indonesia’s

42 “India against direct intervention in South China Sea disputes despite having stakes in the region”, *India Today*, 8 August 2012.

43 See generally, David Brewster, “The evolving security relationship between India and Indonesia”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 51 No. 2, (March/April 2011), pp. 221–244.

44 Mohammed Ayoob, *India and Southeast Asia: Indian perceptions and policies* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 36.

historical concern about China also makes it a potentially important partner in balancing China's economic, political and strategic influence in East Asia.

Despite these reasons for closer relations, engagement in the security dimension has mostly been more symbolic than substantive. A 2001 *Defence Cooperation Agreement* provides for the supply by India of training and equipment and the development of the Indonesian defence industry, but it is also seen in both Jakarta and New Delhi in broader symbolic terms. Indian assistance in defence technology and training could be of value to Indonesia in light of India's experience in supporting Russian-designed equipment. However, there has been little real progress in this area. Indonesia has unsuccessfully sought to acquire Indian radar systems and BrahMos cruise missiles.⁴⁵ However, the prospect of India becoming a significant supplier of defence technology and services to Indonesia is severely constrained both by the small size of Indonesia's defence acquisition budget and India's limitations as an arms supplier. Since 2002, the Indian and Indonesian navies have undertaken biannual "coordinated" naval patrols in the Six-Degree Channel at the northern entrance to the Malacca Strait. Although token in practical terms, such joint action, particularly at the entrance of the Malacca Strait, has considerable symbolic value.

Indonesia's leading role in Southeast Asia, together with its geographical position as gatekeeper between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, may make it an indispensable regional partner for an India. A broad-based defence partnership between India and Indonesia could transform India's role in Southeast Asia. But, while bilateral trade is growing very quickly, both India and Indonesia are subject to significant internal constraints which make any political or security engagement slow and hesitant. The development of a broad-based relationship with Indonesia would require a major political, economic and security commitment by New Delhi that has so far not been forthcoming. Nor has New Delhi acted on suggestions from Canberra that Australia, India and Indonesia could work together on regional security issues.

45 "Indonesia and Malaysia keen on buying BrahMos", *Frontier India Strategic and Defence*, 13 April 2007, <http://frontierindia.net/indianesia-and-malasia-keen-on-buying-brahmos> (accessed 6 November 2012).

India's security relationships with Thailand and Malaysia are also evolving slowly. Thailand's views about maritime security in the Indian Ocean are broadly convergent with India's and Bangkok's seems to accept India's strategic aspirations in the northeast Indian Ocean. Thailand also sees India as a useful regional counterweight to China. But the security relationship is relatively undeveloped. Over the last decade or so, India provided assistance to Thais to combat Islamic separatists in Southern Thailand in return for Thai authorities taking action against Indian separatists using Thailand as a supply route for arms originating in Cambodia. Since 2006, the Indian and Thai navies have also conducted symbolic "coordinated patrols" in the Andaman Sea. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Defence Cooperation was signed in January 2012 and an annual Defence Dialogue has been established. However, closer security cooperation will likely be limited by Thailand's political instability and its very limited naval capabilities in the Andaman Sea.

Malaysia, through its political and economic influence and its geographical position, is also important to India's strategic ambitions in the region. Although India gave Malaya/Malaysia considerable diplomatic support in the years following its independence and during the *Konfrontasi* with Indonesia, the relationship became somewhat strained, particularly after Malaysia began emphasising its ties with Muslim countries, including Pakistan. There are now several irritations in the relationship, including political unrest among the Indian ethnic community in Malaysia, unhappy with their economic and political marginalisation.⁴⁶ Malaysia's links with China have also sometimes caused it to be cool about including India in East Asian regional groupings—Malaysia opposed holding a separate ASEAN-India summit and quietly supported China's attempts to exclude India from the first East Asian Summit in 2005.

Malaysia has also been somewhat cautious about India's strategic ambitions in the region. Malaysia has had concerns about the level of Chinese influence in Myanmar and the potential for a Chinese

46 Dr V. Suryanarayan, "Malaysian Indian Society in Ferment", *South Asia Analysis Group*, Paper No. 2880, 14 October 2008.

naval presence in the northeast Indian Ocean.⁴⁷ But neither has Kuala Lumpur always been enthusiastic about India's attempts to promote itself as the leading maritime security provider in the Andaman Sea and gain a role inside the Malacca Strait. Unlike some of its neighbours, Malaysia considers that it has an active role to play in Indian Ocean security, as indicated by the deployment the Royal Malaysian Navy to the Gulf of Aden since 2008 (as part of the Combined Military Forces). Malaysia has declined to hold regular bilateral naval exercises or conduct "coordinated patrols" with the Indian Navy in the nature of the patrols the Indian Navy conducts with Indonesia and Thailand and, as discussed previously, it has also opposed India's attempts to gain a security role in the Malacca Strait. But there is some cooperation in respect of shared defence platforms. Since 2007, the Indian Air Force has provided training for the Malaysian Air Force's Russian-built SU-30 MKM aircraft, primarily in Malaysia. There is also an agreement to cooperate in maintenance and training for the French-designed Scorpene submarines being deployed by the Malaysian and Indian Navies.

The political and economic relationship seems to be on the upswing. There are longstanding links between Indian and Malaysian small to medium-sized enterprises which could make the India-Malaysia economic relationship qualitatively different to India's economic relations with other Southeast Asian states and there are expectations of a significant increase in two-way direct investment. It is possible that as economic links develop Kuala Lumpur will become more comfortable with an Indian security presence in its immediate area.

CONCLUSION

There is no singular Indian defence strategy towards Southeast Asia, as its varied relationships in the region attest. Rather, this paper has sought to understand India's regional relationships in terms of two broad sets of strategic objectives. The first set of objectives relate to the northeast Indian Ocean, including a perceived defensive

47 Bertil Lintner, "Enter the Dragon," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 22 December 1994, p. 24.

imperative to dominate the Bay of Bengal/Andaman Sea. India also aspires to assume a direct security role inside the Malacca Strait in cooperation with littoral states. A second set of strategic objectives stems from a more general aspiration to expand its strategic role in Southeast Asia and further into the Pacific. This is partly to balance China, but also reflects a wish to expand India's strategic space as it grows as a major regional power.

While India promotes the centrality of ASEAN as a political and economic grouping, ASEAN's weakness in coordinating regional security policy means that the substance of defence relationships is largely at the bilateral level. India's defence relations with ASEAN states reflect their different strategic perspectives and different historical relationships with India. India has developed a close defence relationship with Singapore, which acts as its 'hub' in the region. Elsewhere, India's moves have been slow and hesitant. Some in New Delhi work with Vietnam to establish an Indian naval presence in the South China Sea, but India is likely to be cautious about taking any action that could lead to a possible confrontation with China. India also aspires to develop defence relationships with Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia, but here again the rhetoric has often far exceeded the reality. If India is to build a major strategic role in the region it will need to prove itself to be a useful partner to these key states. This will require a much greater and more consistent commitment to the entire region than has been evident over the last decade or so. India will need to make a much greater commitment to assisting key states, for example, assisting in building maritime security capacity in countries such as Indonesia. India may also benefit from a greater preparedness to work with other external powers in developing its role in Southeast Asia.

ASEAN'S DEFENCE STRATEGY BETWIXT VOCABULARY AND ACTIONS

Bilveer Singh

Any discussion on ASEAN's defence strategy presupposes the existence of defence cooperation and that there is a clearly stated and defined game plan as to what this cooperation is aimed at and with clearly desired outcomes and goals agreed upon. No doubt, there has been defence cooperation among ASEAN member-states for a long time, mainly on a bilateral and at times, even on a trilateral basis. This is especially marked with reference to military cooperation. However, ASEAN's defence cooperation, meaning cooperation among all its member-states as a regional organisation, is something new and was almost unthinkable when the August 1967 ASEAN Declaration establishing the then five-member sub-regional organisation was first inked. If anything, one feature that characterised ASEAN in its first three decades or so was the near single-minded commitment and determination not to be associated as a military group, what more, a military alliance. When it was formed, ASEAN also did not have any intentions of associating itself with SEATO, the Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation, a Cold War military alliance set up by the U.S. as part of its containment policy in Southeast Asia. Yet, since the end of the Cold War, the vocabulary describing ASEAN's military and defence cooperation has undergone transformation with lessening allergy to talk and more importantly, undertake institutional arrangements as far as military, defence and security cooperation within the Southeast Asian regional grouping. When ASEAN defence cooperation or diplomacy, or for that matter, ASEAN military diplomacy is being discussed, it assumes that this is a Ministry of Defence-led activity, something that is relatively new in the culture of regionalism in Southeast Asia.

Against this backdrop, what is meant by ASEAN defence strategy

will be examined. Before this, how defence cooperation is differentiated from the narrower military or broader security cooperation will also be addressed. The factors leading to the transformation of what was essentially defence cooperation between ASEAN's members, mainly bilaterally, to one engulfing ASEAN as a whole will also be analysed. What is involved in ASEAN's defence cooperation, in short, the nuts and bolts of this cooperation, will, however, first be touched upon.

FRAMING THE DISCUSSION

Any discussion of ASEAN, the ten-member regional organisation, can be approached at two levels; first, at the micro level of its elements, namely, the individual member-states and second, at the macro level involving the organisation as a whole. In this connection, one can examine defence cooperation between and among the member-states or between the member states and parties extraneous to the organisation. At the same time, ASEAN's defence cooperation can be approached from the standpoint of activities among the member-states at the organisational level or between the organisation and parties outside it. There is also the distinction between military, defence and security cooperation. Military cooperation involves activities undertaken by the armed services of the respective states with each other. As the concept of defence has been broadened, defence cooperation entail the role expansion of the military, with non-military activities such as peacekeeping, humanitarian activities as well as focusing on non-security threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking and even natural disasters. Security is the over-arching concept that involves almost all activities, political, economic and even social-cultural developments that can undermine a state or regional security. At the same time, how exactly the member-states view such cooperation is equally important. This refers to the vocabulary of describing defence cooperation among the ASEAN members and between ASEAN members and others. Finally, strategy connotes a well-thought out plan of action aimed at achieving specific goals. Strictly speaking, it is about undertaking actions that will position the actors in a position of advantage over its actual or potential adversaries. In this connection, ASEAN's defence strategy

refers to the goals and objectives defence cooperation among the member-states and between ASEAN and others is aimed at. It does not refer to a specific collective defence blueprint or doctrine as this is non-existent. Yet, there is ample evidence of desired goals and outcomes that the ASEAN member-states hope to achieve through intra-ASEAN and inter-ASEAN defence cooperation.

ASEAN'S DEFENCE COOPERATION: AD HOC BILATERALISM TO REGIONAL MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONALISATION

For long, ASEAN's defence cooperation was largely the purview of one or two states in the traditional arena of military cooperation. Slowly, this expanded among most ASEAN member-states and broadened to other areas beyond military cooperation. This aspect of sectoral cooperation within ASEAN increasingly came to be referred to as 'defence diplomacy'. In ASEAN, defence diplomacy encompasses the following elements:

1. Bilateral and multilateral contacts between senior military and civilian defence officials.
2. Appointment of defence attaches to each other's capitals.
3. Bilateral defence cooperation agreements.
4. Training of foreign military and civilian defence personnel.
5. Provision of expertise and advice on the democratic control of armed forces, defence management and military technological areas.
6. Contacts and exchanges between military personnel and units, ship and aircraft visits.
7. Placement of military or civilian personnel in partner countries' defence ministries or armed forces.
8. Provision of military equipment and other material aid.
9. Exchange of military information and intelligence.
10. Deployment of military units in a country hit by natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes or tsunamis, or as part of a peace keeping or peace monitoring effort.
11. Joint air and naval patrols of common waters (such as the Straits of Malacca, Singapore Straits and the Gulf of Thailand).

12. Bilateral or multilateral military exercises for training purposes.¹

While 'defence diplomacy' appear wide-ranging, as far as ASEAN member-states were concerned, initially, these were largely focused on a few areas and their frequency was only regularised much later. Initially, ASEAN's defence diplomacy concentrated on bilateral land, air and naval exercises among member-states (Table 7.1), visits by senior military officials and defence ministers, and somewhat infrequent attendance of personnel at each other's military and staff colleges. Other aspects of defence diplomacy only evolved gradually as the comfort level among the member-states increased.

During this period, namely, prior to the end of the Cold War, some ASEAN member-states were also involved in bilateral military exercises with non-ASEAN member-states (Table 7.2).² One of the most developed in this area was Singapore and Malaysia's participation in the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), a loose pact, and the only multilateral military pact after the Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation that existed in the Southeast Asian region. The FPDA exercises involved were as follows:

1. Integrated Air Defence ADEX Series (Major and Minor).

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- 1 See A Cottey and A Foster, *Reshaping Defence Diplomacy: New Roles for Military Cooperation and Assistance*, Adelphi Paper No. 365 (London: Oxford University Press for the International Institute of Strategic Studies, 2004), pp. 6–7. See also Bhubhindar Singh and See Seng Tan, "Introduction: Defence Diplomacy and Southeast Asia", in Bhubhindar Singh and See Seng Tan (Eds.), *From 'Boots' to 'Brogues': The Rise of Defence Diplomacy in Southeast Asia*, RSIS Monograph No. 21 (Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2011), p. 2.
 - 2 As was argued by the former Chief of the Malaysian Armed Forces, "bilateral defence cooperation is flexible and provides wide-ranging options. It allows any ASEAN partner to decide the type, time and scale of aid it requires and can provide. The question of national independence and sovereignty is unaffected by the decision of others as in the case of an alliance where members can evoke the terms of the treaty and interfere in the affairs of another partner". See Amitav Archarya, "Regional Military-Security Cooperation in the Third World: A Conceptual Analysis of the Relevance and Limitations of ASEAN", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 1992, p. 13. See also Tim Huxley, "ASEAN Defence Policies and Expenditures", *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 13, Issue 2, 1994, p. 44.

TABLE 7.1
Bilateral military exercises among ASEAN member states

Exercise	Type	Participants
Eagle	Air-Naval	Singapore-Indonesia
Elang Indopura	Air	Singapore-Indonesia
Englek	Naval	Singapore-Indonesia
Kocha Singa	Land	Singapore-Thailand
Maju Bersama	Naval	Singapore-Brunei
Malapura	Naval	Singapore-Malaysia
Sarex	Air	Singapore-Malaysia
Safkar Indopura	Land	Singapore-Indonesia
Semangat Bersatu	Land	Singapore-Malaysia
Sing Siam	Air	Singapore-Thailand
Air Thai-Sing	Air	Singapore-Thailand
Termite/Flaming Arrow/	Land	Singapore-Brunei
Juggernaut	Land	Singapore-Brunei
Singa Hutun	Land	Singapore-Brunei
Bold Sabre	Naval	Singapore-Thailand
Thai-Sing	Air	Malaysia-Thailand
Air Thamal	Naval	Malaysia-Thailand
Sea Thamal	Land/Air/	Malaysia-Indonesia
Darsasa Malindo	Naval	Malaysia-Indonesia
Elang Malindo	Air	Malaysia-Brunei
Hornbill	Naval	Malaysia-Indonesia
Kekar Malindo	Land	Malaysia-Indonesia
Kripura Malindo	Land	Malaysia-Indonesia
Malindo Jaya	Naval	Malaysia-Indonesia
Tatar Malindo	Land	Malaysia-Indonesia
Thalay	Naval	Philippines-Singapore
Anoa Singa	Land	Indonesia-Thailand
Elang Thainesia	Air	Brunei-Singapore
Pelican	Naval	Indonesia-
Philindo/Corpaphlindo	Naval	Philippines
Sea Garuda	Naval	Indonesian-Thailand
Lancer	Land	Brunei-Singapore

Source: Bhuhindar Singh and See Seng Tan, "Introduction: Defence Diplomacy and Southeast Asia", p. 7; Amitav Archarya, *A Survey of Military Cooperation Among the ASEAN States: Bilateralism or Alliance?*, Occasional Paper Number 14, Centre for International and Strategic Studies, May 1990, pp. 41–42; Bilveer Singh, *The Vulnerability of Small States Revisited: A Study of Singapore's Post-Cold War Foreign Policy* (Jogjakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1999), pp. 321–346.

2. Southern Safari [Land].
3. Starfish [Naval].
4. Platypus [Land].
5. Kiwi Connection [Singapore, Malaysia, New Zealand Land Exercise].
6. Lima Bersatu [Land].
7. Golden Fleece [Singapore, Malaysia, New Zealand Land Exercise].
8. Lion Spirit [Land].
9. Suman Warrior [Land].

ASEAN member-states are also involved in military exercises with other states such as India, Britain, Australia and China. Thailand and the Philippines have also established long-standing military ties with the United States. The U.S. and the Philippines signed a Mutual Defense Treaty in August 1951. Similarly, the U.S. and Thailand have a number of security-related treaties. Both countries were signatories, together with the Philippines, of the 1954 Manila Pact that established SEATO. Despite SEATO's dissolution, the Manila Pact remains in force, just as does the 1962 Rusk-Thanat Communiqué which provides a key basis for U.S. security commitment to Thailand. Both Thailand and the Philippines were also designated a Major Non-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Ally in 2003 by the U.S. Government. Thailand's U-Tapao Royal Thai Navy Airfield is also a key hub for logistical operations, being frequently used for landing and refueling by American aircraft operating in the Pacific and Indian Ocean.

In many ways, of all the 'legs' of ASEAN cooperation, defence cooperation was the weakest and least developed. This was a function of a number of factors: first, the fact that ASEAN was not created for a specific military purpose and there was no intention of allowing others, especially its Cold War adversaries, to accuse ASEAN and its members of so doing; second, most ASEAN members were preoccupied with internal security, development and nation building issues; third, there was no desire among the ASEAN members to develop the organisation into a military pact; fourth, there were serious outstanding bilateral security, especially territorial, issues among the ASEAN members; and finally, there was no consensus

among the ASEAN members on what constituted a common threat. In such a setting, military cooperation was never given priority, all the more, as most of ASEAN's militaries were targeted at each other in the traditional security dilemma dynamics. Finally, unlike NATO, ASEAN was never conceived by its founding fathers as a military pact and this has largely remained consistent despite role expansion in the defence sector.

Still, whenever possible, ASEAN member-states did collaborate on security matters usually on transnational issues. Here, there are a number of ASEAN-wide networks that should be regarded as invaluable laboratories that played an important role in incubating the concept, idea and norms of security cooperation that later made it easy for the ASEAN member-states to leap into military and defence diplomacy. Some areas of collaboration worthy of note include: ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime, the ASEAN Chiefs of National Police and the ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters. The ASEAN Ministers of Home Affairs/Interior have also met, the inaugural meeting taking place in December 1997.

With increasing comfort level among the ASEAN member-states and most importantly, the changes in the Southeast Asian regional security environment following the end of the Cold War, there was a growing impetus to enlarge the state of existing defence cooperation in the Southeast Asian region. By the time the Cold War ended, the Southeast Asian region had experienced tumultuous security challenges, including the withdrawal of British military presence, increasing Soviet military presence in the region, the defeat of the Americans in Indochina, the forcible unification of Vietnam and rising tensions between China and Vietnam, close security ties between Vietnam and the Soviet Union, Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia, China's limited war with Vietnam and rising territorial disputes in the region, including a number of Chinese military actions in the South China Sea. Against this backdrop, by 1999, all Southeast Asian states had joined ASEAN and this called for a new approach to regional relations, both bilateral and multilateral. At the same time, the role of great powers in the region was changing. Not only was the United States dithering in terms of its security commitment to the region, but more importantly, China was very fast expanding its footprints

TABLE 7.2
ASEAN member states' military exercises with non-ASEAN members

Exercise	Type	Participants
Tiger Balm	Land	Singapore-U.S.
Merlion	Naval	Singapore-U.S.
Daring Warrior	Land/Air	Singapore-U.S.
Tasman Sea	Naval	Singapore-Australia
Neptune	Land	Singapore-New Zealand
Eastern Arc	Joint Forces	Singapore-France
New Horizon	Naval	Indonesia-Australia
Haringaroo	Land	Malaysia-Australia
Cope Thunder	Air	Philippines-Australia
Nulla-Nulla (Boomali)	Air	Singapore-Australia
Bisam	Land	Brunei-Australia
Chapel Gold	Land	Thailand-Australia
Rapid Move	Air	Malaysia-Australia
Southern Tiger	Land	Malaysia-Australia
Penguin	Naval	Brunei-Australia
Night Panther	Land	Thailand-Australia
Aussiam	Naval	Thailand-Australia
Wallaby	Land	Singapore-Australia
Night Tiger	Land	Malaysia-Australia
Night Falcon	Land	Brunei-Australia
Austhai	Naval	Thailand-Australia
Pitch Black (Western Reward)	Air	Singapore-Australia
Matilda	Land	Singapore-Australia
Churinga	Air	Singapore-Australia
Night Hawk	Land	Brunei-Australia
Mallebull	Land	Brunei-Australia
Axolotl	Land	Singapore-Australia
Night Lion	Land	Singapore-Australia
Sea Griffin	Naval	Singapore-Australia
Night Leopard	Land	Singapore-Australia
Wallaroo	Land	Singapore-Australia
Pemburu Rusa	Land	Malaysia-Australia
Temple Jade	Land	Thailand-Australia
New Footing	Land	Brunei-Australia

Source: Bhubhindar Singh and See Seng Tan, "Introduction: Defence Diplomacy and Southeast Asia", p. 7; Amitav Archarya, *A Survey of Military Cooperation among the ASEAN States*, pp. 41–42; Bilveer Singh, *The Vulnerability of Small States Revisited*, pp. 321–346.

in the region following its massive economic rise, followed, albeit slowly, by India after the announcement of the Look East Policy in 1991.

This led to the rise of two inter-related developments, namely, increased engagement of the outside players through ASEAN as well as rising regionalisation within Southeast Asia, including in the defence and security sector. More importantly, despite disavowing a security role, by the 1970s, the ASEAN member-states were already making declarations on security-related issues. One of the first was the 1971 declaration on the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, which among others, aspired to see the drawdown of external powers from the region. However, the most important security statement to be made by ASEAN was the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). Among others, in order to promote peace, the Treaty members committed themselves to the following principles: (i) mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations; (ii) the right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion; (iii) non-interference in the internal affairs of one another; (iv) settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means; (v) renunciation of the threat or use of force; and (vi) effective cooperation among themselves. Additionally, the signatories to the TAC also agreed, in their endeavour to achieve regional prosperity and security “to cooperate in all fields for the promotion of regional resilience, based on the principles of self-confidence, self-reliance, mutual respect, cooperation and solidarity which will constitute the foundation for a strong and viable community of nations in Southeast Asia”. Additionally, in case of disputes, a High Council was established to settle disputes peacefully.

Similarly, the ASEAN Concord signed in February 1976 also contained commitments to peace and security. Among others, the Concord referred to the following: (i) The stability of each member state and of the ASEAN region is an essential contribution to international peace and security. Each member state resolves to eliminate threats posed by subversion to its stability, thus strengthening national and ASEAN resilience; and (ii) Member states shall strive, individually and collectively, to create conditions conducive to the

promotion of peaceful cooperation among the nations of Southeast Asia on the basis of mutual respect and mutual benefit. Additionally, signatories to the Concord committed themselves to settlement of intra-regional disputes by peaceful means as soon as possible; and immediate consideration of initial steps towards recognition of and respect for the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality wherever possible. Following the landmark 1976 agreements, a number of other security-related understandings were also arrived at within ASEAN. This includes:

1. Direct ASEAN involvement in the settlement of the Cambodian conflict.
2. The agreement to establish a Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone that was signed in December 1995 and came into force in March 1997.
3. The 1992 Manila Declaration on the South China Sea urging parties to the conflict to settle the issue peacefully.

By this time too, the basic security approach, partly emanating from the TAC was what came to be described as the ‘Suharto Doctrine’ or the concept of national and regional resilience. This was premised on the fact that each ASEAN member-state was expected to look after its own security and if every member-state did likewise, then there would be ‘national resilience’ and the sum total would be the realisation of regional resilience. More importantly, the end of the Cold War ushered in a new era of defence cooperation on two fronts—multilateral regional defence cooperation and dialogue, and regional multilateral defence institutionalisation. The knock-on effect of these trends was ASEAN’s collective defence engagement with third parties in the Asia-Pacific region.

A watershed development in this regard was the inclusion of defence and security issues in the discussions at the fourth ASEAN Summit held in Singapore in 1992. In this regard, the 28 January 1992 Singapore Declaration was a landmark development as far as breaking past taboos associated with discussions on defence and security within ASEAN. Among others, it stated:

In the field of political and security cooperation, we have agreed that:

- ASEAN welcomes accession by all countries in Southeast Asia

to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, which will provide a common framework for wider regional cooperation embracing the whole of Southeast Asia.

- ASEAN will also seek the cognizance of the United Nations for the Treaty through such means as an appropriate Resolution. This will signify ASEAN's commitment to the centrality of the UN role in the maintenance of international peace and security as well as promoting cooperation for socioeconomic development.
- ASEAN could use established fora to promote external dialogues on enhancing security in the region as well as intra-ASEAN dialogues on ASEAN security cooperation (such as the regional security seminars held in Manila and Bangkok in 1991, and the workshops on the South China Sea held in Bali in 1990 and Bandung in 1991), taking full cognizance of the Declaration of ASEAN Concord. To enhance this effort, ASEAN should intensify its external dialogues in political and security matters by using the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conferences (PMC).
- ASEAN has made major strides in building cooperative ties with states of the Asia-Pacific region and shall continue to accord them a high priority.
- ASEAN will seek to realise the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) and a Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (SEANWFZ) in consultation with friendly countries, taking into account changing circumstances.
- ASEAN will closely cooperate with the United Nations and the international community in ensuring the full implementation of the Peace Agreements signed in Paris in October 1991.
- ASEAN supports the Cambodian Supreme National Council in calling on the UN Secretary General to dispatch UNTAC as early as possible in order to preserve the momentum of the peace process and to implement the gains realised by, the signing of the Paris Peace Agreements ASEAN calls on all parties in Cambodia to implement seriously the process

of national reconciliation which is essential to a genuine and lasting peace in Cambodia.

- ASEAN will participate actively in efforts to ensure that the United Nations is a key instrument for maintaining international peace and security.
- ASEAN will encourage all efforts to strengthen the United Nations, including its role and capabilities, in peacekeeping and peacemaking, in accordance with the United Nations Charter.³

Since then, ASEAN has marched forward in the sector of defence cooperation with the 'denial syndrome' no longer constraining the organisation. ASEAN's defence and the wider security cooperation are manifested through the following activities and arrangements:

1. 1991 ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea
2. 1992 Special Meeting of ASEAN Senior Officials (Special SOM) [involving foreign and defence officials]
3. ASEAN Regional Forum and ARF Special SOM
4. 1995 Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone
5. The ASEAN Regional Forum
6. 2002 ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea
7. Commitment to the creation of a ASEAN Security Community

Just as the Fourth ASEAN Summit held in Singapore in 1992 was a watershed in promoting security and defence discussions within ASEAN, similarly, the Tenth ASEAN Summit in Vientiane in November 2004 was similarly crucial in the rise of institutionalised defence cooperation within the Southeast Asian states. This was following the adoption of the ASEAN Security Community Plan of Action, which among others, provided for the convention of an annual ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM). Since then,

3 See "1992 Singapore Declaration", 28 January 1992, <http://cil.nus.edu.sg/rp/pdf/1992%20Singapore%20Declaration-pdf.pdf>.

TABLE 7.3
Modalities of ASEAN defence-security cooperation

Modality of ASEAN defence-security cooperation

ASEAN Chiefs of Army Multilateral Meeting
 ASEAN Chief of Defence Forces Informal Meeting
 ASEAN Navy Interaction
 ASEAN Air Force Chiefs Conference
 ASEAN Military Intelligence Meeting
 ASEAN Armies Rifles Meeting
 ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting
 ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Retreat
 ASEAN Defence Senior Officials Meeting Working Group
 ASEAN Defence Senior Officials Meeting Plus Working Group
 ASEAN Defence Senior Officials Meeting Plus Conference
 ASEAN Military Operation Meeting
 ASEAN Expert (Military) Group Meeting
 Use of ASEAN Military Assets and Capacities in Humanitarian Assistance
 and Disaster Relief
 Network of ASEAN Defence and Security Institutions

Source: Author

TABLE 7.4
ASEAN defence-security cooperation with third parties

Modalities of ASEAN defence-security cooperation with third parties

ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus Eight
 Shangri-la Dialogue
 ASEAN Regional Forum
 ASEAN Regional Forum Heads of Defence Universities/Colleges/Institutions
 Meeting
 ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Group Meeting on Confidence
 Building Measures [involved the defence ministers]
 ASEAN Regional Forum Defence Official Dialogue
 ASEAN Regional Forum Security Policy Conference

Source: Author

TABLE 7.5
ASEAN military exercises with third parties

ASEAN military exercises with third parties
Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT)
Cobra Gold
Cope Tiger
Southeast Asian Cooperation Against Terrorism
Rim of the Pacific Exercise
Malabar and Milan Series (involving many ASEAN members but not all)

Source: Author

defence cooperation has grown by leaps and bounds. This saw the ADMM being launched in Kuala Lumpur in May 2006 and in October 2010, the ADMM Plus Eight was formally inaugurated. While there is various multilateral defence and security foras, the ASEAN Plus One approach, say, links with individual powers such as the U.S., China and India are also important.

Tables 7.3, 7.4 and 7.5 would manifest that not only is there ASEAN defence diplomacy, the much narrower, ASEAN military diplomacy has also grown in importance in the post-Cold War era. This is a major game changer and its importance should not be underrated in view of the past near-doctrinal aversion towards such cooperation.

ASEAN DEFENCE STRATEGY

From initially being averse to military cooperation beyond bilateral level, ASEAN has gradually expanded and developed the defence leg of cooperation within the Southeast Asian regional context. Today, there is clearly ASEAN-led multilateral defence diplomacy in ASEAN and is increasingly an important component of not just regionalism but also a key element in security and order maintenance in the region. The existence of a defence track in ASEAN can no longer be denied. It has evolved, in a true ASEAN fashion, call it 'spider-web' or 'noodle-like' network, through a system that is closely intertwined, linking states within the region with each other and those from without the region. While security dilemma issues remain, at the

same time, concerted efforts have been made to enhance defence cooperation as part of the new cultural norms within the region as well as partly in response to increasing security threats in the post-Cold War and the post-9/11 world that is dominated by not just new, non-traditional threats but also rising traditional great power conflicts involving the U.S., China, India and Japan. It is within these interstices that one can make sense of defence regionalism within ASEAN and talk, though loosely of what can be referred to as ASEAN's defence strategy. However, in the strict sense, there is no common defence policy in ASEAN, say as in NATO. In this regard, strictly too, the concept of ASEAN defence strategy also does not exist. Yet, it can be argued that the sum total of ASEAN's defence diplomacy and collaboration do amount to a modicum of defence strategy. Already, in terms of military deployments, say in the Straits of Malacca, there are the Malacca Straits Patrols (MSP). This includes the Malacca Straits Sea Patrol (MSSP), the 'Eyes in the Sky' (EiS) air patrols and the Intelligence Exchange Group (IEG), a set of cooperative security measures undertaken by Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand to ensure the security of the Straits of Malacca. Initially, in 2004 the MSP only involved Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore; in 2008, it was expanded to include Thailand. Under this arrangement, the four ASEAN member-states conduct coordinated naval and air patrols in the Straits of Malacca.⁴

Notwithstanding the absence of ASEAN-wide strategic and security concepts, in a general sense, there are defence and security related aspects that are relevant to one's understanding of defence cooperation in the ASEAN region. First and foremost, the past cannot be totally ignored and discounted. Beginning in the 1970s, the strategic concept, loose as it was, that dominated the region was the concept of national and regional resilience. Sometimes referred to as the 'Suharto Doctrine', the concept called for each member-state to focus on enhancing its security through 'national resilience'. The sum-total of all the member-states' 'national resilience' would translate into regional resilience. The concept of 'national' and

4 See "Ocean Beyond Piracy", <http://oceansbeyondpiracy.org/matrix/activity/malacca-strait-patrol>.

'regional resilience' was underpinned by other related security concepts that emanated from the regional organisation, including those enshrined in the TAC, ASEAN Concord, the ASEAN Way, the quest for decision-making through consensus, and the emphasis on conflict avoidance and management rather than conflict resolution

A second aspect of the ASEAN's defence strategy has emphasised the critical merit of the non-use of force and the peaceful resolution of disputes among the members. While this held true for more than forty years and probably holds true to this day, there was a minor violation of this principle when the Thais and Cambodians chose to use force, though sparingly, in their dispute over the ancient *Preah Vihear* Hindu temple in 2009, 2010 and 2012. Otherwise, this principle also represents a key aspect of defence strategy within ASEAN.

Third, despite varying threat perceptions, by and large, ASEAN member-states have come round to the idea that external powers' presence in the region is unavoidable and even if member-states object, they do not have the capacity to prevent it. Due to the strategic importance of the Southeast Asian region, especially the presence of vital sea lanes of communications, the presence and involvement of great powers in the regional security architecture has become an article of faith, best testified to by the ARF and the ADMM Plus Eight. This also stems from the realisation that there are enduring conflicts and security dilemma issues in East Asia in general and Southeast Asia in particular which will remain unsolvable for some-time to come. There is also the realisation that competing approaches to security management are being forwarded by the major powers, be it driven by China's economic growth and the concomitant rise in defence spending and military modernisation or the U.S. attempt to re-engage in the region (Obama's Pivot strategy), something South-east Asian states cannot object to or insulate themselves from.

What is evident from the above discussion is that while ASEAN has made the leap forward from being averse to defence cooperation to one where it is involved in different modalities of defence collaboration, especially multilateral defence diplomacy and not multilateral ASEAN-wide defence cooperation, still, there are general ideas that are worth noting. This, for instance, was made evident during the November 2007 ADMM Three-Year Work Programme and adopted

at the Second ADMM in Singapore. Among others, it involved the agreement to promote regional defence and security cooperation, shaping and sharing norms, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peace building.

What then are the elements of ASEAN defence strategy? Clearly, unlike NATO, there is no clear-cut defence doctrine or roadmap as to how the ten member-states would respond in case of a crisis. In fact, in view of the ongoing conflict in the South China Sea, the fact that there has been no 'military diplomatic response' other than a 'diplomatic' one through the 'Guidelines' is indicative of the type of 'military organisation' ASEAN is. While there are no openly stated or agreed upon defence doctrine or blueprints, yet, in reality, there is broad consensus on what defence cooperation entails and what this cooperation is premised upon. In the main, it flows from national-based defence doctrines and strategies. First, the twin concepts of national defence and deterrence underpin national defence strategies of all ASEAN member-states. This is directed at protecting and preserving the respective national security interests.

Second, partly due to the experiences of colonialism and having learnt the lessons of other states, an important driving force in defence policies is the quest for self-reliance. This involves both the strengthening of combat forces as well as logistical network in defence industrialisation. The third is the increasing realisation that security in the ASEAN region has become highly indivisible. In short, notwithstanding various security dilemma issues, there is growing security interdependence in the region and one member-state of ASEAN can only be as strong as its weakest link.

Fourth, there is the desire to be seen as strong and reliable defence partners within ASEAN, with third parties in the immediate vicinity of the region and the wider Asia-Pacific. As most ASEAN member-states have defence ties with external actors such as the U.S., India, Australia and even China, there is a need to demonstrate that every ASEAN member-state is an invaluable and useful partner, contributing to the partnership and hence, to regional and wider defence and security objectives. Fifth, despite earlier resistance, there is also the growing realisation of the need and importance of external assistance in strengthening national and regional security.

In the case of Singapore and Malaysia, the importance of the FPDA is clearly evident just as in the case of Thailand and the Philippines, their bilateral defence pacts with the U.S. are viewed with renewed importance. There is also the trend of signing Security Framework Agreements with great powers such as the U.S., China and India.

Sixth, there is the growing consensus of the need to demonstrate commitment to concepts such as cooperative security, confidence building measures, preventive diplomacy, peace-keeping operations as well as contribute to addressing rising threats from non-traditional sources, and in the process, be in a position to enhance security through various modalities including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations. The commitment and seriousness with which regular meeting on the “Use of ASEAN Military Assets and Capacities in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief” are taken reflects this new aspect of military diplomacy in the Southeast Asian region.

An equally important factor that has provided the impetus for military and defence diplomacy is the realisation that such cooperation has greatly contributed to national and regional security. Through regular military-to-military cooperation in the region, both at the bilateral and multilateral levels, the benefits can be seen in terms of conflict prevention through enhancement of mutual trust, increasing transparency, growth of perceptions of common interests and altering of negative mindsets of the past.⁵

Hence, while there is no agreed upon ASEAN defence doctrine or blueprint, and this is something that should not be expected in the near future, yet, surveying the character and depth of defence and military diplomacy in the region, one can argue that there is definitely a clear and conscious logic as to why this is being undertaken, the goals that exist in the minds of the policy makers and the impact this cooperation is expected to have nationally, regionally and internationally. A good recent survey of the directions ASEAN is moving in with regard to defence diplomacy in general and military diplomacy in particular is to examine the 2011 Joint Declaration of the ASEAN

5 See Evan A. Laksmana, “Defence Diplomacy in Southeast Asia: Trends, Prospects and Challenges”, in Bhubhinder Singh and See Seng Tan (Eds.), *From ‘Boots’ to ‘Brogues’*, p. 75.

Defence Ministers on Strengthening Defence Cooperation of ASEAN in the Global Community to Face New Challenges that was signed on 19 May 2011 in Jakarta, Indonesia. Among others, the ASEAN Defence Ministers adopted the following:

1. Adopt the Three-Year Work Program, which will serve as guidance and make into priorities the activities of the ADMM for the years 2011–2013.
2. Adopt the Concept Paper on the Establishment of ASEAN Peacekeeping Centres Network, which seeks to enhance cooperation in peacekeeping among all ASEAN Member States.
3. Adopt the Concept Paper on Establishing ASEAN Defence Industry Collaboration to encourage the development of industrial and technological strength, and to seek opportunities to promote technological sharing.
4. Welcome the result of the 2nd Workshop on the Use of ASEAN Military Assets and Capacities in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, which was held in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 29 March 2011, which amongst others, recommended the establishment of the Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC) to carry out practical cooperation for the conduct of effective operations in the use of military assets and capacities in HADR within the ASEAN military under the ACDFIM.
5. Welcome the initiative of Indonesia and Singapore to co-host the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Table-Top Exercise (ASEAN HADR TTX) to be held in both countries in July 2011 as a sign of positive progress in practical cooperation in HADR.
6. Welcome Thailand's efforts to follow up the convening of the 2nd Workshop on ASEAN Defence Establishment and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) on Non-Traditional Security (Disaster Management) held in June 2010 in Bangkok, Thailand to facilitate communication among different stakeholders in HADR operations and to further streamline HADR coordination between military and CSOs.
7. Strengthen regional defence and security cooperation among

- ASEAN Member States through concrete and practical cooperation to address defence and common security issues.
8. Reaffirm ASEAN Member States' commitment to effectively implement the Declaration on the Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea, and to work towards the adoption of a regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea that would further promote peace and stability in the region.
 9. Reaffirm the importance of regional peace and stability, and freedom of navigation in and over flight above the South China Sea as provided by universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
 10. Uphold the ADMM-Plus as an important platform to foster constructive engagement between ASEAN and its security partners on strategic as well as defence and security issues affecting the region.
 11. Support the establishment of the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Groups (EWGs) as platforms for practical cooperation between ASEAN and the Plus countries to strengthen the region's capacity and effectiveness in addressing common security challenges.
 12. Emphasise the importance of maritime security issues in the region, and in this context, welcome the recommendations of the first ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF) held in Surabaya, Indonesia on 28–29 July 2010, and ADMM's efforts to actively participate in the Forum.
 13. Support the efforts on the finalisation to develop the standard format for an ASEAN Security Outlook (ASO) based on the outcome of the regional seminar in Bali on 7–8 June 2010.⁶

ASEAN DEFENCE COOPERATION AND INDIA

Historically, especially since ASEAN's formation, India has never strongly figured as a critical nodal point for military cooperation

6 See "Joint Declaration of the ASEAN Defence Ministers on Strengthening Defence Cooperation of ASEAN in the Global Community to Face New Challenges", Jakarta, 19 May 2011, <http://www.aseansec.org/26304.htm>.

despite low level of cooperation between some ASEAN members such as Indonesia and Vietnam. Throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, India's defence cooperation with ASEAN members remained primarily at the bilateral level. However, following India's Look East Policy and with lessening of Southeast Asian antipathy towards India from the strategic perspective, India came increasingly to be viewed as a useful and important defence partner. This was driven by various factors, including the end of the Cold War, the perceived weakening of the United States' presence in the region, the unstated but rising concern with China as a future world power house as well as the growing political, economic and military clout of India. The ASEAN member-states' involvement in various Indian-initiated military exercises such as *Exercise Milan*, *Exercise Malabar* and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) was evidence of the growing convergence of India-ASEAN strategic outlooks.⁷ India's participation in the ASEAN Plus Eight process further highlighted the growing strategic embrace of India. In this regard, one of the most important developments in ASEAN's defence strategy as far as India was concerned was the agreement to elevate ASEAN-Indian relationship to a new strategic partnership, with a willingness to cooperate more closely to ensure maritime security. This was agreed upon during the ASEAN-India summit meeting to commemorate twenty years of ties in December 2012. As was argued by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, "as maritime nations, India and ASEAN nations should intensify their engagement for maritime security and safety, for freedom of navigation and for peaceful settlement of maritime disputes in accordance with international law"⁸ These multilateral-oriented security and strategic developments and arrangements signal that India has now surfaced as a major actor in the security architecture of Southeast Asia and at a time of rising tensions between ASEAN member-states and China over the South

7 See Bilveer Singh, *Southeast Asia-India Defence Relations in the Changing Regional Security Landscape* (New Delhi: Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, 2011), pp. 34–38.

8 See Anirban Bhaumik, "India, Asean finalise FTA in services", *Deccan Herald*, 20 December 2012, <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/299777/india-asean-elevate-ti>.

China Sea region, India is likely to become an even more important player in ASEAN's calculus as far as strategic and security issues in the region are concerned in the coming years.

CONCLUSION

By any measure or benchmark, ASEAN's defence cooperation has progressed markedly. The evolution from denying that ASEAN or its members have anything to do with military or defence cooperation, to undertaking bilateral defence and military cooperation within and without ASEAN 'outside the ASEAN framework', to one where ASEAN member-states openly champion defence diplomacy, both bilateral and multilateral, best manifested by the ADMM and ADMM Plus phenomenon, speaks volumes of the long and arduous journey ASEAN has made with regard to defence sector cooperation. Today, defence bilateralism and multilateralism as well as institutionalisation are a matter of fact. However, this does not mean that there is a clearly stated and overt defence strategy in the Southeast Asian regional organisation. Many factors, including manifold security dilemma issues, continue to militate against this development even though it cannot be ruled out altogether in future. Still, analyzing the various modalities of ASEAN defence cooperation, one can conclude that broad consensus exists not just on the necessity and value of defence cooperation but also the broad principles ASEAN defence cooperation is to be based upon. Presently, norm building and creation, many of which are based on or flow out of the TAC, remains the key guide to anything close to what one can refer to as ASEAN's defence strategy. Probably more important is not how a document blueprints or roadmaps a strategy but how defence and military cooperation is undertaken in an effort to enhance national and regional security. Therein lies the key importance and impact of ASEAN defence and military diplomacy.

INDIAN AIR FORCE

COOPERATION WITH ASEAN STATES

Jasjit Singh

The Heads of State/Government of the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) and India met on 20 December 2012 in New Delhi to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations under the theme of “ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace and Shared Prosperity” and declared that this partnership “stands elevated to a strategic partnership”. This would be achieved “across the whole spectrum of political and security, economic, socio-cultural and development cooperation, through further strengthening of relevant institutional mechanisms and broadening of the network between government institutions, parliamentarians, business circles, scientists, think-tanks, media, youth and other stakeholders, for the building of a peaceful, harmonious, caring and sharing community in our regions”. Among a range of political and security cooperation goals (besides that in other areas) the Commemorative Summit noted in specific the goal “to promote defence and military exchanges and cooperation ...” This Vision Statement of ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit laying out a comprehensive roadmap for future cooperation provides an added salience to the theme of this paper.

In this context it may be noted that defence diplomacy is a comparatively recent term in the strategic literature of the world. Looking back in history one finds that the role of the soldier and the diplomat was substantively different and belonged to the category of either-or. When the diplomat failed, the soldiers took over to use force in pursuit of national goals. And when the soldiers failed (with a defeat) or won a victory, or even settled on mutually acceptable cessation of fighting through a cease-fire, the diplomats took over. But for many decades this distinction has been blurring and the role

of diplomacy and the use of force has been blurring so much so that defence forces have come to be part of a nation's diplomacy. Similarly diplomacy now has to take into account the military capability. Above all, wisdom requires that the use of force and military power must be synchronised with each other if optimum effect is to be achieved. This is what Joseph Nye has termed as "Smart Power" since mere soft power may or may not achieve the desired results; and hard power may lead to unintended consequences divorced from the diplomatic arena. Hence among many tools of diplomacy, we now may add military capability, and vice versa.

India and the Indian Air Force (IAF) have a creditable record of providing cooperative training over the years to a large number of developing countries ranging from Afghanistan, Iraq, Egypt, Nigeria, etc. since the 1950s and many of these have continued over the decades. Over the past half century, at least seven vacancies were reserved for foreign cadets in the Air Force Academy for flying training; and many more technical officers were accommodated in the technical training institutions. Ghana's Air Force was started by IAF officers. IAF's cooperation with ASEAN started toward the late 1970s-early 1980s when IAF sent a couple of flying instructors to the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF). Two decades before that IAF had provided substantive training facilities to the Indonesian Air Force in India. These came to an abrupt end with the change of government in Jakarta and by 1965 Indonesia was laying claims to Indian territory in the Andamans group of islands besides helping Pakistan with arms (on behalf of China) during and after the unprovoked war launched by Pakistan against India in 1965. Consequently there was little scope for India's cooperation with ASEAN when it was formed in 1967 particularly owing to the active role played by the Cold War and the United States and Australia, and other members of South-East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in this process.

On the other side, the Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan altered the geopolitical scenario and promoted jihadi terrorism from which the world has yet to recover. In January 1980, three weeks after the Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan, Mrs Indira Gandhi, recently elected as Prime Minister, sent her foreign minister, Mr PV Narasimha Rao to Pakistan with the offer to work with Pakistan to

persuade the Soviet Union to withdraw from Afghanistan. Pakistan turned down the offer; and another attempt was made by sending Sardar Swaran Singh in April again but still with no positive response. The U.S. policies led to massive military and economic aid to Pakistan which bargained hard for becoming the American “front-line” state. The U.S. agreed in return to provide massive military and security-related economic aid to Pakistan beside the agreement that the U.S. would not question Pakistan’s political system (which at that time was under Martial Law) and also would not question Pakistan’s nuclear programme.¹ This opened the way for China to supply nuclear technology, material, weapon designs and nuclear-capable ballistic missiles to Pakistan without any hindrance from the West. This obviously posed new security challenges to India.

This also started the American supported Pakistan managed Afghanistan war of the 1980s which was fought with eight groups of “Mujahideen” (those who undertake jihad) and funded by narcotics trade.² The final settlement came through the Geneva Accords leading to Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. But one of the unintended consequences of the Afghanistan War was the widespread belief among elites in Muslim countries (especially Pakistan) that the Mujahideen had defeated a super power! One outcome of this perception was that Islamist jihad spread from the U.S. World Trade Centre (in 1993) to the Balkans, Kashmir, Indonesia and the Philippines; and we have yet to see its end. Ironically, it was India, which had been the target of terrorism since 1983, to which most ASEAN countries turned to deal with religious driven terrorism.

But by the mid-late 1980s a strong anti-India wave originating from western media sources began to affect the ASEAN countries with the sole exception of Singapore. India came under heavy criticism for what was believed to be India’s high defence expenditure and expansion of its Navy. This became one of the key factors after 1987 for India to strengthen its diplomacy and Track II activities

1 General K. M. Arif, *Working with Zia: Pakistan’s Power Politics 1977–1988* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 340–341.

2 For example, see Jonathan Beaty and S. C. Gwynne, *The Outlaw Bank: A Wild Ride into the Secret Heart of BCCI* (New York: Random House, 1993).

in Southeast and East Asia in general and ASEAN in particular. Secondly, the Asian Tigers had managed their affairs well and their techno-economic growth had become the envy of the world. Japan's economy was on the upswing. China had started its modernisation but was facing overheating of economy and then the 1989 Tiananmen incident led to sanctions against it. This economic factor was the second element of India's greater attention to ASEAN and the consequent change of policy.

It is in this geopolitical and economic situation that India started to think of opening up its economy in the late 1980s and collaboration with ASEAN naturally came up on priority with Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister and PV Narasimha as the External Affairs Minister. It may be recalled that this process began with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in 1988.³ But a near crisis in foreign exchange reserves slowed down the process and the "Look East" policy was formally initiated as soon as Narasimha Rao became the Prime Minister in 1991; but efforts to revive relations and strengthen them had started a couple of years before that. The concept, as I understood then (and now), was to deepen and broaden economic collaboration with ASEAN, though in principle the "Look East" policy covered all countries from Indonesia and Southeast Asia to China and Japan. Incidentally, Narasimha Rao first gave the name to the policy during his visit to South Korea in 1991, and closer relations with China began in that period; but the ASEAN remained the central focus throughout. India had become increasingly critical of the military junta that took over in Myanmar in 1988 and All India Radio used to broadcast criticism three times a day till 1991 when Narasimha government recognised the importance of cooperative relations with Myanmar if flow of narcotics and arms (much of it emanating from the outlying areas of Thailand) had to be dealt with successfully. By 1994, when Singapore had started to invest in Myanmar, India had

3 Narasimha Rao, as the Prime Minister since 1991, followed this with the two key agreements with China in 1993 and 1996 to maintain "peace and tranquillity" on the borders till the disputes could be solved; and also initiated military-to-military contacts with China. Trade relations with China were initiated in 1999 and rapidly grew from its negligible beginning to US\$75 billion in 2011–2012.

completely changed the policy and closer relations were seen as the route to a greater progress toward Indian influence and Myanmar's slow march toward democracy. China factor was over-hyped by the media (like the Signals monitoring station built by China for Myanmar at Coco Island in the Bay of Bengal) since the isolated Myanmar government had no option in the absence of access to any other sources but to rely on Chinese arms. It might be mentioned that the term "string of pearls" was later invented outside Asia when China and India were declared "strategic partners".

In sum total, India's "Look East" policy was multidimensional and covered the Asian countries east of India (from China, Japan to Southeast Asia and in particular ASEAN) in what may be termed as multiple-bilateral relations. Incidentally, this was curiously similar to Jawaharlal Nehru's initiative in March 1947 to organise the Asian Relations Conference while India was yet to achieve its independence in August that year. Since the ASEAN had existed since 1967, the obvious focus of closer relations with ASEAN became a key process, especially after the Cold War had dissipated by 1989 with the Berlin Wall having come down. The main elements of Indian "Look East" policy may be summed as follows:

- Attempt to present the facts and correct the negative perceptions promoted by some Western/Australian sources and media since mid-1980s regarding Indian military posture/"ambitions" as interpreted in Southeast Asian countries and Japan in terms of India's rising defence budget and "expansion" of the Indian Navy.
- To open broad spectrum dialogue with China (especially to stabilise the frontiers to maintain peace and tranquillity) and East Asia for politico-economic reasons after the end of the Cold War which had been a significant negative factor in India's relations with many countries in Southeast Asia.⁴

4 Pankaj Kumar Jha, for example, claims that "of late the defence diplomacy (of India) has a China containment component as well". See Pankaj Kumar Kha, "India's Defence Diplomacy in Southeast Asia", *Journal of Defence Studies* (IDSA), Vol. 5, No. 1, January 2011, p. 47. This view is untenable and rather alarmist when the rapidly rising trade between China and India is taken into account.

- To build closer relations with ASEAN based on historical and cultural ties to be pursued in modern times since it was the only institutional group at that time.
- Take advantage of “Asian Tigers” phenomenal techno-economic growth through the 1980s to facilitate trade and investment with these countries as part of the Indian 1991 reforms process. This also received a push because though Indian foreign policy was more pre-occupied with the Euro-Atlantic countries, India was subject to major sanctions by the United States and its allies.
- To the extent possible, present the factual position on Kashmir and Pakistan especially in the Muslim countries like Malaysia and Indonesia.
- To bring into focus the rapidly expanding religious extremism and terrorism as soon as the Soviet Union pulled out of Afghanistan under the Geneva Accords in February 1989.
- Participation in inter-think tank (Track II) policy-related dialogue and cooperation in general and participation in the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) in particular.⁵
- Impetus given to develop military diplomacy with Southeast Asian countries.

5 These were led in most part by the Delhi based IDSA (Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses), India’s premier think tank on policy-related research and dialogues of which this author had the honour to head since 1987–2001. IDSA being invited to be an Associate Member of CSCAP as soon as it was established in 1992 was a unique recognition of India’s role by the CSCAP especially since the innovation by-passed the geographical limits of “Asia-Pacific”. Incidentally, this was not to balance China which in any case was admitted in CSCAP in 1996. It was only in 2000 that New Delhi established a CSCAP national committee and took over the tasks from IDSA. Incidentally IDSA had also started bilateral dialogues with think tanks of China, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Iran, etc. before 1990.

INDIA-ASEAN DEFENCE COOPERATION

It is in the context of above developments that mutual trust was established to begin defence diplomacy between India and ASEAN progressively expanding to other countries as they were added to ASEAN core organisation. A brief summary of defence cooperation between ASEAN states and India covering the period from 2004 to 2012 (October) is listed in Table 8.1. Due to paucity of space, this is limited to joint military exercises (some as indicated by listing the number in the series which should give a more comprehensive understanding of the total exercises undertaken) and high level visits from either side which served two major goals: build mutual understanding and trust to enable expansion of exercises and defence cooperation, and their contribution to closer friendly relations with countries concerned (the list again is not comprehensive and should be taken as indicative of the process).

Some of the other areas of cooperation not included in Table 8.1 below include the landmark agreement between India and Malaysia in the early 1990s when Malaysia acquired eighteen MiG-29N from Russian Federation. The agreement included training of pilots and ground crew, cooperation in maintenance and product support, etc. This was followed up with similar though more elaborate agreement to provide training and maintenance support to Malaysia for its 16 Sukhoi Su-30MK fourth generation combat aircraft over 300 of the Indian version of which are being built at the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) at Nasik in India.

IAF-RSAF COOPERATION

It is in the above broader context that we turn to more specific cooperation between IAF and RSAF. This cooperation goes back to late-1970s to early-1980s when IAF placed some of our best highly qualified flying instructors at the disposal of RSAF. The nature of this cooperation changed with times and following numerous joint naval exercises, joint air exercises started to be held from early 2004. By that time IAF had also started undertaking joint air exercises with the French Air Force at Gwalior, IAF's premier air base for Mirage-

TABLE 8.1
India's defence cooperation with ASEAN states

	High level visits and professional meetings	Exercises
2004–2005	Indian Defence Minister to Myanmar, March 2005	Singapore Air Force (SAF) Dissimilar Air Combat Training Exercise with IAF “Ankush/SINDEX” at Air Force Station, Gwalior, India, 11–26 October 2004
	State visit to India by Chairman of Myanmar State Peace and Development Council, Senior General Than Shwe, October 2004	Indian Army-Singapore Army artillery and armour exercises, Deolali and Babina Range respectively, March 2005
	Indian Defence Secretary Ajay Prasad to Singapore to attend Shangri-La Dialogue, June 2004	Indian Navy (IN) has institutionalised joint exercises with Singapore and joint patrols with Indonesia.
	Maj. General Ng Yat Chung, Chief of Defence Forces, Singapore, November 2004	11 th IN-Singapore Navy annual exercise was held off Kochi (India) on 7–19 March 2004
	Admiral Dato Sri Mohd. Anwar bin H.J. Mohd Nor, Chief of Royal Malaysian Navy, September 2004	12 th IN-Singapore exercise was held in South China Sea, March 2005
	Rear Admiral Ronnie Tay, Chief of Singapore Navy, October 2004	4 th India-Indonesia (naval) Coordinated Patrol called “INDINDOCORPAT” was conducted on 1–30 September 2004

	Maj. General Lim Kim Choon, Chief of Singapore Air Force, October 2004.	Indian Armed Forces launched a major disaster responses in the region after 26 December 2004 Tsunami. Over 20,000 troops, 40 ships and 32 aircraft were deployed for national and international efforts that included Indonesia where the IN ships were the first to start providing relief. For the international effort (including Sri Lanka and Maldives besides Indonesia), IAF airlifted 500 tons of relief material and 1,750 personnel by air, Indian Navy delivered 735 tonnes and conducted 1062 sorties by sea and the Armed Forces as a whole provided medical relief to nearly 15,000 people
	Air Chief Marshal S Krishnaswamy, Chief of the Air Staff, IAF to Myanmar, November 2004	
2005–2006	Vice Admiral SOE Thane, Commander-in-Chief of Myanmar Navy visited India in April 2005	Joint exercises between India and Singapore stepped up.
	Major General Desmond Kuek, Chief of Army, Singapore visited India in June 2005	IAF-RSAF joint exercise “SINDEX 06/I” at Kalaikunda, 3–20 January 2006
	General J.J. Singh, Chief of the Army Staff Indian Army, visited Myanmar in November 2005	
	Air Chief Marshal S. P. Tyagi, Chief of the Air Staff, IAF visited Philippines in August 2005	
	Admiral Arun Prakash, Chief of Naval Staff, IN, visited Singapore (IMDEX) in May 2005; Thailand in May 2005; Malaysia and Indonesia in July 2005	IAF-RSAF joint exercise “SINDEX 06/II” at Kalaikunda, 3 November – 6 December 2006

2006–2007	Indian Defence Minister visited Singapore, participated in 5 th Shangri-La Dialogue	Indian Defence Minister held separate meetings with Defence Minister of Singapore
	Col. Gen. Le Van Dung, Vice Minister of Defence and Director General of the Political Department of the Ministry of Defence of Vietnam visited India in February 2006	Indian Navy and Singapore Navy conducted joint exercises in February 2006 off the coast of Vishakhapatnam (India)
	Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister of Malaysia, Dato Sri Mohd Najib Bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak visited India in June 2006	Indian Army and Singapore Army conducted 3 rd round of Joint Artillery and Armoured exercises in India in October 2006
	Indian Defence Secretary visited Malaysia in September 2006 for the 5 th Malaya-India Cooperation Meeting	IAF and Singapore Air Force conducted joint air exercises “SINDEX 06/III” on 6–22 December 2006 at Singapore.
	Indian Defence Secretary led a delegation for high level consultations in Myanmar in September 2006	India continued joint exercises with forces of friendly countries including forces of Singapore, Thailand etc.
	Indian Defence Secretary visited Vietnam in October 2006 in connection with the 2 nd India-Vietnam Security Dialogue	
	Maj. General Ye Mint, Chief of Military Security Affairs, Myanmar, visited India in October 2006	
	General Thura Shwe Mann, Chief of General Staff Myanmar visited India in December 2006.	

2007–2008	Vice Admiral SOE Thane, Commander-in-Chief of Myanmar Navy visited India in April 2007	
	Admiral Sureesh Mehta, CNS, IN visited Myanmar in May 2007	
	Shri V.K. Misra Secretary Defence (Finance) led a delegation to Myanmar in April 2007	
	Indian Defence Minister visited Singapore on 1–3 June 2007 and addressed the plenary session of the Shangri-La Dialogue on the topic of “China and India: Building International Stability”. He also had separate meetings with Defence Ministers of Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines and Singapore besides those from other regions.	
	A delegation led by Indian DG Acquisitions at Ministry of Defence visited Singapore for the 1 st meeting of the Defence Procurement and Systems Development Group on 6–8 June 2007.	
	Mr Chiang Chie Foo, Permanent Secretary (Defence) Ministry of Defence, Singapore led an 8-member delegation for the 4 th India-Singapore Defence Policy Dialogue on 9–10 October 2007 at New Delhi. During the meeting joint training exercises between the Air Forces of the two countries were signed.	IAF and RSAF carried out joint exercise “SINDEX 07” on 23 November – 13 December 2007 at Kalaikunda (India)

Mr Teo Chee Hean,
Minister of Defence,
Singapore led a delegation
to India on 14–18 October
2007.

H.E. Dato Hazi Zainal
Abidin Bin Zin, Deputy
Defence Minister Malaysia
visited India on 21 August
2007 and the protocol
between the two countries
for conduct of training of
Royal Malaysian Air Force
personnel by IAF in India
and in Malaysia was signed
on 5 December 2007.

Mr Abu Bakar Bin Haji
Abduallah, Secretary
General, Ministry of
Defence, Malaysia visited
India to attend the 6th
Malaysia-India Defence
Cooperation meeting
(MIDCOM) held on 14
December 2007 in New
Delhi.

Indian Defence Minister
visited Vietnam on 17–18
December 2007.

3rd Indo-Vietnam Security
Dialogue was held on
28–29 November 2007
at New Delhi. General
Nguven Huy Hieu, Deputy
Minister of Defence
of Vietnam led the
delegation.

2008–2009	The Rajya Raksha Mantri, Ministry of Defence, Government of India visited Singapore and attended the 7 th Shangri-la Dialogue held in May – June 2008	Singapore and India, taking bilateral cooperation to a further level, on 12 August 2008 signed a Bilateral Agreement for Joint Army Training Agreement in India
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	3 rd Meeting of India-Singapore Defence Working Group was held on 15 July 2008 in New Delhi.	
	5 th India Singapore Defence Policy Dialogue attended by Defence Secretary, MOD, Government of India who led a delegation to Singapore on 7–8 October 2008.	
	Indian Defence Minister led a high level delegation to Malaysia on 6–8 January 2008. A Joint Statement was issued after the delegation meeting which identifies mechanisms for the implementation of cooperation.	IAF and RSAF carried out joint military training “JMT 08” on 24 November – 17 December 2008 at Kalaikunda.
	4 th India Vietnam Security Dialogue was held in Hanoi on 9–10 October 2008.	
2009–2010	4 th Meeting of the India-Singapore Defence Working Group was held in Singapore on 6–8 April 2009.	India and Singapore carried out armoured and artillery exercises named “Ex- Bold Kurukshetra” on 11 February – 29 March 2009.
	Indian Defence Secretary led a high level delegation to attend the 8 th Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on 29–31 May 2009.	
	6 th Indian Navy-Singapore Navy Staff Talks were held in New Delhi on 25–26 August 2009.	
	4 th round of Air Staff Talks was held on 12–13 November 2009.	

	6 th India-Singapore Defence Policy Dialogue was held on 24 November 2009 in India.	
	7 th Malaysia-India Defence Cooperation Committee (MIDCOM) was held in Malaysia on 14–16 January 2009.	
	General Tan Sri Dato Sri Azizan bin Ariffin, Chief of Royal Malaysian Air Force visited India on 27–29 July 2009.	
	4 th Indian Navy-Royal Malaysian Navy Staff Talks were held at Kuala Lumpur on 4–7 August 2009.	IAF and RSAF carried out joint military training “JMT 09” on 4–24 November 2009 at Kalaikunda (India).
	2 nd Air Force to Air Force Staff Talks were held on 13–15 October 2009.	
	General Phung Quang Thanh, Minister of National Defence of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam visited India on 4–8 November 2009.	A Memorandum of Understanding on defence cooperation was signed by the two Ministers of Defence of Vietnam and India on 5 November 2009.
	General Deepak Kapoor, Chief of Army Staff of India visited Indonesia on 25–28 February 2009.	Indian Navy and Indonesian Navy held a bilateral exercise namely, India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (Ind-Indo CORPAT) on 18 October – 5 November 2009.
	Vice Admiral Nyan Tun, C-in-C Myanmar Navy visited India on 20–25 February 2010.	
2010–2011	2 nd India-Indonesia Joint Defence Cooperation Committee meeting was held in New Delhi on 17–18 June 2010.	India and Indonesia have been carrying out regular naval exercises since the 1990s. 16 th Ind-Indo CORPAT was carried out in November 2010.

<p>8th Malaysia-India Defence Cooperation Meeting (MIDCOM) was held in New Delhi on 17 March 2010 co-chaired by the Defence Secretaries of the two countries.</p>	
<p>3rd IAF-Royal Malaysian Air Force Staff Talks were held on 3–5 August 2010 in New Delhi.</p>	
<p>The year saw many high level interactions between India and Singapore. 5th Army to Army Staff Talks were held at Singapore on 13–15 January 2010.</p>	
<p>Professor Koo Tsai Kee, Minister of State for Defence, Singapore visited India and witnessed joint exercise “Bold Kurukshetra” (Armoured Exercise) at Babina on 26–27 March 2010.</p>	<p>Joint India-Singapore exercise “Bold Kurukshetra” (Armoured Exercise) at Babina, 26–27 March 2010.</p>
<p>2nd India-Singapore Defence Procurement and System Development Working Group (DPSDWG) meeting was held in India on 26 April 2010.</p>	
<p>7th Navy to Navy Staff Talks were held in Singapore on 17–18 August 2010.</p>	
<p>5th India-Singapore Defence Working Group meeting was held in New Delhi on 24 August 2010.</p>	

	6 th meeting of Defence Technology Steering Committee was held in Singapore on 2 September 2010.	
	Mr Teo Chee Hean, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Singapore visited India on 1–5 October 2010.	Indian Air Force and Republic of Singapore Air Force held joint training exercises on 2–17 December 2010 at Kalaikunda, West Bengal (India).
	3 rd Navy to Navy Staff Talks between India and Thailand were held in Bangkok on 15–17 January 2010.	MAITREE–10, a joint exercise in Counter Insurgency/Counter Terrorism was conducted in India on 16–29 September 2010.
	5 th India-Vietnam Security Dialogue was held in New Delhi on 24 June 2010 at the level of Defence Secretaries.	
	General V. K. Singh, Chief of Army Staff visited Vietnam on 11–13 July 2010.	IAF and RSAF carried out joint military training “JMT 10” on 10 December 2010 at Kalaikunda (India).
	Indian Defence Minister visited Vietnam to attend the inaugural ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting-Plus (ADMM-PLUS) on 11–13 October 2010.	
2011–2012	The ongoing defence cooperation activities between India and Myanmar include regular exchange of visits, port calls by Indian Navy ships and training exchanges. The Chief of Naval Staff visited Myanmar on 24–26 August 2011. The Chief of Army Staff visited Myanmar on 6–9 January 2012.	

The Chief of Naval Staff of Indian Navy visited Indonesia in January 2011.	The Indian Navy and Indonesian Navy conducted Coordinated Patrols (CORPATs) on 28 September – 13 October 2011.
9 th Malaysia-India Defence Cooperation Committee meeting co-chaired by the two Defence Secretaries was held in Malaysia on 16–17 January 2012.	
Air Chief Marshal N. A. K. Browne, the Chief of the Air Staff, IAF paid a visit to Malaysia on 31 January –3 February 2012.	
4 th Indian Air Force-Royal Malaysian Air Force Staff Talks were held in October 2011.	IAF and RSAF carried out joint military training “JMT 11” on 14 October – 9 December 2011 at Kalaikunda (India).
2 nd Staff Talks between Indian Army and the Royal Malaysian Army was held in India in October 2012.	
6 th round of Army Staff Talks was held in India in February 2011.	
5 th round of Air Force Staff Talks was held in Singapore on 9–11 March 2011.	
7 th meeting of the Defence Technology Steering Committee for R&D cooperation was held in India on 12 October 2011.	
6 th meeting of the India-Singapore Defence Working Group was held in New Delhi on February 2012.	The armies of the two countries conducted the Artillery Exercise at Deolali (Ex Agni Warrior) on 4–21 January 2012; and the Armoured Exercise at Babina (Ex Bold Kurukshetra) on 1–31 March 2011.

	The Joint Exercise (SIMBEX) between the Indian Navy and Republic of Singapore Navy was conducted on 18–25 March 2011.
	The Joint Training between the Indian Air Force and the Republic of Singapore Air Force was held at Kalaikunda on 14 October – 9 December 2011.
A Defence Dialogue at the level of Ministry of Defence of India and Thailand was established during the year. The inaugural meeting of this Dialogue was held on 23 December 2011.	An MOU on Defence Cooperation with Thailand was signed on 25 January 2011 during the visit of the Prime Minister of Thailand.
2 nd Air Force Staff Talks were held in Thailand on 14–16 February 2011.	Joint Exercise “Maitree” between Indian Army and Royal Thai Army was held in Thailand in September 2011.
4 th Navy Staff Talks were held in July 2011.	The 13 th round of Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT) between the Indian Navy and Royal Thai Navy was held in November 2011.
Vice Admiral Nguyen Van Hein, Vice Minister of National Defence and Commander-in-Chief, Vietnam People’s Navy visited India in June 2011.	
6 th India-Vietnam Security Dialogue was held in Hanoi on 14 September 2011.	

Source: Ministry of Defence, Government of India, *Annual Reports* for relevant years.

2000 combat aircraft. These were followed by a series of air exercises with the United States Air Force (USAF) and those of the U.S. allies normally being held at Alaska. The sheer distance involved in transit to Alaska from India necessitated a high level of efficiency not only in flying but also in aircraft serviceability and sustainability, of combat as well as the transport aircraft providing airlift to the technical and ground crew. During the first exercise itself, the very high standard of IAF flying and technical acumen was demonstrated by the fact that it was the only air force to have flown back all its aircraft during and at the end of the exercise from Alaska back to India!

Although Singapore and India had been carrying out a larger number of naval exercises starting much earlier than the air exercises, it is obvious that Singapore and New Delhi both came to a common assessment after the initial SINDEX exercises that the bilateral exercises were mutually beneficial. In order to enhance the scope and extent of joint training it was obvious that the two air forces had to go beyond the exercises. Hence the two countries signed an agreement for establishing facilities for full spectrum of joint training which would also include weapons firing. Kalaikunda in this respect was an ideal air base where the RSAF could station requisite ground support equipment and manpower. Within a few kilometres of Kalaikunda is a World War II airfield which was converted in the 1960s into an air-to-ground firing range. Similarly the coast line of the Bay of Bengal is only 10–15 minute flying time from the base. The coast is extremely shallow and hence almost no boat or fishermen are anywhere within tens of kilometres covering a vast area over the sea especially when the tide is low.

The East India Company had established an artillery proof range at a place called Balasore on the coast. The firing range was established in the 1960s also for air-to-air firing including missile firing. This is also the reason why the bilateral air exercises earlier named SINDEX series were changed to Joint Military Training (JMT) series since 2008. The weather is almost perfect for most of the period between October to December for air training. The general area around the air base is also very suitable for low flying if that is required. Incidentally, Kalaikunda and the nearby airfield now converted into an air to ground firing range were originally built by the U.S. Army Air Forces' as Bomber bases. In

fact the first land-based bombing of Japan was carried out from these and similar other airfields on 12 June 1944 (with one stop for refuelling in China). But in the mid 1950s Kalaikunda was completely rebuilt and the runway extended.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF INDIA-ASEAN/SINGAPORE DEFENCE COOPERATION?

Before we move further to discuss strengthening India-Singapore defence cooperation, serious attention would have to be paid to what S. D. Muni and See Chak Mun in a very perceptive paper have termed as the “performance deficit”⁶ which does carry with it a negative impact in spite of India having made considerable progress in its integration with the ASEAN region. Starting with China, Japan, South Korea, India has also made significant progress in its bilateral relations with countries outside the ASEAN core, especially the “new” ASEAN countries, i.e., Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, normally referred to as CLMV. In addition it has been the moving force in setting up sub-regional groupings like Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) launched with the assistance of Thailand in 1997, and the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation Initiative (MGCI) launched in 2000. These were repeatedly welcomed and India’s role was even praised on many occasions since they also complement ASEAN roles and goals.

But the “performance deficit” in spite of considerable progress is an issue that needs careful attention if its negative impact is to be reduced. India’s own record of impressive economic growth and investments might indicate an alternate view. But it is necessary to also note there has been slow implementation. In India we are mostly inured to this as normal! In his address to the 8th India-ASEAN summit in Vietnam, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh acknowledged this problem when he said that “our experience of implementation shows that we need to work very hard at all levels if we have to accelerate the pace of engagement as outlined in the Plan of Action”. One of the serious reasons for this deficit is that the Ministry of External

6 S. D. Muni and See Chak Mun, “ASEAN-India Relations: Future Directions,” *ISAS Special Reports*, 25 May 2012, p. 6.

Affairs is still functioning with its old under-strength manpower to deal with a vastly expanded need for diplomacy on increasing fronts. The internal structure of foreign-defence-military policy continues to be fragmented and hence has had a serious negative impact on defence diplomacy.⁷ But some of the causes for the performance deficit also lie with ASEAN members, mostly due to individual countries' own interests coming in the way of an integrated approach. The Free Trade Area is but one example. Many of the bilateral agreements in defence sector have not been implemented as expected. India and Singapore need to take cognisance of the reasons so that they do not come in the way of Singapore-India cooperation.

In spite of the deficits pointed out there is a need to increase the Indian military-to-military contacts with each and all the ASEAN countries. India-Singapore framework and goals provide the model, if one is needed, though each country would no doubt seek to do it in its own way to serve its own interests. Even in Singapore-India cooperation, there is a need to give higher priority to defence research and development (R&D) and joint ventures in defence, especially in the aerospace sector. India is investing large amounts to modernise its armed forces and estimates vary from USD 120–130 billion during the next ten years. Airbus and Boeing estimate nearly 1,200 new airliners being acquired by India in the next decade. In addition there would be increasing requirement of infrastructure needs like surveillance radars, airfield lighting, navigation and landing aids. It is inevitable that with this type of expected growth (assessed almost at the same level by Airbus and Boeing) expansion of civil aviation in India will inevitably increase the air links with neighbouring countries on either side of India.

One of the areas of serious concern of relative inattention but of immense opportunities and potential is that of Maintenance Repair and Overhaul (MRO) of aerospace systems, both military as well as civilian. India has quite a large professional scientific pool and infrastructure. But the problem that comes in the way is the high taxation which when the Central and States taxes are counted may be more

7 See a detailed, objective and commendable study by Colonel K. A. Muthanna, *Enabling Military-to-Military Cooperation as a Foreign Policy Tool: Options for India* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2006).

than 32 percent making the enterprise economically unviable. Hence much of the MRO capabilities are shifting to United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Sri Lanka. Singapore is well placed to establish joint ventures in Singapore or India in the growing sector where the civil airline industry is expecting India to acquire more than 1,200 airliners in the next ten years. They will all need MRO sooner rather than later and MRO in India-ASEAN zone is already becoming a critical necessity. Even in the case of military aviation, HAL capacity would remain inadequate as indeed happened with the MiG-29. Singapore or/and India should consider setting up a Defence Technology Development Group to identify areas of future cooperation and seek to exploit the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) wherever possible. There is an enormous potential waiting to be utilised for the establishment of defence industry cooperation between the private sector in each country as well as joint ventures in the two countries.

India and Singapore have moved on from air-to-air exercises between the two air forces to joint training. The next logical step would be to create the capability in India to undertake air exercises like the U.S. Red Flag Exercise to training IAF as well as friendly air forces like the RSAF. India is large enough to accommodate the infrastructure required for exercises like the Red Flag. The process of creating the infrastructure for such exercises—possibly named “Blue Flag” may take time and resources. But these would be well spent in training IAF and ASEAN air forces (some of which are already linked to India for maintenance and flying training. In addition these facilities could be made available to friendly air forces beyond the region to countries like the UAE.

In conclusion it may be stated that ties of defence diplomacy in general and air forces in particular present many opportunities to India and ASEAN (and in particular, Singapore) to further their cooperation in multifarious defence areas. What we need is to build further on existing areas of cooperation and look for additional potential and opportunities for the future especially as the geostrategic environment in Asia undergoes further changes.

THE INDO-INDONESIAN DEFENCE RELATIONSHIP

TOWARDS A CONVERGENT MANDALA

Ristian Atriandi Supriyanto

Despite their shared historical and cultural affinities, the bilateral relationship between India and Indonesia is perhaps the least explored, researched, and developed among all the bilateral relations both countries have forged. This is particularly so in the field of defence, despite both countries being Indian Ocean littoral neighbours with only 80 nautical miles between Indonesia's westernmost province of Aceh and India's southernmost Indira Point in the Great Nicobar Island. Both countries have large Muslim populations and share common democratic values. These factors should be both ingredients and incentives to warrant closer defence cooperation. Why then do they seem embroiled in mutual neglect?¹

In answering the question, the article will apply the concept of mental map to explain the bilateral relationship seen from a defence lens. It argues that for a bilateral defence relationship to mature and for cooperation to be strengthened, the relationship must be buttressed or "ballasted" by parallel improvement of cooperation in other fields of the relationship to propel economic and strategic interdependence, shared awareness and interests for power projection in Indian Ocean, as well as common democratic attributes. Understanding the bilateral defence relationship is crucial for two reasons. First, this work could be among the first attempts to gauge Indonesia's worldview using the concept of mental map. Whereas most literature on Indonesia's strategic environment tends to focus

1 C. Raja Mohan, "India and Indonesia: A New Strategic Partnership?", *RSIS Commentary* No. 10, 1 February 2011, p. 1, <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/Perspective/RSIS0102011.pdf> (accessed 10 November 2012).

more on domestic security, this work will devote more attention to Indonesia's external surroundings.² Second, the paper will chart out Indonesia's interests in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), particularly in relation to India as a major littoral power.

For Indonesia, the Indian sub-continent can arguably be described as a black hole in its mental map. Alan Hendrikson defines mental map as "an ordered but continually adapting structure of the mind ... by reference to which a person acquires, codes, stores, recalls, reorganises, and applies, in thought or action, information about his or her large-scale geographical environment, in part of in its entirety"³ To understand mental map, one must comprehend its two attributes: geographical mind and geographical field. The former refers to the language (visual and verbal) used in public speeches, diplomatic notes, treaty texts, cartographic annexes, and the like, to determine the key geographical concepts and related images that [state] officials more or less consciously entertain in making, conducting, and justifying foreign policy. The latter refers to the pattern of activities pertaining to the geographical landscape. Therefore, one can make a two-pronged approach to assess a mental map. The first is to study what statesmen see and say, as recorded in their documented visual and verbal language. The second is to focus on what they actually do.⁴

A sub-derivative of mental map is the concept of non-physical distance which shapes and influences inter-state relationships. Hendrikson argues there are three kinds of distances—gravitational,

2 See, for example, Udai Bhanu Singh, "Indonesia's security perspectives", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 32, No. 12 (2000), pp. 2111–2122; Leonard C. Sebastian, "Domestic security priorities, 'balance of interests' and Indonesia's management of regional order", in Joseph Liow and Ralf Emmers (Eds.), *Order and Security in Southeast Asia: Essays in memory of Michael Leifer* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2006), pp. 175–195; and Damien Kingsbury, *Power Politics and the Indonesian Military* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), pp. 6–35.

3 Alan Hendrikson, "The Geographical 'Mental Maps' of American Foreign Policy Makers", *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1980, p. 498.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 512.

topological, and attributional.⁵ Gravitational distance sees a state's political power like a gravity which suffuses the whole geographical space, conceived of as a kind of plain, across which power oozes and spreads. The larger political bodies, for example, mainly those classed as great powers, exert a relatively strong influence and thus may seem "closer" than do other, smaller powers that are just as far away. Topological distance refers to the configuration of political spaces (mainly, countries) that are between two places, whatever the actual, physical, and metrisable distances that may lie between these. In essence, the more countries there are between A and B, in the jigsaw puzzle of the political map, the greater the distance between them. Attributional distance pertains to the non-geographical affinities or attributes that countries do, or do not, share. For example, democratic political attributes could draw countries together, to some extent closing the perceived distance between and among them. When all these three distances coincide, Hendrikson believes, the resulting pattern of international relationships, whatever the actual distances between nations, is thereby strengthened.

In the case of Indonesian defence relationship with India, the article will examine the official publication of foreign and defence policies, speeches, and related primary sources to know the prevailing geographical mind, while also looking at secondary sources, such as academic journal articles, as well as media reports, to complement them. To gauge the geographical field, this article will look at the extent of applied defence cooperation between the two countries' defence establishments. The article will also examine how Indonesia views its strategic environment and assess India's place within this environment to measure the gravitational and topological distances between them, to see whether such distances constrain efforts toward a closer defence relationship, as well as to explore alternatives to bring the two countries' defence relationship closer by making the three distances coincide. It will do so in the following manner. *First*, it will outline Indonesia's strategic worldview and its derivative security and defence strategy. *Second*, it will examine how Indonesia places

5 Alan Hendrikson, "Distance and Foreign Policy: A Political Geography Approach", *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 439–460.

India in its mental map. *Third* and *fourth*, it will describe the key developments in the bilateral defence relationship under the Sukarno and Suharto administrations, as well as during the Post-*Reformasi* period, respectively. *Finally*, it will conclude by proposing alternatives to narrow these distances to achieve a closer relationship.

INDONESIA'S SECURITY AND DEFENCE STRATEGY

Being the world's largest archipelagic nation, the sea has a special place in Indonesia's strategic worldview. The archipelago lies at a maritime "cross-road location" (*posisi silang*) between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and serving as a bridge between the Eurasian landmass and Australian continent.⁶ It is transited by four of the world's strategic maritime choke-points, namely the Malacca, Sunda, Lombok, and Makassar Straits, thus making it a pivotal state for global shipping. Complemented by the rich natural resources it is endowed with, particularly oil, gas, and coal, Indonesia is a swing state for major powers to court, not least for India. However, despite its strategic location between the two oceans, Indonesia's Indian Ocean activism has been dismal in modern history, except for its role in connecting the country's large Muslim population with Mecca and the Middle East.

This stood in contrast to the archipelago's ancient history which is arguably closely related to India. Archaeological and historical evidence shows that maritime Southeast Asia has been closely interconnected with the Indian sub-continent, although the Southeast Asian legacy is equally influenced by local flavour. In Indonesia, Indian arts and cultural legacy remains all-too-obviously evident in ancient architecture, literatures, dances and music, cuisines, language vocabularies, etc. In the military realm too, Indian influence is somewhat traceable. For example, the Javanese method of warfare has some resemblances to *Chakra Byuha*, a battle formation in the Indian classical text of *Mahabharata*. Ancient Indonesia also adopted India's 'mandala' concept, which is based upon the centre-periphery

6 Evan Laksmana, "The enduring strategic trinity: explaining Indonesia's geopolitical architecture", *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, Vol. 1, No.1 (2011), pp. 96-98.

relationship as a method of socio-political governance.⁷ Indonesia's two great ancient kingdoms of *Srivijaya* and *Majapahit* exerted a mandala control over its tributaries, where the court's control was largely diffused, nuanced, and gradually diminished along the peripheries.⁸

Although modern Indonesia (established in 1945) was founded upon the Westphalian concept of nation-state, it has by no means relinquished the mandala philosophy altogether. The modern-day "mandala" philosophy is by and large epitomised in Indonesian concepts of *Wawasan Nusantara* and *Ketahanan Nasional*. The *Wawasan Nusantara* basically envisions the Indonesian archipelago, the seas and the land, should remain as a unified whole (*negara kesatuan*). It was designed to cast a unified image of an archipelago made up of geographically-dispersed and socio-culturally diverse string of islands. Indonesia remains perennially susceptible to centrifugal forces that could tear the country apart. It is therefore overly sensitive toward any parties, within and without, who could provoke, incite, assist, or endorse secessionist elements within Indonesia.

While Jakarta sees *Wawasan Nusantara* as a 'geopolitical concept' of the nation, *Ketahanan Nasional* is its geostrategy.⁹ *Ketahanan Nasional* seeks to increase national resilience against and in the face of all possible crisis or malaise. In the academic parlance of national security, it is equivalent to the concept of comprehensive security, although it falls short to be considered human security. Thus, military security is one type of national security—other types include food security, financial security, political security, environmental security, etc. The logic is once all non-military security is achieved, the resultant effect would be national resilience, or a national security that is premised upon stability guaranteed by the prosperity and welfare of the Indonesian people. During the Suharto administration

7 Udai Bhanu Singh, "Indonesia's security perspectives", p. 2121; Leonard C. Sebastian, "Domestic security priorities, 'balance of interests' and Indonesia's management of regional order", pp. 180–181.

8 Paul Michel Munoz, *Early Kingdoms of the Indonesian Archipelago and the Malay Peninsula* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2006).

9 Indonesia's Department of Defence, *Doktrin Pertahanan Negara* [State Defence Doctrine] (Jakarta: Departemen Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2007), pp. 13–14.

(1968–1997), Indonesia attempted to ‘export’ this concept to the outside world, particularly through the philosophical foundation of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).¹⁰ In order for Indonesia to pursue economic development, regional peace and stability is a prerequisite. Regional peace and stability can only be secured if regional resilience can be maintained. The establishment of ASEAN in August 1967 was the primary way to achieve that resilience, amid the geopolitical competition in Southeast Asia between the Capitalist Bloc, led by the U.S. and the Communist Camp, led by the Soviet Union to maintain and expand their spheres of influence. Such logic, however, generates an inward-looking mindset that tends to neglect a robust external oriented defence.

These two concepts also heavily influence Indonesia’s defence strategy. The most discernible strategic psyche that underpins national defence strategy is suspicion toward extra-regional powers and inward-looking orientation. The former psyche owes much to Indonesia’s War of Independence against colonial powers, while the latter stemmed largely from Indonesia’s perennial separatism and communal conflicts.

Indonesia shares a somewhat similar proto-nationalist independence movement with India. The Java War of 1825–1830 waged by Javanese nobles against Dutch colonial rule draws comparable similarities with India’s Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 against the British, in which both colonial powers skilfully engineered a buffer of indigenous elite collaborators.¹¹ However, Indonesia’s road toward independence was comparatively more violent than India’s approach. The Indonesian War of Independence of 1945–1949 was waged using a guerrilla strategy which cast a ‘continental’ mentality in the armed forces so as to make the Army as the Senior Service. The strategy was based upon the strength of manpower to overwhelm a superior enemy through sporadic but continuous guerrilla attacks to wear down the latter and compel it to submission or withdrawal.

10 Leonard Sebastian, “Domestic security priorities, ‘balance of interests’ and Indonesia’s management of regional order”.

11 Sourabh Gupta, “India and Indonesia: Renewing Asia’s Collective Destiny”, *Asia Pacific Bulletin*, No. 99, 11 March 2011, <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/sites/default/files/private/apb099.pdf> (accessed 10 November 2012).

Another consequential element of guerrilla strategy is a comprehensive approach toward defence in the form of “People’s Total Defence and Security” (*Pertahanan dan Keamanan Rakyat Semesta*, Hankamrata). Although similar in many ways to the notion of “Total Defence,” it is characteristically different in application. Strategically, Hankamrata envisages a “defence-in-depth” strategy to make Southeast Asia as a buffer zone for Indonesia. Indonesia’s national security relies on, and intertwines with, the security of Southeast Asia in general. The strategic option that Indonesia chose was thus not alliances, but through its unique concept of “regional resilience”—an outgrowth and exported version of “national resilience” doctrine encapsulated within *Wawasan Nusantara*. According to Indonesia’s 1995 Defence White Paper:

In a geostrategic context, Indonesia’s basic defense and security strategy is one providing for layered security. The deepest layer is domestic security, followed by sub-regional (ASEAN) security, regional (South East Asia) security and security of neighbouring regions, in that order. This strategy is also called defense-in-depth.¹²

Operationally, Hankamrata heavily relies on manpower strategy to wage guerrilla warfare. It is premised upon the assumption that any military aggression against Indonesia must be waged by a militarily superior adversary for whom the former could not afford to wage a conventional war and thus, must resort to guerrilla warfare employed flexibly through the concept of a layered defence. This concept introduced three phases of defensive operations: opposing an enemy attack; containment, challenge, and consolidation; and counteroffensive. Layered defence is applied through limited conventional defence against an incoming aggressor, especially by

12 Indonesia’s Department of Defence and Security, *The Policy of The State Defence and Security of the Republic of Indonesia* (Jakarta: Departemen Pertahanan dan Keamanan, 1995), pp. 16–17, cited in Leonard Sebastian, “Domestic security priorities, ‘balance of interests’ and Indonesia’s management of regional order”, p. 181.

the Navy and the Air Force.¹³ The genuine resistance would primarily be waged by the Army through protracted guerrilla warfare to make the war too costly and exhaustive for the aggressor. A direct consequence of this has been for the Army to retain its strategic and institutional dominance over the Naval and Air Forces, and to remain as the “Senior Service” in the Armed Forces.

This approach drew criticisms from within and outside defence circles which eventually brought about a revisionist doctrine of “Total Defence”. The criticisms were levelled against several flawed assumptions. First, while conventional defence is designed primarily to deter and defeat aggression/invasion, it is by no means limited to such a scenario. Inter-state conflict short of general war, such as high-intensity border conflicts, blockade and counter-blockade, sea lanes interdiction and counter-interdiction, deep surgical/precision strikes, etc., also merit a build-up of conventional defence, including and especially the navy and air force. Second, the Hankamrata grossly overlooked the importance of the maritime domain as the primary platform to project power and, in effect, an invasion path for any aggressor. This is especially so as Indonesia’s archipelagic waters also host four of the world’s strategic maritime choke-points vital for global shipping. Third, the manpower-heavy approach tended to neglect the new development in military technology which renders this approach more ineffective and lost touch with prevailing regional strategic trends (although it must also be noted that quantity is quality in itself and technological determinism is always an inherent risk). Fourth, the approach underestimated the intertwining nature of Indonesian security interests to the region and beyond. With the Indonesian economy on the rise, now becoming the world’s sixteenth largest, the stakes are higher for ignoring events happening outside and around Indonesia, particularly in energy security. Having been a net oil importer since 2004, Indonesia is now more reliant on oil imports from the Middle-East. Energy security is intertwined with sea lanes security, as most of the oil is transported seaborne. This

13 Andi Widjajanto, “Indonesia’s military doctrinal stagnation”, *Strategic Review*, 20 March 2012, <http://www.sr-indonesia.com/2011-08-09-22-09-10/commentaries/157-indonesias-military-doctrinal-stagnation> (accessed 10 November 2012).

means Indonesia should consider a cooperative maritime strategy to secure energy imports route with the Indian Ocean littoral states, especially with India.

Officially introduced in 2007, the “Total Defence” doctrine and strategy is said to offset the Hankamrata’s deficiencies. It carries several assumptions and convictions. First, it acknowledges the possibility of inter-state conflict short of an all-out war, particularly border disputes. At present, Indonesia views cautiously the development of two possible “flash-points” along its northern perimeter, namely the Indonesia-Malaysia disputed maritime border in the Sulawesi Sea, also known as the Ambalat Block, and its possession of the natural gas-rich Natuna Sea lying adjacent to, and overlapping with, the Chinese “nine-dashed-line” claim in the South China Sea.¹⁴ Second, it endorses a layered defence approach through maritime delineation, namely based on the partitional demarcation of exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and territorial seas. While previously the main resistance against an aggressor would have been waged inside the archipelago’s insular features, current strategy espouses main engagement on the archipelagic waters and territorial seas. This makes the role of naval and air forces more critical than before. Third, the latest military doctrine released in June 2010 endorsed the possibility of pre-emptive strikes through strategic offensive operations. In essence, it permits the Indonesian Armed Forces (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, TNI) to conduct warfighting operations beyond Indonesia’s national jurisdiction or EEZ. Known as the “Archipelagic Defence Strategy” (*Strategi Pertahanan Nusantara*), the strategy envisaged more forward-deployed TNI assets buttressed by highly-mobile and medium-to-long range capabilities.¹⁵ This means that mere possession of more warships and combat aircraft is not enough without the supporting capabilities to sustain them operationally longer, such as through acquisitions of tanker/oiler for warship replenishment-at-sea and

14 Indonesia’s Department of Defence, *Strategi Pertahanan Negara* [State Defence Strategy] (Jakarta: Departemen Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2007), pp. 76–79.

15 Indonesia’s National Defence Forces (TNI) Headquarters, *Doktrin TNI Tri Dharma Eka Karma* [TNI Military Doctrine] (Jakarta: Markas Besar Tentara Nasional Indonesia, 15 June 2010), pp. 52–54.

mid-air refuelling aircraft. Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, Indonesia's strategic mind-set starts to be outward-looking. Being outward-looking does not mean that Indonesia foresees conventional state-based threat is more likely, but it considers its overseas interests as, if not more, important than domestic security interests, and attempts to pursue such interests in a much bolder and more blunt manner than ever before.

This shift however is not totally bereft of flaws. There are at least three main inherent flaws in the new strategy. First, although the strategy is based on maritime delineation, it is by no means a maritime strategy. It has neither envisaged sea lines of communication (SLOC) protection as Indonesia's main security priority nor does it make maritime strategy an integrative "umbrella" for all the armed services. Second, the retention of army territorial commands in district level makes the strategy an old wine in new bottles. For some, the territorial commands resemble the old "guerrilla" mindset that is irrelevant, redundant, and outdated to hedge against conventional challenges that would most likely emerge at and from the sea.¹⁶ Third, the fact that the strategy preoccupies heavily on border delimitation (land and maritime) makes it to adopt a "*maginot*" mentality, which fixates on static linear defence (i.e. to make national borders the first, instead of the last, line of defence). But Indonesia would require more than just ambitions to think strategically beyond its borders. It needs to reframe its mental map in order to have a better view of its strategic environment.

INDIA IN INDONESIA'S MENTAL MAP

India and the Indian Ocean have been a black hole in Indonesia's mental map. Reflecting Indonesia's geographical mind, contemporary official publications say very little about Indonesia's interests in the Indian Ocean, let alone about the strategic significance of India as a major littoral power. The 13-page official document on Indonesia's strategic environment mentions South Asia and India

16 More on territorial commands, see, Damien Kingsbury, *Power Politics and the Indonesian Military*, pp. 68–85.

in only one paragraph.¹⁷ It acknowledges India's increasing political and military weight in South Asia, and refers to the perennial on-and-off crisis with Pakistan involving nuclear weapons. But the document stops short of elaborating on how such dynamics might implicate Indonesia and Southeast Asia, notwithstanding the two regions' proximate distance. On the other hand, Jakarta welcomes the re-invigoration of bilateral defence relationship as stipulated in its 182-page long 2008 Defence White Paper.¹⁸ With a bilateral defence cooperation agreement on 11 January 2001 and ratified in December 2007, Jakarta sought to engage New Delhi in defence dialogues, coordinated patrols in the Andaman Sea, defence personnel exchanges, and defence industry. Compared to defence cooperation with other countries, however, the agreement was somewhat slow in implementation—it even took seven years to ratify. Cooperation with China, for example, only required five years for Jakarta to start a joint naval missile development, as well as maritime surveillance systems with Beijing, after both countries signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement in 2005.

The geographical field is also indicative of Indonesia's lack of interest in establishing close, productive ties with India. While visits by Indonesian political and diplomatic elites to New Delhi were plenty, they were by no means exceptional compared to other strategic partners.¹⁹ After visiting New Delhi in February 2000, Indonesia's fourth president, Abdurrahman "Gus Dur" Wahid, floated the idea of "Beijing-New Delhi" axis to emphasise the new strategic and economic centre of gravity in Asia. But his proposal was too vague to be crafted into actionable policy, and his term was too short for the idea to mature, except for the Defence Cooperation Agreement

17 Indonesia's Department of Defense, *Analisis Lingkungan Strategis dan Prediksi Ancaman Tahun 2008* [Analysis on Strategic Environment and Threat Assessment Year 2008] (Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal Strategi Pertahanan – Direktorat Analisa Lingkungan Strategis, January 2008), p. 5.

18 Indonesia's Department of Defence, *Buku Putih Pertahanan Indonesia 2008* [Indonesia's Defence White Paper 2008] (Jakarta: Departemen Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2008), pp. 148–149.

19 See "India-Indonesia Relations", Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, August 2012, <http://meaindia.nic.in/meaxpsite/foreignrelation/indonesia.pdf> (accessed 10 November 2012).

signed in January 2001. Sukarno's daughter and Indonesia's fifth president, Megawati Sukarnoputri, who succeeded Gus Dur, also visited New Delhi in April 2002 to mend old ties her father had with India. However, nothing special nor strategic came out of her visit.

The relative neglect or indifference regarding Indonesia's approach to India could be influenced by the non-geographical distances between them, namely the gravitational, topological, and attributional distances. Gauging these distances would require an assessment of the dynamics of bilateral relations under three regimes: Sukarno administration (1949–1967), Suharto administration (1968–1998), and Post-Reformasi period (1999–present). The following section will compare and contrast the defence relations during Sukarno and Suharto administrations, which will be followed by an assessment of the contemporary defence relations under the democratic regime, also known as Post-Reformasi period. In the latter, particular emphasis will be given to President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's administration, when a strategic partnership agreement was eventually signed.

DEFENCE RELATIONS UNDER SUKARNO AND SUHARTO

India had a special place in Indonesia's mental map shortly after the independence of the latter. For Indonesia, India seemed closer in both topological and attributional distances. The topological distance was evident when Indonesia's Southeast Asian neighbours were still under colonial rule by the British in Malaya, Myanmar (Burma), and Singapore, which was anathema to Jakarta's anti-colonialist approach. With a neighbourhood still surrounded by colonial powers, Jakarta found a reliable friend in New Delhi, which had recently gained independence from the British. This was particularly evident when India became the main champion of Indonesia's struggle for independence in 1945–1949 against the returning Dutch colonial administration. This also made New Delhi seem closer in terms of attributional distance with Jakarta as they both shared anti-colonialist and non-alignment strategic mindsets. However, the lack of gravitational distance due to their relatively weak economic, military, and diplomatic assets precluded the required interdependence factor as a stabilising ballast to prevent a divergence in the topological and attributional distances

from deteriorating the relationship. This is what happened in the latter day of Sukarno administration that due to competing sets of national interests and objectives, both nations found themselves poles apart, which subsequently resulted in deteriorating bilateral relations.

For Indonesia, India is not only remembered as a staunch supporter of its independence, but also a fellow adherent in non-alignment posture in international politics. India's Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru (1947–1964) was the first world leader to condemn the Dutch Police Action against Indonesia in 1947 and 1948. "What has become of the United Nations' Charter?" asked Nehru of the world, "No European country has any business to set its Army in Asia against our people. When it does so, the spirit of New Asia will not tolerate such things."²⁰ As such, India tried to draw international attention and support for Indonesia by convening the International Conference on Indonesia attended by fifteen nations in January 1949. For Nehru's staunch support, Indonesia's President Sukarno was "trying vainly to measure the gratitude of the Indonesian people to India and to her Prime Minister personally for the unflinching and brotherly support in our struggle."²¹ Also in recognition of India's role for Indonesian independence, Indonesia conferred the highest title of "Pahlawan Indonesia" (Hero of Indonesia) to Jawaharlal Nehru and to Biju Patnaik, who took great risk in flying a plane to Jogjakarta, the then republican capital to rescue Sukarno and another independence figure, Sutan Sjahrir.²²

Shortly after independence, Indonesia and India embarked on an "extreme cordiality" in bilateral relations, particularly due to the staunch anti-colonialist and non-alignment posture both countries shared.²³ In 1950, Indonesia's first President, Sukarno called upon the peoples of Indonesia and India to "intensify the cordial relations" that

20 "India Relations", *The Sukarno Years*, <http://www.sukarnoyears.com/317india.htm> (accessed 11 November 2012).

21 *The Hindu* (Madras), 5 January 1950, cited in L. P. Singh, "Dynamics of Indian-Indonesian Relations", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 7, No. 9 (Sept., 1967), p. 656.

22 Baladas Ghoshal, "Indonesia in India's Look East Policy", *IDSIA Issue Brief*, 20 January 2011, p. 15, http://www.idsa.in/system/files/IB_IndoLookEastPolicy.pdf (accessed 11 November 2012).

23 L. P. Singh, "Dynamics of Indian-Indonesian Relations", pp. 655–657.

had existed between the two countries “for more than 1000 years”²⁴ This culminated in the Treaty of Friendship of March 1951 which proclaimed “a perpetual peace and unalterable friendship” between the two countries.²⁵ It was subsequently followed by agreements on trade, military, cultural, and diplomatic cooperation. For Sukarno, India then was not only a long-separated cousin of Indonesia, bound by similar culture and shared historical heritage, but a fellow bulwark against what he called “colonialism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism” led by the West. The Asia-Africa Conference of 1955 in Bandung, also known as the Bandung Conference, was the momentous resultant of such cordiality. The Conference was special to both countries during the height of the Cold War as it proclaimed a “third way” by which some Asian and African nations preferred not to become embroiled in the competition between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

This situation also had a positive spillover effect on defence. Following large arms imports from the Soviet Union in late 1950s and early 1960s, Indonesia cooperated with India to maintain some of its newly-acquired weapon platforms. As a result, three separate security agreements were concluded between the Air Force, Navy, and the Army in 1956, 1958, and 1960, respectively.²⁶ Air Forces’ bilateral agreement envisaged exchange and training of pilots, sale, loan, and exchange of aircraft spares. The Naval agreement provided for cross attachment of naval officers, training exercises, and bilateral visits. Symbolic but strategically significant was the first-ever joint naval exercise the Indian Navy held with the Indonesian Navy in July 1960. New Delhi also extended military assistance to Indonesia when it was faced with internal revolts and armed separatist movements in the 1950s.²⁷

24 Lok Sabha Secretariat, *Foreign Policy of India: Text of Documents 1947–59* (New Delhi, 1959), p. 54, cited in L. P. Singh, “Dynamics of Indian-Indonesian Relations”, p. 655.

25 “Treaty of Friendship between India and the Republic of Indonesia”, <http://www.commonlii.org/in/other/treaties/INTSer/1951/7.html> (accessed 11 November 2012).

26 Pankaj K. Jha, “India-Indonesia: Emerging Strategic Confluence in the Indian Ocean Region”, *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 443–444.

27 G. V. C. Naidu, “India’s Strategic and Defence Interaction with Southeast Asia”, in T. Nirmala Devi and Adhuri Subramanyam Raju (Eds.), *India and Southeast Asia: Strategic Convergence in the Twenty-first Century* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2012), p. 80.

The cordial relationship did not last long, however. India's support for Malaysia during Indonesia's *Konfrontasi* (Confrontation), Indonesia's support for Pakistan in the 1965 War, and Indonesia's alignment with the People's Republic of China (and tacit support for its 1962 Invasion), chilled bilateral relations. This situation made the topological and attributional distances grow further and less convergent. Sukarno promised "all possible assistance" to Pakistan in the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War.²⁸ For example, Jakarta sent its submarines to Pakistan as a "showing-the-flag" gesture to demonstrate its support, and offered to divert Indian attention by seizing the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal. The Indonesian Air Force agreed to transfer both MIG-15s and 19s, whereas the Navy despatched two submarines, two Komar-class missile boats and two Jaguar class torpedo boats to Pakistan. This situation only led to demonstration flights over the islands but, combined with Sukarno's declared ideas of an "Indonesian Ocean", caused justifiable alarm in India.²⁹

The overthrow of Sukarno by General Suharto in 1966 marked a slight warming up in bilateral relations. However, the non-geographical distances between India and Indonesia remained existent as before. Gravitationally, Indonesia had started to build-up its economy from the mismanagement of Sukarno administration due to political and military adventurisms. But it had by no means created sufficient power to make Jakarta's economic beat felt in New Delhi. Likewise, under Indira Ghandi, India was yet to become a dominant economic power to be felt beyond South Asia. As such, bilateral relations remained cordially cool during Suharto's regime. Topologically, Suharto was more inclined to foment closer relationship in its immediate neighbourhood of Southeast Asia. Being a Javanese, he envisaged a "mandala" concept of international relations in which Indonesia's foreign policy engagements be structured according to three-layered rings, where Southeast and Northeast Asia constituted the first and second rings. India was by no means the least impor-

28 Mohammed Ayoob, *India and Southeast Asia: Indian Perceptions and Policies* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 40–41.

29 James Goldrick and Jack McCaffrie, *Navies of South-East Asia: A comparative study* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013), p. 71.

tant strategic partner, but Indonesia's relative dependence on major powers, particularly the U.S. and Japan made New Delhi occupy a lower rank in Jakarta's list of foreign policy priorities.

Attributionally, Indonesia was somewhat concerned with India's closeness with the erstwhile Soviet Union. This also stemmed from Jakarta's underlying suspicion about New Delhi's regional ambitions as the former moved away from Sukarno's Socialist-leaning foreign policy stance. First, the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship of 1971 was viewed suspiciously by Jakarta's military circles. Jakarta was concerned that the treaty would severely compromise India's non-alignment stance into acquiescing increased Soviet military presence in the Indian Ocean, particularly in the vicinity of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. For example, General Harsudiyono Hartas, the Indonesian general commanding the elite Diponegoro Command and a former commander of Northern Sumatra from 1983 to 1985, "hinted that Soviet submarines were roaming in Indonesian waters around Sabang, the northern tip of Sumatra, and indicated that the submarines had come from the Indian base on Nicobar Island. Sabang faces the Andaman group of islands in the Bay of Bengal to its north and the entrance to the strategic Straits of Malacca to its east".³⁰

Second, Jakarta was suspicious about Indian "designs" in South-east Asia pertaining to its build-up of military power-projection capabilities. India's acquisitions of leased Soviet nuclear-powered attack submarines and aircraft carrier from the United Kingdom raised "muted" alarm bells in Jakarta. It reinforced the latter's suspicion of India's hegemonic ambitions in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), particularly within defence and military circles. As such, Indonesia was quite receptive toward Western presence in the littoral to check the rise of Indian military power. Third, Jakarta sensed New Delhi's nuclear ambitions with caution, as it has not acceded to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, notwithstanding the latter's claim of not being a proliferator. This stance stood in contrast to Jakarta's and ASEAN's anti-nuclear sentiment, as was formalised by the Southeast

30 *The Strait Times*, 13 October 1986, cited in Mohammed Ayoob, *India and Southeast Asia*, p. 44.

Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty. In Jakarta's eyes, the stockpiling of nuclear arms would only increase the propensity of an arms race and tensions which had a spillover effect to the adjacent region of Southeast Asia. Fourth, despite its secular profile, Indonesia remains sympathetic to fellow Muslim countries. Being the world's largest Muslim nation, Indonesia is quite reluctant to speak objectively on Indo-Pakistani antagonistic relationship for fears of being perceived as "abandoning" a fellow Muslim nation. Thus, for instance, during the Bangladesh (East Pakistan) Crisis of 1971, Indonesia, along with Singapore and Malaysia, viewed Indian "humanitarian" intervention in grim light. Although Jakarta understood the refugee influx to India was pretty much caused by the Pakistani military crackdown on Bengali independence activities, Jakarta had difficulty in empathising with India's response in the form of military intervention.³¹ As a founding nation of ASEAN, Indonesia believed the principle of non-interference should be sacrosanct in governing international relations. India's behaviour, therefore, was perceived to be hardly different from those of classic major powers, who would not think twice to intervene militarily against minor powers using all sorts of dubious justification.

During the Suharto administration, the defence relationship was therefore understandably dismal. Soviet arms were gradually phased off in favour of those from the West. With Jakarta viewing the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty suspiciously, the situation was not quite conducive to start defence cooperation even at the same level as during Sukarno's administration. Coupled with the fact of Indonesia's inward-looking defence policy prioritising on internal security, India and the Indian Ocean Region became a black hole in Jakarta's mental map. On the other hand, Indonesia's ties with its Southeast Asian neighbours improved significantly with the establishment of ASEAN in 1967. Cognizant of the much-needed economic development after a decade of political and military adventurism under Sukarno, the Suharto administration embarked on an unprecedented economic engagements with Northeast Asia, Japan in particular, as a capital

31 Kripa Sridharan, *The ASEAN Region in India's Foreign Policy* (Aldershot, England: Dartmouth, 1996), pp. 88–92.

market to start exploiting the archipelago's raw potential. Hence, the overall mental map during this period was rather preoccupied with diplomatic and economic exchanges with Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia, respectively. Yet following the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997 which brought down Suharto and precipitated the *Reformasi* in 1999, Jakarta began to seek multiple partners in a more pragmatic manner.

POST-REFORMASI DEFENCE RELATIONS

The overthrow of Suharto in 1998 was a major turning point in Indonesia's history. Not only did it enable genuine democracy to be implemented, but also introduced a new identity in Indonesia's foreign policy. This created ripple effects on the non-geographical distances between Indonesia and India. Gravitationally, Indonesia and India are much stronger economically now than before as evident in the increased bilateral trade value, which made them more diplomatically assertive on the global stage. In 2010–2011, bilateral total trade volume increased almost 38% to US\$16 billion. Indonesia's Ambassador to India said that by 2015, the volume is expected to reach US\$45 billion, and by 2020, India could be Indonesia's largest foreign investor.³² In terms of gross domestic product (GDP), both countries are among the twenty largest in the world under the so-called economic grouping of Group of Twenty (G20). Topologically, both countries' influences also expand beyond their immediate neighbourhoods, surpassing "intermediate" countries in favour of pragmatic engagements with peer powers. Central to this approach has been Indonesia's strategic and comprehensive partnership agreements. Indonesia agreed to establish a "Strategic Partnership" with India in November 2005. India too has looked into Southeast Asia through its "Look East Policy" to promote economic cooperation, in addition to developing its soft power through cultural and academic exchanges.³³ Indonesia is India's second largest export

32 "India-Indonesia trade to touch \$45 billion by 2015: Andi M. Ghalib", *The Economic Times*, 15 June 2012, http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-06-15/news/32254649_1_andi-m-ghalib-indonesia-crude-palm-oil (accessed 12 November 2012).

33 Baladas Ghoshal, "Indonesia in India's Look East Policy".

market in ASEAN (after Singapore) and one of its major trading partners in the region. India's scientific and technological skills are also another factor that makes Jakarta closer to New Delhi. Among the various agreements that were signed during Indonesia's President Yudhoyono visit to New Delhi in January 2011 was Science and Technology Agreement to tap India's potentials as Asia's "Silicon Valley". Attributionally, the secular democratic values both countries shared provide the necessary foundation on which to lay a common identity. Indonesia's democracy is also a stake for India due to their large Muslim populations. If democracy fails in Indonesia, it will not only lead to the revival of the authoritarian forces and the old regime but also the rise of militant Islam in a country that has tried to preserve a secular society.³⁴

The Defence Cooperation Agreement signed in January 2001 was a significant milestone in bilateral relations. Not only did it mark a re-establishment of defence cooperation cemented fifty years ago, but also signalled Jakarta's positive perceptions toward New Delhi. The Agreement stipulated the establishment of a Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) to study and identify various possible fields of defence cooperation. For Jakarta, this means it has a major partner to cooperate with on its Indian Ocean frontier.

Navy and maritime security

The Indonesian and Indian navies have conducted coordinated maritime patrols at their common maritime border located at the northern entrance of Malacca Strait, also known as the "Six-Degree Channel". Beginning in 2002, the India-Indonesia Coordinate Patrols (Ind-Indo Corpat) seeks to increase maritime security situation in the Malacca Strait which was once beset with rampant piracy, sea robbery, and smuggling activities. In a coordinated patrolling, the two sides remain inside their maritime boundaries but remain constantly in touch and keep each other updated on movements and

34 Ibid., p. 9.

the situation in the sea.³⁵ But the bilateral coordinated patrols are not the only one Indonesia is engaged in. In fact, the centre of attention has been on the so-called littoral navies of the Malacca Strait themselves—Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand—which conduct the Malacca Strait Patrols (MSP), and its air element, the Eyes in the Sky (EiS). These patrols are widely credited as successful in reducing the level of piracy and sea robbery incidents significantly in the Malacca Strait. Proclaiming itself as a littoral state in the Malacca Strait, India feels itself being left out. The reluctance of the Southeast Asian members to include India in MSP might have been motivated by two factors. First, they see the Malacca Strait as genuinely Southeast Asian turf, which means only Southeast Asians are its rightful guardians, and India is not. Second, they are concerned about the gap between their capabilities and those of India, which tends to make them somewhat insecure. However, to the extent that Indonesia may require external maritime security assistance in the Malacca Strait in the future, India may represent a convenient candidate to work with, especially when compared to the U.S., Japan, or certainly China.³⁶

On the other hand, Jakarta sees the establishment of a Joint Command at Port Blair in the Andaman Islands in a positive light, as it could contribute to greater monitoring of the northern approaches to the Strait, providing prompt assistance when needed, as well as to increase bilateral cooperative activities, like joint exercises and patrols, with the Indonesian Naval Western Fleet Command. The Ind-Indo Corpat for example has seen Indonesian Navy warships visiting Port Blair more often, and vice versa. Indonesia also participates in India-led multilateral naval exercises and gatherings, such as MILAN, Search and Rescue Exercise (SAREX), and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS). In the aftermath of 2004 Tsunami, Jakarta highly appreciated Indian Navy's Operation Ghambir in Janu-

35 "India, Indonesia take up coordinated patrolling of Malacca Straits from Oct 18", *Asian Tribune*, 18 October 2009, <http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2009/10/18/india-indonesia-take-coordinated-patrolling-malacca-straits-oct-18> (accessed 11 November 2012).

36 David Brewster, "The Relationship between India and Indonesia", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 51, No. 2, (March/April 2011), p. 242.

ary 2005 to send food and medical supplies to Indonesia through its hospital ship INS *Nirupak* and a corvette INS *Khukri*.³⁷ In terms of naval technological and industry cooperation, however, progress is still limited. Jakarta is still vying to purchase the Indo-Russia jointly-developed anti-ship supersonic missile, BrahMos, only to be met by India's reluctance. India was concerned the sale could give away critical information regarding the Brahmos to its rivals, China and Pakistan. The supply of missiles to Indonesia was also vetoed by India's Russian partner. In response, Jakarta sought cooperation from Russia and China instead, which eventually granted the sales of Yakhont and C-802/C-705 missiles, respectively. Most recently, India also offered Indonesia the establishment of a formal maritime domain information sharing arrangement between the two navies.³⁸ Such an arrangement could improve awareness along their shared maritime boundaries in the Andaman Sea and Indian Ocean.

Air force

The 2001 Agreement also enabled the Indonesian Air Force (TNI-AU) to mend its old ties with the Indian Air Force (IAF). The first bilateral agreement between TNI-AU and IAF was signed in February 1956 calling for mutual attachment of officers; training of selected TNI-AU personnel in India; loan, sale, or exchange of Air Forces equipment and material; as well as the institution of courier services between the two Air Forces' aircraft.³⁹ This agreement was abruptly terminated when Suharto came to power. Like the Indonesian Navy (TNI-AL), the TNI-AU gradually scrapped most of its Soviet-designed aircraft which made mutual training and equip-

37 Vibhanshu Shekhar, "India-Indonesia Relations: An Overview", *IPCS Special Report*, No. 38, March 2007 (New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 2007), p. 2, http://www.ipcs.org/pdf_file/issue/1218405219IPCS-Special-Report-41.pdf (accessed 11 November 2012).

38 Sitanshu Kar, "India and Indonesia Agree to Significantly Step Up Defence Cooperation it's a turning point: Antony", *Press Information Bureau of India*, 16 October 2012, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=88424> (accessed 11 November 2012).

39 "Agreement between the Governments of India and Indonesia Providing for Cooperation between Air Forces", <http://www.commonlii.org/in/other/treaties/INTSer/1956/3.html> (accessed 11 November 2012).

ment exchanges eventually inapplicable. The post-Reformasi period brought a turning point, however. In October 2012, India agreed to train and support the TNI-AU in operating its fleet of Russian Sukhoi fighter jets, despite initial India's concerns about the risk of disclosure to third parties (i.e. Pakistan) of information on its frontline strike fighters.⁴⁰ Given that India also operates the fighters and will have one of the largest fleets in service, Jakarta has been interested in seeking New Delhi's assistance for technical support and training.⁴¹ A high-level IAF team would be sent to finalise details of training and spares support package once the TNI-AU firms up its requirements. TNI-AU aims to acquire up to 16 Sukhoi aircraft by 2013. But in order for the cooperation to be effective, Indonesia needs to field more Sukhoi or similar aircraft that IAF operates. For example, when the 1956 Agreement was still in effect, Indonesia had 40 MiG-17 and 22 MiG-21 fighter aircraft, 18 IL-28 medium bomber, and 26 Tu-16 strategic bombers. These aircraft had similar systems to India's fleet of Soviet aircraft which made interoperability, personnel training, and material exchanges possible. Indonesia's potential procurement of up to 24 F-16 fighter aircraft from the U.S. could thus complicate interoperability with its Sukhoi fleet. But India's renowned skills in integrating various aircraft systems from diverse manufacturers and countries could also assist Indonesia in developing its own platform-compatibility skills.

Army

Last but not least, the Indonesian Army has also benefited from the 2001 Agreement. Both armies have identified counter terrorism and jungle warfare as two core areas for cooperation. In the former, the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in July 2004 on Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism and to coordinate measures to combat terrorism in a comprehensive and sustained manner. Such measures include the "sharing of

40 David Brewster, "The Relationship between India and Indonesia", p. 233.

41 Manu Pubby, "India to train, support Indonesian Sukhoi fleet", *The Indian Express*, 17 October 2012, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/india-to-train-support-indonesian-sukhoi-fleet/1017745/0> (accessed 11 November 2012).

intelligence, the development of more effective counter terrorism policies, enhance liaison between law enforcement agencies, provide assistance in the areas of border and immigration control to stem the flow of terrorist related material, money and people and specific measures against transnational crimes, including international terrorism through the already existing mechanism between Indonesia and India.”⁴² And to discuss the implementation of these activities, both countries have established the Joint Working Group (JWG) on Counter-Terrorism, which held its first meeting in New Delhi in February 2005.⁴³ However, the lack of legal support for the Indonesian Army (TNI-AD) to involve directly in counter-terrorism operations, as opposed to the National Police (POLRI), could limit cooperation only to tactical level, such as joint exercises between their army anti-terrorist special forces units, while the strategic and operational levels of cooperation (e.g. intelligence exchange) would largely be the domain of law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, Indonesia is still reluctant to directly pinpoint Pakistani links in terrorist activities which led to the Mumbai attack in November 2008.

In the latter area, both armies have exercised together in jungle warfare. From 18 February to 4 March 2012, the first ever platoon level joint training exercise codenamed “Garuda Shakti” was conducted at the Indian Army’s elite Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School (CIJWS) Vairengte in Mizoram.⁴⁴ The TNI-AD really appreciated the hospitality and professionalism of the Indian Army which “reflected India’s seriousness to establish defence cooperation with Indonesia.”⁴⁵ The next exercise is yet to be decided, but it should

42 “Joint Statement: Vision for the India-Indonesia New Strategic Partnership over the Coming Decade”, Indian Embassy, Jakarta, 25 January 2011, <http://indianembassyjakarta.com/Joint%20Statement.pdf> (accessed 11 November 2012).

43 Vibhanshu Shekhar, “India-Indonesia Relations: An Overview”.

44 Ministry of External Affairs, “India-Indonesia Relations”.

45 Dinas Penerangan Kostrad, “Latma ‘Garuda Shakti’ antara Kostrad dan AD India” [Joint Exercise “Garuda Shakti” between the Indian and Indonesian army], *KOSTRAD*, 8 March 2012, http://kostrad.mil.id/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=518:latma-garuda-shakti-antara-kostrad-dan-ad-india-&catid=3:newsflash (accessed 11 November 2012).

be expected to take place in Indonesia. In the JDCC discussions, India has also offered large-calibre guns and military trucks for TNI-AD.⁴⁶

Army-to-army cooperation could still be expanded nonetheless. First, India could utilise Indonesia's Peacekeeping Centre to train its peacekeeping troops and conduct various scenario-based exercises with the host. Second, New Delhi could transfer its superb knowledge and skills in mountain warfare to the TNI-AD which is currently engaged in low-intensity counter-insurgency campaign in the mostly highland areas of Papua. Third, Jakarta's bid to procure more than 100 main battle tanks and heavy artillery pieces could be an opportunity for India to offer assistance in developing their operational doctrines for the former, which does not have prior experience in operating them. Fourth, India's advanced research and development in missile technology could assist Indonesia to develop its own surface-to-surface (SSM) and surface-to-air missiles (SAM) for the TNI-AD.

TOWARDS A CONVERGENT MANDALA

Propelling closer bilateral defence cooperation between India and Indonesia would require further convergence in the three non-geographical distances to knit both "mandalas" together in the Indian Ocean. While they are both littoral nations, Indonesia is lagging very far behind India in mentally identifying, let alone pursuing, its interests in this area. To offset this, Indonesia should illuminate the "black hole" in its Indian Ocean mental map by closing the gravitational, attributional, and topological distances with India. Gravitationally, Indonesia and India could increase mutual interdependence through economic and strategic links, in which the latter should be a consequence of the former. Increasing economic links could be propelled by improving bilateral investment opportunities, granting special trade concessions, and even undertaking various joint economic activities. The fact that India has become Indonesia's second largest coal export destination after China is noteworthy. In

46 Nur Khafifah, "India Tawarkan Truk Militer ke Indonesia" [India offers military trucks to Indonesia], *Detiknews*, 16 Oktober 2012, <http://news.detik.com/read/2012/10/16/192025/2064372/10/india-tawarkan-truk-militer-ke-indonesia> (accessed 11 November 2012).

2010–2012, total volume of coal exports almost doubled from 40 million to 70 million tons.⁴⁷ Economic interdependence should deliver strategic ramifications given both countries are also Indian Ocean littoral neighbours. The two countries, along with Australia, could establish a trilateral strategic dialogue on issues of common concern to complement the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC). Sea lanes security should become a major issue to be discussed. As many Asian growing economies are now increasingly dependent on Middle East energy imports, it is more imperative for the major littoral nations to provide navigational safety and security along the shipping routes.

Topologically, Indonesia should re-balance its focus to put the western Pacific and Indian Ocean frontiers on an equal footing. Indonesia's increasing reliance on energy routes transiting the Indian Ocean should invoke a greater awareness to improve maritime security cooperation with India as the largest littoral navy. Indonesia could learn from India in providing good order at sea in the Indian Ocean, particularly on counter-piracy missions. The rise of Indian naval power should be welcomed by Jakarta, because it means that Indonesia could cooperatively secure its western maritime frontier with New Delhi. Although it is still unlikely that Indonesia would overlook ASEAN, growing attachment with peer powers like India could alter its foreign policy calculus. Jakarta can no longer afford to ignore India's strategic and economic clout. After all, there are no intermediate countries separating India and Indonesia but the expanse of Indian Ocean. In any event, closing the mutual distance means forging maritime links. For India, the Indonesian archipelago could also become a natural barrier against Chinese encroachment to the Indian Ocean, as well as a friendly springboard for power projection to the western Pacific. But some challenges remain as to what New Delhi has to offer Jakarta, while at the same time, competing with other major powers, especially China. Therefore, it remains an open question whether India's rise could be consequential enough for Indonesia to match or even eclipse that of China.

47 "India and Indonesia aim to double trade", *BBC News*, 25 January 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-12274815> (accessed 11 November 2011).

Attributionally, both nations should work more to exploit their common democratic values. In the looming Sino-American rivalry, both countries could re-invigorate the “1955 Bandung Spirit” and align with neither side, yet still work constructively to promote peace and stability between the two powers. But there still lingers the strategic question of China’s rise on which New Delhi and Jakarta differ considerably. The different views and approaches toward Beijing date back to the Sukarno era, when Indonesia dumped New Delhi in favour of Beijing after the 1962 war. India, on the other hand, felt less enthusiastic in following Indonesia’s militant anti-imperialist campaign as epitomised during the Konfrontasi period. The present situation draws a striking parallel, when the Sino-Indonesian relationship is arguably closer than the Indo-Indonesian relationship. While India does not explicitly aim to contain China (no country ever admits to doing so, including the U.S.), the general line has been to maintain “cool peace” with China under the shadows of the 1962 War. In contrast, despite Indonesia’s accusation of Chinese involvement in the coup d’état of 30 September 1965, and Indonesia’s overlapping EEZ with the Chinese nine-dash claim in the South China Sea; Jakarta stops short of mounting hostile rhetoric and behavior toward Beijing. Instead, Jakarta attempts to fully exploit Beijing’s growing diplomatic, political, economic, and military clout for its own benefit. For example, in 2011 China replaced Japan as Indonesia’s largest trading partner. Jakarta also extends open arms to Beijing’s infrastructure assistance, like the establishment of the 2-km long Surabaya-Madura “friendship” bridge in East Java. In defence, too, Beijing has emerged as one of Jakarta’s closest partners, especially in the field of maritime security. Strategically, Indonesia also wants to keep China within the regional security architecture, and maintain watchful eyes on Washington’s re-balancing or pivot strategy, perceived to being attached with an element of containment. For Jakarta, any containing influence on China’s rise would only beget “a vicious cycle of tensions and mistrusts”, which could deliver deleterious and disastrous consequences for regional security and stability.⁴⁸

48 “New US base in RI’s backyard”, *The Jakarta Post*, 17 November 2011, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/11/17/new-us-base-ri-s-backyard.html> (accessed 12 November 2012).

As such, it is in Jakarta's interest that Indo-American alignment and the so-called "Indo-Pacific" convergence do not lead to an eventual strategic alienation of China.⁴⁹

CONCLUSION

Despite sharing geographical proximity, India and Indonesia have yet to exploit the full potential to strengthen their bilateral defence relationship. While India has remained preoccupied with its immediate neighbourhood in South Asia, Indonesia's insular strategic worldview and security strategy has inhibited an expanded extra-regional engagement to reach places beyond its shores. Coupled with divergent interests and values, a defence relationship has not been well-cultivated, if not intentionally kept at bay. As such, India and the Indian Ocean have been a "black hole" in Jakarta's mental map throughout the 20th century.

The opportunities brought about by a democratised Indonesia, and its emergence as one of the world's largest economies in the 21st century herald a new beginning for the bilateral relationship. Indonesia has begun to view India as a reliable strategic partner in defence cooperation. Ratified in 2007, the 2001 Defence Cooperation Agreement could be a harbinger for a full-fledged strategic alignment between the two nations. Although initial implementation was slow as compared to similar agreements with other countries, Jakarta and New Delhi have started fleshing out the bones of possible areas of cooperation between their navies, air forces, and armies. To further accelerate its implementation, they need to close their non-geographical distances through increased mutual economic and strategic interdependence, shared awareness and interests for power projection in the Indian Ocean, as well as further exploitation of their shared common democratic values to promote greater regional security and stability.

49 For an assessment of "Indo-Pacific" term, see Nick Bisley and Andrew Philips, "The Indo-Pacific: what does it actually mean?" *East Asia Forum*, 6 October 2012, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/10/06/the-indo-pacific-what-does-it-actually-mean/> (accessed 11 November 2012).

INDIA-MALAYSIA DEFENCE RELATIONS

ENHANCING STRATEGIC COOPERATION TO MEET COMMON CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

K. S. Nathan

INTRODUCTION: THE HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY CONTEXTS OF INDIA-MALAYSIA RELATIONS

There are sufficient historical precedents for a broader and deeper engagement of India in Malaysia and Southeast Asia. Indian cultural influence has been extant in the region between the 9th – 13th centuries AD when Indian military and imperial power reached the shores of Southeast Asia through the Chola empire in South India. The exercise of Indian military power and presence in Southeast Asia is therefore nothing new. An earlier, more powerful cultural influence is now transforming itself into political, cultural, economic and military manifestations of a 5,000-year civilisation that has energised Southeast Asia's polities and cultures for centuries. The difference today, however, is that the communications revolution and the revolution in military affairs (RMA) coupled with major systemic transformations following the demise of the 45-year Cold War (1947–1991) have compelled a review of the engagement of major external powers in Southeast Asia. Additionally, revisionist theories and approaches in international relations in the post-Cold War era of globalisation, such as liberal institutionalism and constructivism have afforded a higher profile to the role of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in forging multilateralism and claiming “centrality” in building the contemporary regional security architecture of the Asia-Pacific region. In the event, the impact of the international and regional sub-system on bilateral relations—intra-regional as well as extra-regional i.e. between a state in Southeast Asia and major external powers cannot be ignored. A combination of realism, liberal institutionalism, pragmatism and constructivism is driving rela-

tions between big powers and ASEAN as a regional entity, and also between external powers and the individual states of this regional association. This paper attempts to examine the defence and security dimensions of the evolving India-Malaysia relationship, and to analyse present trends and constraints, and suggest future trajectories in the context of a dynamic and changing security scenario in Asia.

India-Malaysia relations during the Cold War have at best been clouded by negative mindsets on both sides, leaving little room for positive bilateral cooperation. On certain international issues such as apartheid in South Africa, decolonisation, creation of the non-aligned movement (NAM), reform of the international economic order, and South empowerment, there was a convergence of perspectives. However, Malaysia's generally pro-Western stance especially on the Vietnam War (1954–1975) and the Cambodian conflict (1978–1991) precluded any form of substantive cooperation with India which adopted a more pro-Soviet and pro-Hanoi stance during those difficult years. As Malaysia consolidated itself as a nation-state and made significant economic progress compared to India's sluggish growth hamstrung also by its pro-socialist orientation during the Cold War, ideological and political differences widened. Malaysian (especially Malay) perceptions of the ethnic Indians in the country (a majority of whom were plantation workers) did little to enhance India's image in Malaysia. It took the end of the Cold War, the onset of globalisation, and the major economic reforms introduced by the former Finance Minister (in 1991) and current Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh to compel a serious review of emerging economic, political and strategic opportunities arising from India's more active participation in globalisation and enhanced political and economic engagement with Southeast Asia via its Look East Policy. On the Malaysian side, former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's Vision 2020—a 30-year programme begun in 1990 of moving Malaysia to developed country status by 2020 opened up further avenues for cooperative engagement of the two economies. Other factors and incentives which impelled the two nations towards a "strategic partnership" will be discussed in the context of their evolving defence relations.

INDIA AND MALAYSIA: THE IMPERATIVES FOR DEFENCE COOPERATION

International system

The evolving character of the international system together with the opportunities and constraints residing therein, do influence policy formulations and directions in pursuit of national interests. The India-Malaysia defence relationship is no exception. Globalisation is one such imperative. However, it should be noted that globalisation is a historical process, except that the intensity, scope and volume of contacts, transactions and engagement have increased exponentially due to the communications revolution. The demise of bipolarity has also removed structural/ideological constraints and opened up opportunities for expanding bilateral as well as multilateral cooperation in a plethora of fields ranging from cooperation in hard security, soft security, non-traditional security, environment and climate change, to name a few. Modernisation of the defence sector and infrastructure development in both countries have encouraged the exchange of expertise. The information technology (IT) Revolution has boosted India's outreach to Malaysia and Southeast Asia through the services of thousands of Indian IT professionals now located in the region.

Rise of ASEAN

External powers including India have been closely monitoring the development of ASEAN over the years since its inception in 1967, and its more recent empowerment via initiating the process of integration leading to the realisation of the ASEAN Community by 2015. This global awareness of the relative success of regional cooperation and integration in Southeast Asia compared to other parts of the Developing World has stimulated greater interest in ASEAN's Dialogue Partners in recognising it as a corporate entity. The appointment by external powers including the United States of ambassadors to ASEAN as a corporate entity merely strengthened the regional entity's legitimacy and relevance in working with external partners to jointly address political, economic and security issues affecting the region. With all the limitations of the "ASEAN Way", the regional body's adoption of "process regionalism" has thus far been able to weather the storm and to ensure general progress towards regional

stability, security, development and prosperity.

India's perception of ASEAN changed significantly with the demise of the Cold War in 1990. Similarly, ASEAN's perception of India changed equally with the launch of India's Look East Policy by the government of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao in 1991. Like the United States, India began to view ASEAN as the cornerstone of regional security in Southeast Asia. In this new strategic scenario, India recognised the critical role played by Malaysia as an active proponent of regionalism. Malaysia's stability and steady rise towards developed country status within the next decade provided additional impetus to forge stronger bilateral relations. India was also cognizant of growing political and economic interactions between China and Malaysia. Gaining more political, diplomatic, economic and strategic influence in ASEAN became an integral element driving India's Look East Policy in Southeast Asia.

Rise of China

India and China represent the two oldest and largest civilisations in Asia, and Southeast Asia is currently witnessing a resurgence of the influence and involvement of these two Asian giants with enhanced political, economic, technological, and military capacity. The earlier rise of China since the Dengist reforms in the late 1970s and 80s which spearheaded large-scale economic and military modernisation is now impacting upon China's engagement with Southeast Asia. China's trade with the region has grown in leaps and bounds over the past two decades. India is clearly taking note of China's growing political, economic and strategic engagement with ASEAN, and would not like to be left behind in the contest for power and influence. In this regard, there is a convergence of national interests of both India and Malaysia as neither would like to see the region dominated by China. One could also add, the United States is a natural strategic ally as Washington would be loath to witness the demise of its influence in Southeast Asia—hence Obama's "re-engagement" policy towards the region. Indeed, the rise of China is impacting on the regional balance of power thus obliging small and medium powers to make adjustments to emerging realities through 'strategic partnerships,' 'refurbished alliances' and the like.

India views Malaysia as a key player in ASEAN under its Look East Policy aimed at expanding cooperation with all members of the ASEAN Community. The rise of China has increased the strategic importance of ASEAN to India and vice-versa. The dynamics of balance of power is obliging India to be more engaged as an Asian power in Southeast Asia, while Malaysia's policy of equidistance obliges the government to seek closer strategic cooperation with India and the west, especially the United States.

Maritime security

Southeast Asia's strategic location astride key trade routes and vital sea lines of communication enhances the geopolitical significance of the region to the major commercial powers of the world. Therefore, ensuring maritime stability and security in Southeast Asia is not just the concern of the littoral states but also that of major trading powers who depend on strategic access to the region for their welfare and prosperity. India as a maritime power with direct stakes in Southeast Asia via control of the Andaman and Nicobar islands is keenly interested in the security and stability of the region. Territorial disputes in the South China Sea (SCS) over which China claims complete sovereignty, and which has of late become a focal point of Beijing's military assertiveness is raising concerns among littoral states including Malaysia, Philippines and Vietnam. Several episodes of clashes and standoffs between China and the Philippines, as well as China and Vietnam have raised the stakes of involvement for regional as well as external powers. India, like the United States, would be averse to Chinese domination of the SCS and indeed of ASEAN as a whole. Individual states in ASEAN too would prefer to hedge against China by strengthening defence and security cooperation with other external powers such as India and the United States. This scenario provides the appropriate context for a closer examination of India-Malaysia defence relations.

INDIA-MALAYSIA DEFENCE RELATIONS: EVOLUTION AND GROWTH

It was the post-Cold War environment that provided the impetus for initiating defence cooperation between the two countries

beginning in 1993 when a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed. Under the MOU, a Malaysia-India Defence Cooperation Meeting (MIDCOM) was established to enable several meetings and exchanges between high-level military personnel on both sides.

Then Malaysian Defence Minister and current Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak signed a protocol with his Indian counterpart at the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition 2007. Under the protocol, India would send some 40 officers, pilots and engineering officers to the air force base in Gong Kedak in Malaysia's northern state of Terengganu. Malaysia bought 18 jet fighters from Russia in 2003, and the first two were delivered in last May, while the Indian Air Force (IAF) has been using the fighter jets since 2002. The IAF Training Team deployed in Malaysia began training Malaysian pilots on the SU-30SKM aircraft for two-and-a-half years since February 2008.

Malaysia-India Defence Cooperation meetings at the level of Defence Secretary are held regularly. The eighth meeting of MIDCOM was held in March 2010 and the 9th meeting of the MIDCOM was held on 16–17 January 2012. Service Chiefs from both countries have regularly exchanged visits—in 2009 India's Chief of Naval Staff visited Malaysia while the Chief of the Royal Malaysian Air Force visited India. MIDCOM now serves as a platform for military exchanges, provision of training by India to Malaysian pilots on Sukhoi fighter aircraft and navy personnel on Scorpene submarines. Indian naval visits to Malaysian ports have increased over the years. A new chapter opened in 2003 when Indian naval ships INS Delhi and INS Kora participated in the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition –LIMA-03 in Malaysia.

Defence relations and partnerships are obviously augmented by strong and expanding trade ties. For India, Malaysia is a prime trading and investment partner in ASEAN and Asia given the regional entity's strategic location. Malaysia's Minister of International Trade and Industry Mustapa Mohamed remarked that "India is one of Malaysia's important trading partners. Since 1998, it has been Malaysia's largest export destination in South Asia. Bilateral trade between the two countries increased more than six-fold between 2002 and last

year (2011)”¹ The implementation of the Malaysia-India Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (MI-CECA) on 1 July 2011 has evidently boosted bilateral trade, with total trade increasing by 32.7 per cent over 2010, reaching US\$12.5 billion (RM38.3 billion). Malaysia’s exports also increased substantially by 34.6 percent from US\$6.5 billion in 2010 to US\$9.2 billion. Indeed growing trade and commerce between the two countries furnishes a strong mutual incentive to protect trade routes.

As a major Asian naval power, India has a definite stake in the security of the Straits of Malacca through which transit a considerable amount of Indian goods to Asia and vice-versa. Malaysia plays a cardinal role, along with Singapore and Indonesia, in combating piracy. The Straits of Malacca which carries over 80% of oil supplies from the Persian Gulf is also critical to the security and well-being of the developed world including Japan. With growing economic and military strength, India’s naval diplomacy is now being deployed to impact upon its strategic interests in Southeast Asia. Malaysia along with Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand now participate in the MILAN naval exercises sponsored by India. MILAN is a congregation of navies organised by the Indian Navy biennially since 1995 in Port Blair involving combined exercises as well as social and professional interactions. Yet, Malaysia and Indian perspectives on the security of the Straits may not be wholly congruent. Malaysia’s standpoint is that the Straits of Malacca should be free from external powers’ involvement and that it is the responsibility of the littoral States to defend the sovereignty of the Strait of Malacca.²

Indian naval ships regularly make port calls in Malaysia; in March and May 2011 the ICGS Sankalp and the INS Ranvijay visited Port Klang and Kota Kinabalu respectively, and in August the INS Airawat and the 1st Training Squadron of the Indian Navy (INS Tir, INS Krishna and ICGS Veera) made port calls at Port Klang. India is also participating in the Cooperative Mechanism on the Straits of

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- 1 Hamidah Atan, “Malaysia, India trade ties to soar”, *New Straits Times*, 20 December 2012, <http://www.nst.com.my/nation/general/malaysia-india-trade-ties-to-soar-1.188853>.
 - 2 Ministry of Defence, Malaysia, “Malaysia’s National Defence Policy”, www.mod.gov.my/images/ndp.pdf (accessed 10 January 2013).

Malacca and Singapore (SOMS) and contributed to two of the six IMO Projects (Project 1 and Project 4) for enhancement of navigational safety and environmental protection in the Straits. These activities are clear evidence of an evolving Indian strategic doctrine to be engaged in Southeast Asian affairs in a manner that advances the mutual interests of both parties.

In the last few years itself, numerous high level visits have been exchanged between the two countries. India's Defence Minister A. K. Antony's visit to Malaysia in January 2008 helped expand the scope of defence cooperation. His visit was closely followed by the official visits of the Indian Chairman of Staff Committee, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Air Staff to Malaysia and from Malaysia, the Chief of Air Staff and Chief of Defence Forces to India. Recently the Chief of Air Staff India visited Malaysia on an official visit in February 2012 and Chief of Army and Chief of Navy, Malaysia made official visits to India in April 2012.

INDIA'S ROLE IN MALAYSIA'S DEFENCE MODERNISATION

India's role in Malaysia's defence modernisation can be expected to increase especially after the visit to India by the current Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak in 2010. Malaysia has requested industrial cooperation with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) given India's growing technological base and military sophistication over the past decade. As of now, more than 100 technical maintenance crew from Malaysia have visited India for training at HAL for maintenance of Sukhoi 30 MKM aircraft. India had already despatched a team of four instructor pilots, one weapons systems officer, two engineers, 22 technicians and two administrative servicemen for pilot training of Malaysian air force officers at Gong Kedak airbase in Malaysia for two and half years ending July 2010. India's experience in licensed production and better indigenous capability in missiles and communication systems are twin factors conducing to strong bilateral military cooperation, given also that Malaysia has purchased a sizable amount of Russian military hardware. India's familiarity with Russian military technology provides added incentive to expand the defence relationship to broader issues of mutual concern such as maritime security in Southeast Asia.

One potentially fruitful area of bilateral cooperation is in the Malaysian defence technology sector. The Malaysian government is developing the Malaysian Defence and Security Technology Park (MDSTP) in the expectation that it will attract over USD5 billion (RM15 billion) in investments over the next 12 years beginning in December 2012. It is a public-private partnership between the Ministry of Defence and a local company, Masterplan Consulting Sdn. Bhd. and would comprise three phases and cost RM1.4 billion.³ The park, which is located in Sungkai, Perak is about 75 miles north of Kuala Lumpur. India will be able to participate in any or all of the three phases of development outlined by Ministry of Defence: (i) the first phase involving the construction of the main building, research and development centres, commercial centres and the development of a university; (ii) the second phase spanning four years will focus on providing industrial areas and logistics centres for small and medium industries; and (iii) the third phase, which will take three years, will witness the construction of centres for specific industries.

According to Malaysia's Defence Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, the MDSTP will be the first of its kind in the ASEAN region, turning Malaysia into a regional hub for the industry and creating opportunities that will contribute significantly to the prosperity and growth of the country. He added: "With the Malaysian Defence and Security Technology Park we are seeking to propel Malaysia into an innovation-led economy, by hosting the most advanced and fully integrated centre for research and development, producing innovative defence industry related products".⁴ Malaysia has invited companies from Europe, North America, Korea, Australia and New Zealand to participate in developing Malaysia's defence technology sector. In this regard, India which is also advanced in defence technology can contribute to Malaysia's goal under the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) of improving Malaysia's own defence production capabilities. India

3 "Malaysian Defence and Security Technology Park Eyes RM15 Billion in Investments", *Bernama.com*, 5 April 2012, http://web6.bernama.com/bernama/v3/news_lite.php?id=657303.

4 "Collaborations Bolster Defence Industry", *Worldfolio – AFA Press*, 5 April 2012, <http://www.worldfolio.co.uk/print.php?id=538>.

recently signed a defence pact with Spain which *inter alia* entails exchanging defence-related experience, information, encouraging visits of personnel and collaboration in defence industry.⁵ India will also be able to support Malaysia's desire to capture a larger share of the growing and lucrative maintenance, repair and overhaul market (MRO) and to develop its potential as a one stop MRO centre in Southeast Asia—an objective being pursued under the country's Economic Transformation Programme launched by Prime Minister Najib Tun Razk on 21 September 2010 to turn Malaysia into a high income economy by 2020. However, it should also be noted that India will face strong competition for bids in the Malaysian defence sector from Malaysia's erstwhile partners such as the UK, U.S., Italy and France, all of whom have had a longer history of selling defence-related equipment to the country.

INDIA, MALAYSIA AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

One major area of security convergence between India and Malaysia is the prevention of outbreak of conflict over territorial claims in the SCS. The presence of a large number of regional and extra-regional navies in the SCS area could well lead to misperception of intentions and thereby trigger clashes that could result in major conflict. This maritime zone is very rich in animate and inanimate resources, and can well provide the temptation for rising industrial powers such as China and India whose energy demands are expanding rapidly to meet national requirements. The area is home to strategic waterways that provide critical supply lines to the major maritime powers such as USA, Japan, India (besides China) who see themselves as legitimate stakeholders that have a role to maintain peace and security in the region. Rising Asian oil demand, as well as Japan's oil needs, will need to be imported from the Middle East and Africa, and to pass through the strategic Straits of Malacca into the SCS. Countries in the Asia-Pacific region depend on seaborne trade to fuel their economic growth, and this has led to transformation of the SCS into one of the

5 "India, Spain sign 5 pacts to bolster defence ties", *Indo-Asian News Agency*, 26 October 2012, <http://en-maktoob.news.yahoo.com/india-spain-sign-5-pacts-bolster-defence-ties-130353197.html>.

world's busiest shipping lanes. Over half of the world's merchant fleet (by tonnage) sails through the SCS every year.

The economic potential and geopolitical importance of the SCS region has triggered rivalry and competition for its resources especially oil and gas. According to Glaser, there is a high risk of conflict in the SCS.⁶ China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and the Philippines have competing territorial and jurisdictional claims. Recent clashes between China and the Philippines and between China and Vietnam in the context of Beijing's military assertion in support of sovereignty claims in that region are also raising the concerns in ASEAN capitals as well as India and the United States. Glaser adds that freedom of navigation in the region is also a contentious issue, especially between the United States and China over the right of U.S. military vessels to operate in China's two-hundred-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The inception of the 5-nation joint military/ naval exercises (Malabar 2007) involving the United States, India, Japan, Australia and Singapore in the Asia-Pacific region cannot but be viewed in the context of deterrence given the rising military power of China and its desire to use force, if necessary, to protect what it claims to be its inalienable national interests in the South China Sea. The exercises focused on non-conventional maritime operations including anti-piracy operations, search and rescue, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and counter-terrorism. Significantly, their deterrent value was underscored by the inclusion of anti-submarine operations, maritime interdiction, and aerial combat exercises as well.⁷ A month prior to Malabar 2007, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, spearheaded primarily by China and Russia, conducted a six-nation war game—its largest to date. In light of these developments, Malaysia and India have a common interest in encouraging dialogue and cooperation among all parties that have a stake in this region. Malaysia's approach towards the South China

6 Bonnie S. Glaser, "Armed Clash in the South China Sea", Contingency Planning Memorandum No. 14, Council on Foreign Relations, April 2012, <http://www.cfr.org/east-asia/armed-clash-south-china-sea/p27883>.

7 Anik Panda, "India and Japan Come Together", *The Diplomat*, 1 October 2012, <http://thediplomat.com/indian-decade/2012/10/01/india-and-japan-come-together/>.

Sea, the Spratlys and other islands is to jointly exploit the natural resources with regional states and external partners and to stabilise the disputed area with a view to avoiding any possible clashes or confrontations that can undermine regional security⁸ and threaten a relatively stable environment built over four decades of ASEAN cooperation.

INDIA, MALAYSIA AND POLITICAL/SECURITY DIALOGUES IN A REGIONAL CONTEXT

Defence relations on a bilateral level are also impacted by defence cooperation and security dialogues at the multilateral level. Indian naval expansion in the 1990s, which aroused some concern in ASEAN, began to be viewed more positively only after the commencement of some joint naval exercises with Southeast Asian countries. Following India's admission as a Sectoral Dialogue Partner in 1992, full dialogue partner in 1995 and a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1996, the momentum for enhanced cooperation in several fields was firmly established. As Malaysia has been firmly committed to ASEAN regionalism, bilateral relations improved as India began full participation in ASEAN-led institutions such as the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference with Dialogue Partners, ARF, in the annual ASEAN Plus Three meetings since 2002, and in the annual East Asia Summit (EAS) since 2005. India's accession to ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in 2003 provided additional impetus for Malaysia to explore further avenues of defence and security cooperation with a rising Asian power whose military strength could be deployed in Southeast Asia to ensure a "balance of forces". Indeed, the warming Malaysia-India relationship fitted neatly into Malaysia's foreign policy of practising "equidistance" in relations with all major external powers.

The first India-Malaysia Strategic Dialogue, which was held in Delhi in April 2007 set the stage for further and more substantive discussions on specific aspects of bilateral cooperation as well as

8 Interview of Ahmad Zahi Hamidi, Minister of Defence, Malaysia, *Defense News*, 4 April 2011, www.defensenews.com/article/20110404/DEFFEAT03/104040301/Ahmad-Zahid-Hamidi.

adopting common positions on regional security. The 2nd India-Malaysia Dialogue took place in Kuala Lumpur from 27–29 January 2010, while the 3rd Dialogue was held in Delhi from 12–13 April 2012. These discussions involving both the first track and second track representatives are essentially confidence-building measures for influencing policy directions on both sides to accelerate cooperation in key areas including defence and security. Exploration of appropriate mechanisms to enhance bilateral and multilateral cooperation in defence matters now includes both countries' participation in the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) and the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM+). The latter framework now includes participation by external powers Russia and the United States besides the ASEAN+3 (the ten ASEAN states plus China, Japan and South Korea).

The ADMM which has met four times since 2006 before broadening into the ADMM+ formulation in 2010 is clearly a post-9/11 invention to address new challenges and opportunities in Asian defence cooperation. India and Malaysia have a common interest in cooperation on the less controversial and less sensitive issues that fall within the ambit of Non-Traditional Security (NTS). Issues that have supported a broader convergence of bilateral security perspectives are disaster relief and humanitarian assistance. For Malaysia as for India, the ADMM+ Concept and Framework clearly indicates that threat perceptions are less important while potentials for cooperation are being steadily explored, including in defence and security matters. In combination with other complementary political/security dialogues such as ARF and EAS, the ADMM+ can play a pivotal role for intensification and institutionalisation of political, economic and security processes in many areas of NTS, especially disaster relief, pandemics, humanitarian assistance, climate change, peace-keeping operations, piracy and counter-terrorism. The significance of ADMM+ for India as for Malaysia is that this new rather informal framework of security cooperation involves all 18 states which also constitute the membership of the East Asia Summit besides also being members of the ARF.

Nevertheless, there are major challenges on this highway towards a fuller and more comprehensive engagement: (i) For Malaysia and

ASEAN, the challenge is in developing a deeper knowledge, understanding and appreciation of how India ticks, in order to optimise and maximise the synergies that arise; and (ii) For India, considering that it is a multinational state engendering the obviously inherent complexities of managing the world's largest and most populous democracy—the challenge is in developing a unity of perception and purpose on foreign policy, regional security and integration held by the foreign ministry, defence ministry, economic ministries, and even the bureaucracy to contain the tendency towards insularity, and encourage the more desirable, perhaps inevitable trend towards globalisation and universality.

INDIA-MALAYSIA DEFENCE AND SECURITY COOPERATION: LOOKING AHEAD

Defence relationships, like all other relationships evolve, develop and are constrained within given strategic contexts. Indian and Malaysian strategic perspectives converge in a number of areas: (i) rejection of big power hegemonism; (ii) concern over China's 'muscle-flexing' in the South China Sea as it carries the potential of a wider conflagration; (iii) upgrading regional cooperation on non-traditional security issues especially maritime piracy, and trafficking of drugs, women and children; (iv) viewing the EAS process as yet another forum for member countries to discuss strategies to maintain and expand the concept of "open regionalism" as the major driver of regional integration embracing the notion of inclusivity and cooperative security; (v) addressing bilaterally as well as collectively issues arising from globalisation, namely climate change and its impact on food and human security; strengthening counter-terrorism cooperation — both countries agreed during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Malaysia in October 2010, to establish a Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism including anti-terror cooperation i.e. combating religious and ideological extremists, and also cyber terrorism; (vi) containing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD); (vii) strengthening the Cooperative Mechanism on the Straits of Malacca and Singapore SOMS, in which India as a partner is contributing to two of the six IMO Projects (Project 1 and Project 4) for enhancement of navigational safety and environmental protection

in the Straits; and (viii) maritime security cooperation: India and Malaysia have been participating in the multilateral exercise in the Indian Ocean since 2007—a post-9/11 initiative. India could do more in capacity building through support for the Kuala Lumpur-based Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT) Program of Training for the entire region. All these elements of actual and potential cooperation can constitute A Common Regional Agenda for strengthening India-Malaysia bilateral as well as multi-lateral cooperation in Southeast Asia.

Malaysia is fully aware that ASEAN's strategic relationship with India cannot be viewed in isolation from the grouping's relations with external powers. Indeed, "China's future role, interests, capabilities, and influence are a major concern to India as it is to ASEAN",⁹ and also Malaysia as a principal actor in this regional organisation. The strategic redeployment of U.S. forces to the Asia-Pacific region on a ratio of 60–40 by 2020, with the lower ratio being stationed in Europe is a clear indication of the emerging shape of the Obama Administration's foreign policy of U.S. "re-engagement" in Southeast Asia. U.S. Defence Secretary Leon Panetta pointedly remarked at the June 2012 Shangri-la Dialogue, a major annual security conference in Singapore, "All of the U.S. military services are focused on implementing the president's guidance to make the Asia-Pacific a top priority; ...while the U.S. military will remain a global force for security and stability, we will of necessity rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific region."¹⁰ Panetta also singled out India, Indonesia and Singapore as "key partners" in America's renewed engagement in Southeast Asia. In this regard, both India and Malaysia would find it in their mutual interests to promote closer defence and security cooperation with the United States within the framework of bilateral as well as multilateral security in Asia.

9 K. S. Nathan (Ed.), *India and ASEAN: The Growing Partnership for the 21st Century* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations, 2000), p. 39.

10 Remarks by U.S. Defence Secretary Leon Panetta at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, 2 June 2012, <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=5049>. See also Patrick Martin, "US to shift bulk of Navy ships to Asia-Pacific", *World Socialist Website*, 4 June 2012, <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2012/jun2012/navy-j04.shtml>.

Transnational terrorism will not go away: states need to be constantly vigilant and strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation despite evidence of some recent successes—for example, the execution by Indonesian authorities of the 2002 Bali bombers, Imam Samudra, Amrozi, and Amrozi's brother Ali Ghufron in November 2008; the killing by Indonesian security forces of Malaysian terrorist operatives Dr Azahari Husin (November 2005) and Noordin Mohammed Top in August 2006; and the liquidation in Pakistan of Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden by U.S. Special Forces in May 2011. The ADMM+ is a good and inclusive vehicle. In the ASEAN Community Project, there is ample scope for Malaysia and India to work together to strengthen its 3 Pillars: ASC (security), AEC (economic), and ASCC (socio-cultural). Malaysia's proactive role in ASEAN, and India's desire for constructive engagement with Southeast Asia, strengthened also by a common historical past, are positive variables for moulding and nurturing this Common Regional Agenda for Peace and Cooperative Security in the NEW ASIA of the 21st century.

CONCLUSION: INDIA-MALAYSIA STRATEGIC CONVERGENCE?

India and Malaysia have several reasons to foster mutual cooperation in the second decade of the 21st century and beyond. Both countries have gone through some rough patches in their bilateral relationship, with Malaysia harbouring negative perceptions of India during the Cold War, and India expressing strong reservation of Malaysia's rough treatment in March 2003 of Indian IT professionals working in Kuala Lumpur. At that material time, around 40,000 Indian expatriates were working in Malaysia, including information technology professionals, engineers, doctors, academics and executives involved in joint ventures. The strong displeasure against police brutality expressed by Indian High Commissioner Veena Sikri resulted in an apology from the Malaysian government.¹¹ This episode coupled with another, the Hindraf Affair in 2007 when Malaysian police used teargas to dismiss thousands of protesting Malaysians of Indian ethnic origin over perceived socio-economic marginalisation and

11 "Malaysia to apologise to India over police arrests: report", *Daily News*, 22 March 2003, <http://www.dailynews.lk/2003/03/22/wor03.html>.

discrimination did little to help improve bilateral relations.¹² In the wake of the latter incident, the Indian community asked the government of India to terminate all present and future business projects with Malaysia. Nevertheless, the situation has improved substantially since 2008 when high-level visits by both sides culminating in Prime Minister Najib's visit to India in January 2010 and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Malaysia later in October set the stage for strengthening bilateral relations including defence and security.

The changed perceptions towards a more positive approach in India-Malaysia relations are clearly being driven by current trends in the regional environment and national interest priorities leading to a convergence of perspectives to strengthen strategic cooperation in the years ahead. Indeed, India's Look East Policy since the 1990's was designed to create a new strategic framework for New Delhi's comprehensive engagement in Southeast Asia. Yet, it must be noted that the effectiveness of India's foreign and defence policies and its role as a regional or even global power can be diluted by several factors: ongoing challenges to political unity and territorial integrity of a 'multi-national' nation, bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption, widespread poverty affecting a quarter of its population, and the Kashmir issue marked by testy relations with Pakistan.¹³ Nevertheless, as India emerges as a major regional albeit world power, New Delhi has every reason to cast its net wider, in a geographical sense, to promote its best national interests. While Malaysia is an important actor in ASEAN, India would hedge against any downswings by cultivating strong economic and defence ties with other ASEAN members such as Singapore, Vietnam and Myanmar. On Malaysia's part, the policy of equidistance would require a similar hedging strategy by not putting too many eggs into the Indian basket. Just as building a strategic partnership with China and Russia are greater priorities for India, the Malaysian inclination would be to maintain

12 "India says Hindraf crackdown a 'source of concern'", *Malaysiakini*, 1 December 2007, <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/75540>.

13 For details on a more subdued vision of India's rise, see Oliver Stuenkel, "India's National Interests and Diplomatic Activism: Towards Global Leadership?"; pp. 34–38, <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/publications/reports/pdf/SR010/stuenkel.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2013).

strong security relations with the West especially the United States while also benefiting from strong economic ties with Asia's economic powerhouse, China. Additionally, given the racial arithmetic in Malaysia's plural society which houses significant Chinese and Indian ethnic minorities, the Malay/Muslim-dominant leadership would view any strategy of leaning too heavily on either India or China as being ultimately counter-productive to the national interest. The Government's Islamisation programme since the Mahathir era of the 1980s has encouraged a tilt towards the Muslim World and especially the Arab-speaking Middle East. This politico-religious orientation on the part of the dominant Malay/Muslim ruling elite would invariably furnish some deterrent to the building of very close emotional and cultural ties with both India and China, although *realpolitik* dictates the need for pragmatism in the pursuit of political, economic and security cooperation in Malaysia's approach towards the two rising major Asian powers of the 21st century.

INDIA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN

G. V. C. Naidu

BACKDROP

The Indian Ocean is once again in the centre of global attention because of its rapidly increasing geostrategic significance, its huge natural resources, especially energy, vast amounts of global trade that passes through this ocean, immense economic opportunities this region offers, and its rapidly growing interface with other regions, particularly the Pacific. There are several other issues the analysts and policymakers would have to wrestle with such as the likelihood of great power rivalry, building an enduring Indian Ocean security architecture, and more importantly dealing with challenges non-traditional security issues pose. The key questions in the emerging environment are: as the dominant power occupying geostrategically the most vantage position with a rapidly expanding economy, a powerful military armed with the largest navy in the entire rim region and fast increasing interests, how India does perceive the unfolding security in the Indian Ocean, and what kind of security order it seeks to build. Regardless of its intents, India will remain under the spotlight and its moves in the Indian Ocean will be watched closely.

From an Indian perspective, the current atmosphere is an opportunity as well as a challenge. Undeniably, it is an historic opportunity that is presenting itself to India to emerge as the pre-eminent power in the Indian Ocean. Let us not forget that for nearly two millennia the Indian Ocean had been at the centre of much of global political, economic and cultural activity with India as the chief contributor and facilitator of these interactions. Even though none of its myriad kings and emperors ever possessed a great navy, with the possible exception of the Cholas, never once India's status came under threat. That changed fundamentally with the European voyages, which eventually

subjugated India into a colony thus drastically curtailing its crucial role in the Indian Ocean. The British Empire would not have been the largest and greatest without its domination in the entire Indian Ocean. Present conditions could not be more propitious for India to position itself as the most important player. But, it is not easy to maintain the dominant position because it will most likely be challenged by other great powers whose have strong stakes. Moreover, India will also have to face up to myriad non-conventional threats that the region is notoriously famous for from terrorism to natural disasters if its aspirations were to be realised.

Contrary to general perceptions, as a foremost strategic thinker K. M. Panikkar has articulated so elegantly and forcefully in his writings on India and the Indian Ocean in the 1940s,¹ India always harboured ambitions in the Indian Ocean ever since it gained independence. These are obvious if only one looks at initial grand plans for its navy, which included acquisition of aircraft carriers (the first one was bought from Britain in 1957, thus India was the first non-western country to possess one) and other ocean going ships.² Many of those plans failed to materialise for varied reasons partly due to a series of major land wars it had to fight and partly because of a reassuring British presence. India's consternation was evident when the British military from the Indian Ocean was replaced by the Americans in the early 1970s but to be sure it had neither the wherewithal nor the resolve to fill the power void even if it wanted to, caught as such in continental threats. Thus, it began a diplomatic initiative, i.e., to rid the Indian Ocean region of foreign military presence (read American) and to make it a zone of peace. It was an infeasible idea that it was doomed to fail. Nothing stopped the militarisation of the region by the super powers anyway. Four decades later, it is a remarkably transformed environment. Not only India now has become a

1 K. M. Panikkar, *India and the Indian Ocean* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1945).

2 According to the Ten-Year Perspective Plan (1948–1958), a balanced Navy, consisting of two light fleet carriers, cruisers, destroyers and auxiliary craft was to be built. It also emphasised the need to build up a submarine force and an air arm during that period. For details, see G.V.C. Naidu, *Indian Navy and Southeast Asia* (New Delhi: IDSA and Knowledge World, 2000).

close strategic partner of the U.S. and hence no reservations for its military presence—probably wants it to continue—it for first time is showing signs of larger ambitions in the Indian Ocean as well. Yet, New Delhi seems to understand its limitations and that the Indian Ocean cannot become India's ocean as it was once British lake, for Britain colonised most countries in the rim region from South Africa all the way up to Australia covering much of east Africa, the Indian subcontinent, parts of Southeast Asia and Oceania (Indonesia was the only prominent exception although it ruled for a short while) and had unchallenged commanding military power over the entire ocean till World War II. Obviously a repeat of that is ruled out, nonetheless India will strive for a major role in any new regional security framework. Judging from the steady increase in the funding for the navy and more vociferous statements both by politicians and senior naval officers underscoring the country's destiny in the Indian Ocean, New Delhi is beginning to take cognisance of the changing maritime security environment in general and the role of a strong navy in the advancement of its interests in particular. It is noticeable from the early 2000s onwards that policymakers have been steadily enlarging India's security perimeter from the previous narrow confines of its immediate vicinity to now covering virtually the entire Indian Ocean region with the common refrain that the area of critical interest is 'from the Hormuz Strait in the west to the Cape of Good Hope in the south and to the Malacca Strait in the east.'

It is useful to keep in mind that India's desire to dominate the Indian Ocean is borne out of necessity now than ever before. Concomitant with its emergence as a great power, its interests are also growing exponentially. Its robust Look East policy of engaging the Asia Pacific, its fast growing economic and strategic interests in the African continent, and its critical dependence on the Middle Eastern energy (aside from nearly five million Indian diaspora) compel New Delhi to envision an expansive maritime strategy. Naturally, the China factor and its likely presence and/or role loom large in the Indian strategic debate, although the government tends to be cautious in explicitly stating its stand.

The rising salience of the Indian Ocean has to be seen in the context of unprecedented changes taking place at the global level

with the world invariably moving towards multipolarity on one hand and the shift of centre of gravity to the East, on the other. East Asia's pole position is not merely because of China and India but due to the rise of the entire region. The emergence of Indo-Pacific as the new strategic framework is testimony to the fact that the fate of this region is intrinsically intertwined with these two oceans.

In the following, to understand the emerging dynamic of India and the Indian Ocean in a perspective, besides providing a brief introduction, the paper explicates the prospects and implications of the presence of extra-regional powers, analyses how the Indian Navy is fundamentally reconfiguring its force structure, the crafting of a new maritime strategy, major naval diplomacy that has been initiated, and finally enumerates India's willingness to shoulder its share of responsibility as a security guarantor. It concludes by contending that India is gearing itself to play a larger role in the Indian Ocean by suitably reconfiguring its force structure, by crafting a new maritime security strategy, and by shouldering greater responsibility with the objective of emerging as the pre-eminent power.

INTRODUCTION

It is nothing new that oceans have historically played a major role in shaping the global history. Before the Atlantic gained prominence consequent to the industrial revolution and the rise of European metropolitan powers, and later the Pacific with the ascent of the U.S. at the turn of the twentieth century, for over two millennia the Indian Ocean was the principal conduit and theatre of global activity. Skills and knowledge were transmitted through this ocean, and civilisations, cultures, languages, religions, and ideas flowed back and forth from one end to the other alongside dynamic economic interactions. This was particularly so with respect to the East Asian region, with which regions to its west had vibrant links, starting early on with India followed by the Arabs and later on the Europeans. The south Indian Chola kings were supposed to have dispatched a huge flotilla of ships in the tenth century to subdue a wayward Sri Vijayan king in Indonesia, and the most spectacular overseas maritime expedition that Admiral Zheng He led during the Ming Dynasty (from 1405 to 1433) was to the Indian Ocean. These and many other instances

signify the criticality of this ocean to the littoral states and beyond not just for their trade and economic development but equally importantly for social, cultural and religious reasons too. Even during the long colonial era, when whatever remnants of seafaring traditions of littoral states were severely curbed, any semblance of naval power was decimated and thriving regional economic links were ruthlessly snapped, the Indian Ocean's strategic and economic significance never diminished. To the contrary, it increased enormously after the Suez Canal was opened. Only after the trans-Atlantic and Pacific Oceans gained prominence before and after the Second World War does one see the relative decline of the Indian Ocean. As it turned out, this appears to be a brief interlude in its long history with the Indian Ocean once again on its way to regain its pride of place. Because of its geographical location, India's destiny is firmly tied to this ocean.

Thus, as noted the world has been witnessing a gradual shift of focus from time to time depending on the geostrategic and economic importance of oceans and various great powers that have risen along their shores—from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic and from the Atlantic-Pacific to the Pacific-Indian oceans at present. If this historical trend is any guide, the Indian Ocean will most likely once again hog the limelight. Perhaps no other ocean is so geostrategically located as the Indian Ocean, flanked by some of the most important regions and able to seriously endanger international peace and security but also significantly contribute to global prosperity. With over one-third of the world's population residing in its littoral along with its huge resource base, its potential cannot be overstated.

In order to appreciate and understand the Indian Ocean's rise, certain key global mega trends are to be taken note of. The foremost being the shift of the centre of global gravity to the east exemplified by the rise of Asia. It is no exaggeration that, given the Eurozone crisis and the relative decline of the U.S., the world's future will be increasingly determined by events in the extended region from India to East Asia to Oceania. Connected to this is the new geostrategic framework of reference that is fast gaining currency, i.e., the Indo-Pacific. The interface and interdependence between energy and mineral rich western Indian Ocean (the Middle East alone possesses nearly two-thirds share

of global oil and about 30% share of gas reserves) and the economic powerhouses of the Pacific Rim and eastern Indian Ocean, including India, could not have been starker. It is indeed what former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has dubbed the 'confluence of two seas'.³ Indications suggest that the Indo-Pacific may sooner than later replace the current dominant template, i.e., the Asia-Pacific, which means, the Indian Ocean's overall standing in the emerging geostrategic equation will get enormously enhanced and with that India's.

The other notable trends is that, even while economic and strategic considerations propel oceans into greater salience, several maritime disputes that had remained dormant for a long time are becoming major flashpoints across the East Asian region driven by geostrategic considerations and the scramble for natural resources. For instance, considered for long as characterised by islets with rocks and reefs that cannot sustain any human habitation and hence were of little no use, the South China Sea is becoming the most contested, thanks to their geostrategic location and the benefits that accrue under the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Or, who could have imagined that the uninhabited Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands would create such fissures between Japan and China.

These incidents have in turn brought UNCLOS and its relevance in the current circumstances into sharp focus leading to questioning its utility after three decades of its adoption. The world's sole super power, the U.S., has yet to ratify the Convention, and in any case it has proved to be of little use in settling the East Asian maritime disputes, which indeed can potentially destabilise the entire region and seriously hamper the current economic dynamism. As a result, the maritime security environment is undergoing pivotal shifts. A striking feature of the emerging Indo-Pacific security is the unprecedented modernisation and expansion of regional navies. Yet, it is premature to dub this either as a case of classic 'action-reaction' or as an 'arms race'.

Perhaps the most prominent of mega trends is the emergence

3 "Confluence of the Two Seas", Speech by Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan at the Parliament of the Republic of India, 22 August 2007, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html>.

of China and India as maritime powers. After having remained as continental powers for virtually throughout their history beset as such with continental problems, these two have embarked on major long-term efforts to acquire sea power that not merely enables them to operate far from their shores but also be able to fundamentally reorder the regional security architecture. True, their immediate concerns are still confined to their vicinity and their power projection capabilities are limited but the trajectory of their naval growth is unmistakable.

Specifically with respect to the Indian Ocean, China and its likely role in the coming years has become the most important issue in India. Just like India wanting to be a key player in the west Pacific region, will China too seek a rightful place in the Indian Ocean and therefore competition between the two is inevitable is a big question mark. Simultaneously, Washington, apart from advocating the Indo-Pacific concept, is nudging New Delhi to play a larger security role in the entire region. Against the above backdrop, as the most dominant power in the Indian Ocean, India's likely future role matters the most.

INDIAN OCEAN AND EXTRA-REGIONAL POWERS

No discourse on Indian Ocean security is complete unless the role of extra-regional powers is taken into account, and India especially would be mindful of it. The much talked about Asian century is already upon us and in that a key cog is the Indian Ocean. For instance, more than 80 percent of the East Asian hydrocarbon requirements, prominently of the global economic power houses like China, Japan and India, are met with imports from the Middle East and Africa. Besides, the 60-odd tankers that carry oil daily (expected to dramatically increase up to 200 in the next decade), over 40% of global trade—with some 100,000 ships a year at present—that transit the Indian Ocean are critical to the global economy. It is not simply the resources and the vital sea lines of communication that make the Indian Ocean that much critical to the rest of the world but equally its economic performance. The combined GDP of the rim countries has gone up to \$6.5 trillion in 2011 from \$5.7 trillion in 2010. With its huge resource base, Africa could well be a global cynosure in

the coming decades where the southern and eastern regions facing the Indian Ocean have already become economically quite vibrant. Hence, major extra-regional powers will continue to take interest in the Indian Ocean region.

The presence of extra-regional powers in the Indian Ocean had been a touchy subject in India for a long time. While the roots of this lie in British colonisation, it became more pronounced during the Cold War with the U.S. establishing a huge base at Diego Garcia. The American presence in itself probably would not have been an issue but for the U.S.-Pakistan anti-Soviet partnership and the deployment of the U.S. Seventh Fleet into the Bay of Bengal during the 1971 India-Pakistan War, which New Delhi saw as an attempt at gunboat diplomacy. India's alignment with Moscow and Soviet determination to remain militarily present led to the Cold War taking firm roots in the Indian Ocean region. The Cold War's end had a remarkable impact on Indian perceptions. Both the zone of peace idea and U.S. military presence became non-issues and in fact very soon the India-U.S. relationship began to gain unprecedented strategic traction. After forcing Iraq to vacate its occupation of Kuwait, in tune with its general trend of drawing down overseas military presence across the world, American deployments at Diego Garcia would have steadily decreased but for the 9/11 events, subsequent American war on terrorism in Afghanistan, and anxieties that China's rise was undercutting Washington's influence. With pivot to Asia and the new 'rebalancing' strategy, one can expect to see a robust American military presence and enhanced involvement in Asian affairs.

Faced with huge deficits and waning influence, the U.S is under pressure to streamline the defence spending as well as to rejig its strategy. Even though Washington continues to swear that bilateral alliances underpin its Asian strategy, a key element has been added in what is called 'allies and friends' wherein India figures prominently in the 'friends' category. Despite New Delhi's ambivalence, willy-nilly it is a partner with the U.S. (along with others) in the management of regional security in the Indo-Pacific region. In the light of relative decline of Japan and growing frustration with security multilateralism's inability to make a mark, India is emerging as a critical partner to American efforts to balance an ascendant and assertive China,

which is looking for ways to expand its strategic space. As part of this strategy, the U.S. has been exhorting India to increase its security role in the Indian Ocean and beyond. For the first time the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review* has averred: 'As its military capabilities grow, India will contribute to Asia as a net provider of security in the Indian Ocean and beyond.'⁴ Further, the latest strategy document, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense 2012*, makes clear that 'the United States is also investing in a long-term strategic partnership with India to support its ability to serve as a regional economic anchor and provider of security in the broader Indian Ocean region.'⁵

Perhaps a bigger issue that confronts Indian policymakers pertains to China's long-term ambitions in the Indian Ocean region. Thanks to a 2005 report by the consulting firm Booz, Allen and Hamilton to the Net Assessment Office of the U.S. Department of Defense, which coined the phrase 'string of pearls,' according to which China was purportedly building a network of facilities for military access spread around India. Whereas the rhetoric of impending China threat premised on this theory has subsided, many believe that it is matter of time before China pushes its security perimeter from western Pacific deep into the Indian Ocean as its interest grow. China's critical dependence is not merely limited to oil from the Gulf but its economic stakes in Africa are also mounting.⁶ The Middle Eastern oil may be hogging the limelight at present, but the next big thing appears to be Africa. Its huge natural resources are going to be critical driver of Asian economic dynamism. Already all the major economies—China, India and Japan—are jockeying for resources with China leading the charge. China-Africa trade has gone up from \$10 bn. in 2000 to 165 bn. by 2011⁷ and expected to cross 200 bn.

4 See *Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington: Department of Defence, 2010), http://www.defense.gov/qdr/images/QDR_as_of_12Feb10_1000.pdf.

5 *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington: U.S. Department of Defence, 2012), http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf.

6 "The Chinese are coming ... to Africa", *The Economist* online, 22 April 2011, http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/04/chinese_africa.

7 *People's Daily*, 30 November 2011, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90883/7661335.html>.

in 2012.⁸ Aside from US\$20 bn. aid pledge, China's direct investments are growing by leaps and bounds. According to the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, by the end of 2011 Chinese investments in Africa had reached \$14.7 bn., up 60 percent compared to 2009.⁹ China now receives an estimated one-third of its oil imports from Africa. No question that China's stakes will rise dramatically in the coming years. Even a cursory look suggests that the supply routes that China uses to trade with Europe and the Indian Ocean region can be vulnerable. Not to be left behind, India has stepped its relations with Africa in a big way. New Delhi has initiated India-Africa Forum Summit meetings since 2008 and has committed to provide more than \$10 bn. aid. The bilateral trade is expected to reach \$90 bn. by 2015. The India-China competition for resources (and possibly for political influence as well) will invariably grow in the coming years.

However, the animated debate about string of pearls thesis notwithstanding, it appears hyperbole since at present there is no evidence to suggest that China is actively involved either in building military facilities or attempting to 'encircle' India through a string of bases stretching from Gwadar (Pakistan), Hambantota (Sri Lanka), Chittagong (Bangladesh) up to Sittwe and Kyaukpyu (Myanmar). In order for China to use these facilities for effective military purposes, it should build a navy which can project power far from its shores and be able to undermine the existing strategic equilibrium by openly challenging India's dominant position. An unlikely proposition for the foreseeable future especially because of serious maritime disputes it is involved in East and South China Seas, the Taiwan issue, and a long gestation time and huge investments required to build a truly blue-water navy besides huge political costs of open confrontation with India. As Ashley S. Townshend rightly contends, "As the prevailing Indian Ocean power balance is tilted in favor of Washington and New Delhi, Beijing's capacity to influence international sea lanes

8 Jane Perlez, "With \$20 Billion Loan Pledge, China strengthens its Ties to African Nations", *The New York Times*, 19 July 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/20/world/asia/china-pledges-20-billion-in-loans-to-african-nations.html?_r=0.

9 *China Daily*, 20 July 2012, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-07/20/content_15601800.htm.

remains grossly inferior.”¹⁰ The Indian government too does not seem to share the concerns of the string of pearls theory. Mr Shivshankar Menon, former Foreign Secretary and current National Security Advisor, dismissed it in a speech at the National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi:

Let us look at the facts. There are no Chinese bases in the Indian Ocean today despite talk of the “string of pearls”; (which, by the way, is a pretty ineffective murder weapon as any “Clue” aficionado will tell you). There is, however, extensive Chinese port development activity in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, and active weapons supply programmes to the same states.¹¹

True, India cannot discount the prospect of China converting the civilian facilities for military activities but the issue is whether these countries (with the possible exception of Pakistan) will be willing to so flagrantly antagonise India by allowing the Chinese use these for military use. It, nonetheless, is possible that China ideally would like to be a consequential power in the Indian Ocean, a prospect India has to take into account in its strategic calculus. Where would these two countries draw the redlines to avoid stepping on each other’s toes is a moot question despite China’s assurances that it has no plans to build a military base in the Indian Ocean¹² and India making clear that it does not intend to permanently deploy naval forces in the Pacific in

10 Ashley S. Townshend, “Unravelling China’s String of Pearls”, *YaleGlobal*, 16 September 2011, http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/unraveling-chinas-string-pearls?utm_source=ListServe&utm_campaign=cb9e54bce0-YG_ListServe9_15_2010&utm_medium=email.

11 S. Menon, “Maritime Imperatives of Indian Foreign Policy”, Speech at the National Maritime Foundation, 11 September 2009, <http://www.maritimeindia.org/sites/all/files/pdf/SMenon.pdf>

12 According to the State Councillor and Minister of National Defence of China, Liang Guanglie, the “logistic supply activities do not have any connection with establishing military bases overseas.” “China has no plan for Indian Ocean military bases”, *The Hindu*, 4 September 2012, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/interview/article3855313.ece>.

general and the South China Sea in particular.¹³ In fact, the bigger challenges the non-traditional security issues are posing have made India and China to agree to cooperate in undertaking joint operations against pirates. While Beijing has offered to share technology knowhow on seabed resource exploitation¹⁴, these two have also started a maritime security dialogue in March 2012.¹⁵ Thus, one can expect to see both competitive and cooperative elements between India and other major powers. Given India's location and the sea power at its disposal, like the U.S. and many others, China too will have to depend on Indian security guarantees in the protection of trade routes at least for the foreseeable future; that in no way means Beijing does not harbour ambitions in the Indian Ocean.

CHANGING FORCE STRUCTURE OF THE INDIAN NAVY

A good way to understand India's interests, concerns and the likely strategy it seeks to pursue in the Indian Ocean is to look at how its force structure is being shaped. After the uncertainty that dogged the Indian Navy in the 1990s (dubbed as the 'dark decade'), its fortunes began to change dramatically from the late 1990s, thanks to a better appreciation of a multitude of roles it can play in advancing the country's strategic and other interests, and its crucial role in the nuclear deterrent. It also underscored a realisation that India could become a dominant power in the Indian Ocean. The navy is likely to receive a lot more attention in the coming years if the ambitious long-term plans it has chalked out for itself, qualitative and fundamental shifts in the kind of capabilities that it is seeking to acquire,

13 Admiral Nirmal Verma, a former naval chief, has categorically stated that "At this point of time, Pacific and South China Sea are of concern to the global community, but in terms of any active deployment from our side, it is not on the cards." Gautam Datt, "India against direct intervention in South China Sea disputes despite having stakes in the region", *India Today*, 8 August 2012, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/south-china-sea-india-against-direct-intervention-in-disputes/1/212305.html>.

14 Sandeep Dikshit, "India, China move to maritime cooperation", *The Hindu*, 1 March 2012, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article2951373.ece>.

15 Shubhajit Roy, "India, China to start a maritime dialogue", *Indian Express*, 2 March 2012, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/india-china-to-start-maritime-dialogue-/918922/>.

the recalibration of its role and strategy, a steady increase in naval share of defence budgets, etc., are any indication.

It is striking that the current modernisation plans are qualitatively different and quite unlike the previous ones. For instance, till recently the composition of the Indian Navy had been roughly in the ratio of sixty/fifty in terms of coastal and sea-going ships. Despite a light fleet carrier, some advanced conventional submarines and other principal combatants, it had been primarily geared to play the role of a brown-water navy. It was virtually incapable of embarking on any out-of-area operations given the very limited sea-lift capability it possessed. That began to change and since the mid-2000s a reversal of the above is seen with the addition of more sea-going rather than coastal ships. Between April 2007 and March 2012 (XI Plan period), close to 200 Acceptance of Necessity (AONs)—the initial process of obtaining a go-ahead—with a total value of nearly \$50 bn. were obtained and of these 161 contracts worth \$16.7 bn. had been concluded.¹⁶ Corresponding to growing profile of the navy, its funding has also witnessed a steady rise. Whereas in 1990–1991 the navy's share was 12.7 percent of total defence expenditure—compared to 56.3 for the army and 24.1 for air force—by 2012–2013 it had risen to 19 percent (in comparison the army and air force shares were 50 and 25% respectively), excluding the budget for the coast guard.¹⁷

Despite inordinate delays and cost overruns, the Indian Navy is aiming at three carriers by the end of this decade so that operationally at least two carriers are available at a given point of time. The Russian *Admiral Gorshkov* carrier (rechristened *INS Vikramaditya*) that was expected to be inducted by the end of 2008 is likely to join the Indian force in 2013. Similarly, the construction schedule of the 40,000-tonne indigenous aircraft carrier has also been delayed for diverse reasons. While it is likely to be launched in 2013, as the

16 Admiral Nirmal Verma, "Indian Navy's Recent Milestones", statement at his farewell press conference, 7 August 2012, http://www.indiastrategic.in/topstories1698_Indian_Navy_recent_milestones.htm.

17 The naval share of defence budget does not include the Coast Guard whose funding is provided by the Ministry of Finance. Data are computed from *Defence Services Estimates* (various years), Ministry of Defence, Government of India.

Defence Minister A. K. Antony stated in the parliament that it will be delivered in 2018.¹⁸ A third carrier is also envisaged to be constructed in India soon.

Following the 1998 nuclear tests and the urgent need to create a credible nuclear deterrent, in July 1999 the government approved a 30-year submarine building plan (nuclear and conventional), which envisioned the induction of 12 new submarines in Phase-I (2000–2012) and another 12 in Phase-II (2012–2030). Of course, the Indian Navy is nowhere near achieving these goals since the submarine programme is also beset with the problem of delays. At the same time, nonetheless, one can see some major developments. Along with the commissioning of a Russian nuclear attack submarine INS Chakra (procured on a 10-year lease) in January 2012, the indigenously built nuclear submarine *Arihant* equipped with ballistic missiles is being readied for sea trials. Another at least two more of this class are expected to be built in the future, which will be part of the nuclear triad.¹⁹ With that India would have joined a select band of nations possessing this capability. With respect to the conventional submarines, to procure six French Scorpenes was approved in 2005 but after considerable delays, according to the revised schedule the first one is likely to be delivered by 2015 (late by more than three years) and the sixth by 2018. And there is a big question mark over the next six submarines as a decision is still pending. Simultaneously, a mid-life refit of seven Kilo class submarines is underway in Russia.

As far as the destroyer programme is concerned, the first of the three Kolkata-class stealth destroyers approved in May 2000 (Project 15A) was launched in March 2006 at Mazagon Dock, Mumbai.²⁰ It

18 “Launch of navy’s indigenous aircraft carrier by 2013: Antony”, *Indian Express*, 22 August 2012, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/launch-of-navys-indigenous-aircraft-carrier-by-2013-antony/991653>.

19 Arihant submarines will be equipped with K-15 underwater launched missile capable of carrying nuclear warheads which has already been successfully tested. T. S. Subramanian and Y. Mallikarjun, “K-15 all set to join Arihant”, *The Hindu*, 27 December 2012, <http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/technology/k15-all-set-to-join-arihant/article4242325.ece>.

20 “Kolkata Class Guided Missile Destroyers India Project 15A”, *Naval Technology*, <http://www.naval-technology.com/projects/kolkata-class-guided-missile-destroyers/>.

is followed by the sanctioning of another batch of four more stealth destroyers to be built by Mazagon Dock in August 2010 (Project 15B), which will be equipped with advanced sensors and weapon systems.²¹ In addition to six Talwar-class frigates that Russia has been contracted to build (five already supplied), an ambitious indigenous programme—the Shivalik class—with stealth features and other weapons is being undertaken at the Mazagon under Project 17 and 17A, which are being constructed first time in India. The lead vessel of the class was commissioned on 29 April 2010. While three in this category have been completed, seven to nine more next generation frigates are to be built in the next phase (P-17A). It certainly marks a major milestone in terms of Indian indigenous abilities to build major warships. Under Project 28 four Kamorta class anti-submarine warfare corvettes with stealth and other advanced features are designed and built in India by the public sector Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers, Kolkata, which are scheduled for delivery beginning from 2012.

India's rapidly increasing sealift capabilities are noticeable, which indicate the enhancement of power projection and disaster response capabilities. In addition to the two Magar class landing ship tank (LST) amphibious ships, three more improved Shardul class ships have been commissioned between 2007 and 2009. Navy's sealift capability has got dramatically enhanced with the induction of the *USS Trenton* Landing Platform Dock (LPD), rechristened *INS Jalashwa*, in June 2007. With this acquisition, India has joined a select group of countries operating LPDs, which will enable it to move troops and equipment to greater distances.²² Acquisition of three to four additional LPDs appear to be a distinct possibility in the near future.

The naval air is also being modernised along with other surface and sub-surface arms. India has signed a deal to procure eight American P-8I Poseidon long-range maritime patrol aircraft (touted as the world's most advanced) to be inducted starting from 2013. Further, another eight Medium Range Maritime Reconnaissance (MRMR) aircraft are also planned to be acquired. The Unmanned

21 "Project 15B Stealth Destroyers", <http://idp.justthe80.com/naval-projects/destroyers/project-15b-stealth-destroyers>.

22 Gurpreet S. Khurana, "USS Trenton Sets Course for India: Imperatives for Navy's LPD Buy", *Defence Digest*, January-February 2006, pp. 2–4.

Aerial Vehicles for surveillance and reconnaissance purposes are the other platforms that the navy intends to acquire. The navy's strike capability will be further strengthened with the induction of MiG-29s that will be based on the Vikramaditya carrier. 56 anti-submarine helicopters are also likely to join the service from 2016.

Regardless of delays and therefore escalating outlays, the Indian Navy never had it so good. On the occasion of his stepping down as the chief of naval staff, Admiral Nirmal Verma, averred, "Today, of the 46 ships and submarines presently on order, 43 are from Indian shipyards. The intended induction programme is structured to continue at a pace such that over the next five years we expect to induct ships and submarines at an average rate of five platforms per year provided the yards deliver as per contracted timelines."²³

According to a former naval chief, by 2027 the Indian Navy will wear a brand new look with some 150 principal combatant ships and another 500-odd aircraft fleet. It is expected that nearly 49 new warships and submarines, which are on order, are likely to be inducted in the next few years. The kind of capabilities that India has been acquiring and proposes to acquire are obviously aimed at making its navy to be able to emerge as an expeditionary force, a fact acknowledged by the XII Defence Plan by making clear that the objective is to "build adequate standoff capability for sea lift and expeditionary operations to achieve desired power projection force levels, influence events ashore and undertake military operations other than war."²⁴

TOWARDS A NEW MARITIME STRATEGY

In tandem with fundamental changes in the Indian Navy's force structure an entirely new maritime strategy is also taking shape. India's maritime strategy, like others, is a dynamic process and is shaped by a wide array of factors including the prevailing security environment, threats—both real and potential—non-traditional maritime challenges, and protection of diverse maritime interests. Given major structural changes the navy is experiencing, it is logical that fundamen-

23 Admiral Nirmal Verma, "Indian Navy's Recent Milestones."

24 Manu Pubby, "12th Defence Plan Focus on Navy's 'expeditionary' ops", *Indian Express*, 4 May 2012, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/12th-defence-plan-focus-on-navys-expeditionary-ops/945283/>.

tal revisions are effected to its strategy as well. The earlier defensive strategy basically centred on coastal protection is being replaced by a strategy under which the navy would be able to undertake what is called 'out of area operations'. With continental threats becoming less severe and the Indian Ocean environment that is favourable, there has been a greater appreciation of the unique role the navy can perform in advancing diplomatic and strategic interests and to deal with a variety of maritime security challenges. Besides well known maritime interests, the draft declaration on nuclear strategy has catapulted the navy's significance in a big way. The central role of the navy as the third and probably the most important leg in the Indian doctrine of minimum deterrence has been duly recognised.

Contrary to the past practice, between 2009 and 2012, the Indian Navy to its credit has come out with several documents on maritime doctrine (*Indian Maritime Doctrine* 2004 and a revised one in 2009) and strategy (*Freedom to Use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy*, 2007). Surely it is unprecedented and these policy papers also offer some insights into India's perceptions on its maritime concerns and interests and the Indian Ocean security. For instance, the *Strategy* paper clearly delineates the regions of primary and secondary interest in the Indian Ocean and beyond. The former include the "Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, which largely encompass our EEZ, island territories and their littoral reaches; the choke points leading to and from the Indian Ocean—principally the Strait of Malacca, the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb and the Cape of Good Hope; the Island countries, the Persian Gulf, which is the source of the majority of our oil supplies; and the principal international sea lines crossing the IOR". And the secondary areas are "the Southern Indian Ocean Region; the Red Sea; the South China Sea, the East Pacific Region".²⁵ This has been emphatically underscored by the former naval chief: "Our vision encompasses an arc extending

25 *Freedom to use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy* (New Delhi: Directorate of Strategy, Concepts and Transformation, Integrated Headquarters Ministry of Defence (Navy), New Delhi, 2007), pp. 59–60. Also see Pranab Mukherjee, former Minister for External Affairs, "Admiral A. K. Chatterjee Memorial Lecture", Kolkata, 30 June 2007, <http://mea.gov.in/speech/2007/06/29ss01.htm>.

from the Persian Gulf to the Malacca Straits as India's legitimate area of interests."²⁶ The documents also clearly spell a range of activities India seeks to undertake for ensuring peace and stability by countering non-traditional security threats and deter moves that undermine its interests.

Since the Indian Navy is gearing to emerge as a force that can embark on operations in far off parts, in addition to equipping itself with sufficient capability, increasingly the emphasis is on creating a sophisticated communication network: what is called shift from "platform-centric to network-centric operation".²⁷ With a view to keep the dispersed formations linked, the Indian Space Research Organisation is developing a dedicated naval communication satellite.²⁸ As the Maritime Military Strategy clearly enunciates, the principal components of the current strategy are "prevention of the destruction of major coastal and offshore assets and disruption of coastal mercantile traffic..." coupled with limited sea control capabilities but "sea denial over larger areas in the Indian Ocean" and the "use of maritime power in support of land operations" as a "subsidiary and not a primary role".²⁹

INDIAN NAVAL DIPLOMACY

The defence diplomacy is the other dimension that has been unleashed quite prominently since the early 2000s in which the Indian Navy is the trailblazer. It began in the early 1990s as an attempt to assuage concerns about its rapid expansion by engaging some select countries of Southeast Asia such as Indonesia and Malaysia. What was to follow ever since was a sea change when seen against the backdrop of Indian reticence during the Cold War to forge close

26 Arun Prakash, "India's Maritime Strategy", Fifth Major General Samir Sinha Memorial Lecture delivered at the United Services Institution, New Delhi, 30 April 2007, <http://www.usiofindia.org/Article/?pub=Journal&pubno=568&ano=382>.

27 Arunkumar Bhatt, "Navy Building High-Speed Data Network", *The Hindu*, 6 December 2004, <http://www.hindu.com/2004/12/06/stories/2004120602511200.htm>.

28 "Indian Navy Modernisation- 2006 Year Review", <http://www.india-defence.com/reports-3134>.

29 *Freedom to use the Seas*, p. 101.

security links with any country. Emerging as a key facet of India's foreign policy, it now encompasses a range of activities most prominently with the Indian Ocean rim countries.

The naval diplomacy can be broadly categorised into two types—multilateral and bilateral. At the multilateral level, in 1995 the Indian Navy has initiated a biennial gathering of friendly naval forces at Port Blair in the Andamans called *Milan*.³⁰ While five countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Sri Lanka) participated in the inaugural meet, by 2012 it had grown to 15 (including India).³¹ Notably, for the first time Maldives, Mauritius and the Seychelles have participated in 2012 and it is likely that the other rim countries too would gradually take part in this event. The *Milan* is moving far beyond from being a confidence-building measure initiative to emerge as a major forum for professional discussions and exchanges, to hold multilateral exercises and for the promotion of interoperability. It may soon emerge as an important mechanism to deal with a variety of non-traditional security challenges in the region such as maritime terrorism, piracy, humanitarian assistance, search and rescue operations, and protection of the sea lines near the Malacca Strait, through which over 30% of global trade passes. The other significant initiative by the Indian Navy is the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) whose inaugural was hosted by India in 2008. Consisting of 32 littoral nations and held biennially, it is by far the largest gathering of naval chiefs of member states. Having taken over as the Chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IORARC), New Delhi is also making earnest efforts to reinvigorate the Association to play a key role in the promotion of

30 Apart from naval exercises, this event includes coordination of search and rescue operations at sea and establishment of interoperability among participating navies. This is followed by seminars at Port Blair on marine environmental protection and pollution control, disaster relief operations and protection of exclusive economic zones.

31 These are: Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Myanmar, the Philippines, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Thailand (Vietnam did not participate in 2012).

regional cooperation.³² Since 2007, India has also been participating in the *Malabar* multilateral exercises along with the U.S. and Japan.

The most robust naval interactions however with large a number of Indian Ocean littorals are at the bilateral level. They can broadly be grouped into three types: joint exercises of various types and frequent port visits, a variety of defence and security dialogues and strategic partnership agreements with almost all prominent countries in the region such as Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa, Oman, Iran, the U.S., etc., and a mammoth training programme it offers to the Indian Ocean littoral countries. A measure of the success of defence diplomacy can be gauged from the fact that a section on “Defence Relations with Foreign Countries” has started appearing in the Annual Reports of the Ministry of Defence since 2003–2004. Since most of the above activities are done under its auspices, the navy created a separate Directorate of Foreign Cooperation at its headquarters in 2004.

In addition to augmenting the infrastructure in the Andaman and Nicobar, Lakshadweep and Minicoy islands which form the strategic outposts and thus enhance forward operating capability,³³ alarmed by China’s economic diplomacy, the menace of piracy, and growing importance of the crucial Indian Ocean island nations, India has begun a major initiative to engage them. In early 2005 India donated a large naval patrol to Seychelles, which was followed by the gifting of a new Dornier-228 plane and two Chetak helicopters for maritime surveillance. Besides numerous defence cooperation arrangements, India also gave a fast attack craft to the Maldives coastguard. The first ever overseas Indian listening post, “complete with radars and surveillance gear to intercept maritime communication”³⁴, was acti-

32 G. V. C. Naidu, “Prospects for IOR-ARC Regionalism: An Indian Perspective”, *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2012), pp. 21–36.

33 Sandeep Unnithan, “China threat, Indian Navy unveils forward policy in Indian Ocean”, *India Today*, 2 December 2011, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/china-indian-navy-indian-ocean/1/162562.html>.

34 Manu Pubby, “India activates first listening post on foreign soil: radars in Madagascar”, *Indian Express*, 18 July 2007, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/india-activates-first-listening-post-on-foreign-soil-radars-in-madagascar/205416/0>.

vated in July 2007 in Madagascar. There have also been reports that India is keen to use the remote Agalega Islands, located in the north of main Mauritius island, for use by reconnaissance aircraft. Meanwhile, India also holds frequent bilateral and multilateral exercises with the above countries along with Sri Lanka and other island states. The Indian defence minister reportedly “assured India’s maritime neighbours of the country’s ‘unstinted support for their security and economic prosperity’”.³⁵ This facet of navy’s engagement is likely to intensify in the coming years.

INDIA AS A SECURITY GUARANTOR IN INDIAN OCEAN

The question is whether India is willing to shoulder responsibilities to match its ambitions as a security guarantor in the Indian Ocean at a time when its navy is heading towards truly blue-water capability and it is forcefully articulating its ambitions? A number of instances can be cited to suggest that India could become a major security provider. What had been episodic previously is now becoming a regular phenomenon even as the expectations from the rest of world increase, a shift that is more discernible since the early 2000s with the Indian Navy embarking on a proactive role. The swift intervention in Maldives to save the then Abdul Gayoom regime from a coup in 1988 was the first instance of Indian action that brought to the fore its potential to contribute to regional peace and stability, which in fact was welcomed by most countries. The 1999 Alondra Rainbow incident leading to the rescue of a Japanese-owned tanker that pirates had hijacked through a joint operation by the navy and coast guard demonstrated India’s capability to address a range of non-traditional security threats.

In 2002, during Operation Enduring Freedom, Indian naval ships escorted American ships in the Strait of Malacca to protect them from potential terrorist attacks, a sign of confidence that Washington has placed on Indian military capabilities. In July 2003, at the request of Mozambique, India deployed two naval ships to provide coastal security during the African Union Summit held in Maputo.

35 Angana Guha Roy, “Indian Navy’s Anti-Piracy Operations”, ICWA Viewpoint, 5 March 2012, <http://www.icwa.in/pdfs/Ang6032012.pdf>.

The gesture was repeated twice during World Economic Forum's African Economic Summit and the 4th EU-ACP Summit in 2004. The Indian naval ships were the first to reach soon after the deadly December 2004 tsunami that battered the Aceh province in Indonesia. Once again, India was first country in October 2008 to undertake patrolling of trading routes from the Gulf of Aden in the wake of major spurt in Somali piracy. The Indian Navy's role has become so critical in counter-piracy operations in the Arabian Sea that most countries—EU, China, Japan, South Korea, etc.—which are critically dependent on the energy imports from the region have joined hands with India in launching joint operations against piracy. By October 2012, India had escorted over 2100 merchant ships besides permanently basing one of its warships close to the Gulf of Aden. Thanks to intense Indian patrolling, not a single incident of piracy has been reported within 300 nautical miles of India's island territories on the west coast till November 2012. Consequently international shipping is increasingly passing closer to Indian coast due to the protection provided by the Indian Navy and the Coast Guard. In April 2012 the Indian Navy commissioned a new base, INS Dweeprakshak, on Kavaratti island of Lakshadweep partly to address piracy, sea-borne terrorism and protection of sea lanes of communication.

On its eastern flank, in addition to the development of a tri-service, full-fledged Far Eastern Command at Port Blair, a series of new bases and facilities has also been opened. The commissioning of INS Baaz in the southern fringe of the Nicobar Island at Campbell Sea in July 2012 is to keep a vigil over the Strait of Malacca. Under the defence cooperation agreement, the annual India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrols (IND-INDOCORPAT) in the Six Degree Channel, the main conduit for international shipping that passes through the Malacca Strait, in the Andaman Sea by their navies have been taking place since September 2002.³⁶ Similarly, the Indian Navy also conducts coordinated exercises with the Thai Navy under the 2005 memorandum of understanding (MoU) in the areas adjacent to their international maritime boundary lines (again close to the Malacca

36 "Joint patrolling of Andaman Sea", *The Hindu*, 11 September 2006, <http://www.thehindu.com/2006/09/11/stories/2006091101991300.htm>.

Strait).³⁷ Both these are primarily aimed at the security in and around the Malacca Strait.

Indeed, India has repeatedly expressed its preference for strengthening cooperation under a UN framework to deal with maritime challenges such as piracy and natural disasters. India has also shown unprecedented flexibility in working with a number of its counterparts especially in counter-piracy operations. In one of those rare instances, India, China and Japan have established a mechanism to coordinate the activities of their navies in the region. In fact, again in break from the past, India is far more willing to share the burden in the security of the Indian Ocean as the former naval chief unequivocally claimed: “The Indian Navy is completely cognizant of its responsibilities as the nation’s primary guarantor of security and safety not only at sea but also as the lead agency in facilitating coastal security.”³⁸

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the Indian Ocean is once again at the centre of global strategic discourse and its geostrategic significance will increase considerably in the coming years, which, in turn, has given rise to a new framework: the Indo-Pacific. A key element of the Indian Ocean security is India and its likely role. The earlier ambiguity and a sense of helplessness are gradually giving way to a clearer articulation of its interests and strategy. The kind of capabilities that the Indian Navy is acquiring along with publication of several documents boldly outlining its doctrinal and strategy aspects signal a new policy framework towards the Indian Ocean. The emphasis clearly is on developing the navy as an expeditionary force with an ability to operate in the far flung regions of the Indian Ocean.

Two of the most perceptible trends are its increasing security cooperation with the U.S. and a major engagement by the navy of its counterparts in the Indian Ocean rim. Despite assertions that Beijing has no plans to build a military base in the Indian Ocean, concerns about its long-term intent remain. However, from a short

37 “14th Cycle Of Indo-Thai Coordinated Patrol ‘Corpat’ Conducted”, 24 April 12, http://indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/PReI_120424_Indo-US-Ex-14thCORPAT-completed.pdf.

38 Admiral Nirmal Verma, “Indian Navy’s Recent Milestones”.

to medium-term point of view, China needs the Indian Navy's commanding presence in the Indian Ocean to secure the critical lanes of communication. India, on the other hand, is showing remarkable flexibility to work closely with other stakeholders, including China, in tackling myriad non-conventional threats such as piracy. Importantly, today India is far more willing to shoulder a greater burden as a security guarantor in the Indian Ocean region even as its ambitions expand in a big way. That an historical opportunity is presenting itself to emerge as a pre-eminent power in the Indian Ocean is palpable. Since the Indian Navy will play a key role in that, one can expect New Delhi to pay a lot more attention to the Indian Ocean and build a truly blue-water navy in the coming years with an ability to influence developments in the region.

INDIA'S EXPANDED MARITIME MANDALA

NAVAL INTENT AND STRATEGY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Lawrence Prabhakar Williams

India's naval engagement with Southeast Asia had begun since 2001 and had progressed incrementally.¹ It had commenced with India's economic growth, maritime-based trade and the benign maritime relationships with the states of Southeast Asia that had been the pivot for its increasing economic and maritime presence in East Asia and the East Pacific. India's naval engagement with Southeast Asia have been premised on the economic and strategic rationale of: (i) the imperatives to develop and sustain the enduring economic partnerships evident in the Comprehensive Economic Agreements with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); (ii) the enablement of the symbolic Indian naval forward presence based on convergent and cooperative security interests with Southeast Asia. In articulating the three concentric circles of the Mandala Doctrine of the inner, intermediate and the outer circles of the Mandala with India as the core state, Southeast Asia is the intermediate *Mandala*

1 A wide source of literature annotates the developments. See Vijay Sakhuja, *Asian Maritime Power in the 21st Century: Strategic Transactions, China, India and Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011); James R. Holmes, Andrew C. Winner and Toshi Yoshihara, *Indian Naval Strategy in the Twenty-first Century* (London ; New York : Routledge, 2009); Walter C. Ladwig III, "Delhi's Pacific Ambition: Naval Power, 'Look East', and India's Emerging Influence in the Asia Pacific", *Asian Security*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (June 2009), pp. 87–113; David Scott, "India's Drive for a Blue Water Navy", *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, Vol.10, No. 2 (Winter 2007–08), pp. 1- 42; Andrew C. Winner, "India as a Maritime Power?", in Toshi Yoshihara and James Holmes (Eds.), *Asia Looks Seaward: Power and Maritime Strategy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008), p. 141; and G V C Naidu, *Indian Navy and Southeast Asia* (New Delhi: IDSA & Knowledge World, 2000).

of India's realist-strategic concourse.² Southeast Asia constitutes the extended neighbourhood of India with substantive geo-economic and security interests; (iii) Reinforcing India's substantive maritime presence in its mercantile and naval dimensions has gained imperative. Southeast and East Asian theatres are now the hubs of global economic growth and India has emerged as a critical economic and strategic stakeholder of regional order and stability; and (iv) Southeast Asian waters provide the 'convergence' of strategic and security interests for India, China, United States, Japan as the premier economic powers that are constantly engaged in the region. Given the great power involvement in the region that is shaping the region's architecture, India's naval presence and proaction plays a salient role. Is the Indian naval presence welcome in the region? What roles does India play in terms of maritime security in Southeast Asia and in terms of the great power rivalry in the region?

Does India exhibit a genuine naval vision in the extended neighbourhood of Southeast Asia and the Pacific that envisions cooperative and convergent engagement? Could a sustained symbolic naval presence in Southeast Asia envision for India the vistas for transiting through to the Arctic? Does the eastern maritime linkage to the Arctic and Pacific provide India the desiderata for fulfilling its great power ambitions?

India's naval strategy is experiencing a new proaction that is witnessed by closer naval engagement with Southeast Asia that is evident by (i) new naval infrastructure developments in the Andaman Nicobar Islands viz: INS Baaz in the Campbell Bay and a series of other forward basing posts that are being bolstered for sustained naval forward presence; (ii) recent additions to the fleet in terms of surface warships in the like of frigates and expeditionary platforms that is in the process to create a genuine expeditionary operational capability; and (iii) enhanced defence trade and military exercises with Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines as part of India's Eastern Pacific naval presence tying with naval engagements with South Korea, Japan and the United States in the Far East.

2 The concept of Mandala is essentially a geopolitical spatial term. For its application in the maritime domain, see Vijay Sakhuja, *Asian Maritime Power in the 21st Century*, pp. 68–69.

India's ambient naval foci in the region go in the definition of its naval objectives of the future in three directions: one, the development of India's Arctic passage through the region and the Northeast Pacific; two, the Indian perspective and imprint of what is now the evolving Indo-Pacific theatre; and, three, the continuance of India in the South China Sea as a trading and transit state with extensive naval engagements with the littoral countries of the region. Indian naval missions in the region have been closely woven with bilateral naval exercises, defence partnerships and joint ventures with Southeast Asian states. Southeast Asia has been the leveraging point of India's launch into the Pacific and the extension of its relations in the extended neighbourhood. India's continued naval tryst with the region has stabilised its role in the region as an emerging power that is keen on regional stability assuring Southeast Asia in its dealings with China. With its ambitions of being engaged in the near region and extending its reach to the Far North and Far East, India's naval engagement remains the fulcrum of its actions. China's assertive power rise has been evident in the Southeast Asian region with impressive strides in naval and air modernisations, besides extensive infrastructure build-up on the Hainan Island Sanya Naval facility that overlooks Southeast Asia and the South China Sea. The expanding People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has gained immensely in terms of new surface warships, submarines, naval aviation and has the greatest advantage of being a littoral power that could project preponderant force in the region. Its naval and air orders of battle have the advantages of proximity and dominant force projection, which extra-regional navies (with exception of the U.S. Navy) cannot field in the region. India's naval proaction has the dilemma of whether to contend with a dominant PLAN in the region or merely play a secondary balancer role to the regional powers that would provide limited deterrence to the PLAN by its presence in the region.

INDIA'S MARITIME STRATEGY AND ITS EASTWARD FOCI

India's maritime strategy has been evolving to a definitive Eastward focus since 2007. The release of its capstone maritime doctrine of Indian Maritime Doctrine INBR 8 (April 2004) was the basis of India's naval activism. This was followed by other statements, viz. the Indian

Navy's *Vision Statement* (May 2006) and *Roadmap to Transformation* (October 2006). The *Freedom to Use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy (IMMS)* (September 2007) was the benchmark document that provided the initial impetus of a new Indian vision of articulating its eastward focus.³ The Maritime Doctrine elucidates the conception of maritime power and its strategic objectives and the desiderata of its employment in the pursuit of national strategic goals and missions.⁴ Several platform and infrastructure developments attribute to the growing interest of India for adding sinews to its eastern fleet that is gaining momentum with hosting and conducting fleet exercises with the Southeast Asian navies and with the Pacific powers like South Korea, Japan, United States and even Russia. The Naval Order of Battle of the Eastern Fleet has slightly more fleet warships than the Western Fleet in the order of 24 fleet warships, 7 submarines and 22 other ships vis-à-vis 20 fleet warships, 9 submarines and 25 other ships.⁵ As indigenous and foreign procurement orders are fulfilled, the sustaining of the numbers of the fleet is ensured. The Indian Navy's eastward foci could be surmised in the following trends and impact that reflect the Navy's priorities and operational capacity.

Anchoring benign and cooperative exercises

These have been one of India's foremost priorities in Southeast Asia. The Indian Navy's role in the region has been in the accents promoting benign and cooperative maritime security. The Indian Navy's cooperative maritime initiative-MILAN- provides the perspective for bilateral and joint naval manoeuvres in the region in the light of shared threat perceptions of transnational scope. The MILAN is a comprehensive Track I exercise with perspectives exchanged on

3 Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), New Delhi, *Freedom to Use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy*, 2007.

4 Iskander Rehman, "India's Aspirational Naval Doctrine", 15 October 2012, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/10/15/india-s-aspirational-naval-doctrine/e177>.

5 Cmde Ranjit B. Rai (Retd) and Gulshan R. Luthra, "Indian Navy: Power-packed for A Strong Nation," December 2009, <http://www.indiastrategic.in/topstories454.htm>.

issues of Ocean Governance, Sea Piracy, Terrorism and Disorder at Sea. The Indian Navy has been hosting this endeavour since 1995 and today more than 30 states have featured their presence and participation. MILAN had featured Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Besides the multilateral exercise, India has been working on bilateral maritime initiatives with Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam to augment the scope of maritime intelligence sharing concerning transnational threats of maritime piracy and terrorism and optimise the institutionalisation of contacts. Besides the MILAN, India has launched the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) since 2008 and this has engaged the Southeast Asian nations as part of the extended Indian Ocean community.

Augmenting humanitarian and disaster response capacities

The Indian Navy was one of the first responders to the Asian Tsunami 2004 in the manner it responded to the humanitarian crisis and disaster. The spontaneous Indian participation in the post-Tsunami relief and recovery efforts has been most impressive. Indian naval ships despite having to weather the ravages of the Tsunami in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands Command base swung into action to extend immediate water and medical relief supplies to Aceh in Indonesia, Phuket in Thailand, besides assistance to Sri Lanka and Maldives. Indian Naval ships, aircraft, helicopters, and personnel responded to the Tsunami in the Indian Ocean promptly. The Indian Navy deployed 32 naval ships, seven aircraft and 20 helicopters in support of five rescue, relief and reconstruction missions. In the concerted effort of Operation Unified Assistance, the Indian Navy was joined by the U.S. Navy expeditionary strike group of the USS Theodore Roosevelt and the USS Richard Bonhomme along with the detachments of the Japanese Coast Guard and the Royal Australian Navy in the concerted humanitarian relief operations in the Thailand and Indonesia.

India has been building expeditionary capabilities that would have significant capacity for playing an important role in humanitarian disaster relief by the deployment of these platforms to provide assistance. The new platforms of INS Jalashwa and the INS

Airavat augment enormous capacity besides the Navy is inducting three new platforms (landing platform docks) that would provide enhanced expeditionary capacity for crisis response as well as disaster response.⁶ The deployment of these platforms in the Eastern Fleet and their frequent deployment in Southeast Asia as well as the extended region provide the Navy with a good operational capability.

Deployment of task forces

These have been a frequent event with the Eastern Fleet even as the Navy had dispatched taskforces into the South China Sea and extending it to the Pacific. In June 2012, the Eastern Fleet task force of four warships embarked on a visit to East Asia carrying out exercises with the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force. En-route to the north-eastern Pacific, the ships made port calls in Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia and Philippines. The task force on return journey had also embarked on exercises with the PLAN. The deployment of annual task forces to Southeast Asia and the Pacific signifies India's intent and capability to retain and sustain the economic and energy interests in the Sakhalin and the strategic stake of the Navy in the Pacific. The deployment of taskforces and the expeditionary capability reflect the Indian Navy's objective of "desired power projection force levels, influence events ashore and undertake military operations other than war".⁷ The deployment of the taskforces have been sustained with various tiers of exercises with Southeast Asian navies and the Pacific navies of South Korea, Japan, Russia and the United States demonstrating the capacity and varied complexity of the platforms with various naval forces. The deployment of taskforces and the exercises symbolise the Indian Navy's sustained intent and capacity for closer naval partnerships with the Southeast Asian navies.

6 Abhijit Singh, "The Indian Navy's New 'Expeditionary' Outlook", ORF Occasional Paper # 37, October 2012 (New Delhi: Observer Research Foundation).

7 "12th Defence Plan: Focus on Navy's 'expeditionary' ops", *The Indian Express*, 4 May 2012, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/12th-defence-plan-focus-on-navy-s--expeditionary--ops/945283>.

Increasing importance to interoperability

The Indian Navy's exercises with Southeast Asian navies have varied levels of scope with the different naval forces of the regions. Indian naval operations have the objective to develop capacity for interoperability with the various Southeast Asian navies although each force varies in terms of different operational capacities and platform capabilities. Interoperability may not be feasible with the vast differences in training, operations and platforms, yet the exercises with each of the navies provide the Indian Navy familiarity of operations and development of capacity. Although the exercises cannot accrue real offensive capability, the scope in terms of cooperative and constabulary elements remains high. From the Indian Navy's point of view, these exercises enhance maritime domain awareness, sharing of maritime intelligence and enhance the benign scope of ties. India's hosting of the MILAN and IONS reciprocally brings in the Southeast Asian navies to Indian waters for similar exercises that serve to enhance interoperable features of the various operational capacities of the different navies with the Indian Navy. Interoperability serves as the benchmark of the closer degree of naval cooperation and operational capacity. The Indian Navy's operational capacity and its doctrinal focus endeavour towards greater cooperative capacity between its force and the navies in the region.

Expanding great power naval engagement

India joins the great power concert in Southeast Asia with its maritime forward presence. India features as a major power along with Japan and South Korea in terms of economic and strategic engagement. India's naval engagement in the region would continue as a significant factor even as the PLAN expansion and its surge into the Indian Ocean region continues. India would see it as a strategic engagement in its ties with Southeast Asian navies and a counterbulwark to the PLAN expansion in the region. Even as India expands with its naval engagements with the United States, Japan, South Korea, Russia and Australia in the Eastern Pacific as well as in the Indian Ocean region, India's role as a significant actor in the region enhances in its credibility. India's gradual increase of the size and the sophistication of its warship dispatches into the region and the

increasing complexity of its naval exercises with Pacific powers of Japan and South Korea; its participation in the Western Pacific Naval Symposium and the enlargement of the Malabar series within Indian and the Pacific waters burnishes India's credentials to an important benchmark of its power status. With the Indo-Pacific gaining its significance in the context of the new power alignments with the U.S. rebalancing to the Pacific, the U.S. access to Darwin in Australia all raise the prospect of India's greater naval involvement in this theatre.⁸

Sustaining India's naval footprint

This would be a strategic priority for the Indian Navy even as it adds new platforms into the Eastern Fleet. India's nuclear submarine platform is deployed in the Eastern Fleet and the addition of the INS Vikramaditya India's next aircraft carrier to the Eastern Fleet would significantly enhance carrier air power. With the increase of the frigates and destroyers to the fleet that comes by way of the carrier task group; it would provide the lateral platform expansion that comes along with the new combat capabilities. The newly inducted 'Shivalik' and 'Teg' class ships are a manifestation of the navy's desire to acquire strategic assets. The INS Teg was inducted in May 2012, followed by the INS Sahyadri, commissioned a few weeks later are the two latest multi-purpose frigates to have joined the Fleet. The frigates are tasked for a broad spectrum of maritime missions that adds to the 'strategic posturing' and deployable for long-term maritime missions.⁹ India's support ships like long range oil tankers are being added to the fleet that would provide the fleet longer legs and would sustain the naval footprint in the region. India is also negotiating with Russia for three additional frigates of the Krivak-IV class that would serve to increase the platform numbers and enhance combat versatility of the fleet deployments.

8 Arun Sahgal, "India and US Rebalancing Strategy for Asia-Pacific", IDSA Comment, 9 July 2012, http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/IndiaandUSRebalancingStrategyforAsiaPacific_asahgal_090712; Walter Ladwig, "Delhi's Pacific Ambition".

9 Abhijit Singh, "India's Maritime Outlook Acquires Strategic 'Heft'", 15 August 2012, <http://maritimeindia.org/india%E2%80%99s-maritime-outlook-acquires-strategic-%E2%80%98heft%E2%80%99>.

Reinforcing naval basing infrastructure

This has been in the current phase of India's defence expenditure. The Ministry of Defence had sanctioned the construction and the commissioning of the INS Baaz in the Campbell Bay of the Andaman Nicobar Island chain. The INS Baaz provides an important basing facility as a replenishment hub of the fleet. Besides it overlooks the Six Degree Channel overlooking the Strait of Malacca. The naval air facility would enable the receiving and deploying of long range planes that could bring in supplies as well as support of fixed and rotary naval aviation in the area. Naval basing infrastructure could serve as important storage points for the dispensing of humanitarian and disaster relief as well as aid in the service and replenishment of the fleet ships. As new naval infrastructure is added, it multiplies basing points for the fleet and also hosts maritime surveillance and reconnaissance assets that are vital in the region in contending with the various asymmetric threats at sea. Besides the INS Baaz in Campbell Bay, new facilities are being constructed, upgraded and commissioned in Kamorta (Nicobar Islands) and Diglipur (Andaman) as well. Deployments of airborne surveillance and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) would go a long way to maintain and sustain better Maritime Domain Awareness in the region.¹⁰

The Indian Navy's eastward focus is thus comprehensive and is aimed to fulfil a broad range of tasks from the essence of fleet build-up and maintenance to the sustaining of a long range naval presence in the region. With the addition to the platforms and the enhancement of combat efficiency, the Eastern Fleet aims at the sustained deployment of its taskforces in the region and beyond that goes to support the national economic and strategic goals of the country.

INDIA'S NAVAL ENGAGEMENT WITH A MILITARY MODERNISING SOUTHEAST ASIA

India's naval engagement with Southeast Asia comes at a time when Southeast Asian navies and air forces are being modernised. Several

10 "New Naval Air Station 'INS Baaz' commissioned by CNS", <http://indiannavy.nic.in/press-release/new-naval-air-station-ins-baaz-commissioned-cns-0>

factors attribute to the naval and air modernisation of the Southeast Asian countries even as perceptions of China's colossal military modernisation is the primary catalyst. The Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea provide a maritime thoroughfare of the Eastern Fleet's warships even as Indian energy commerce comes from Sakhalin in the Russian Far East. Over half of India's maritime bound commerce moves in the eastern flank of its borders and the energy supplies from Sakhalin to Mangalore in India's Southwest coast are among the bulk cargo that moves in this sector. The imperative of Indian naval deployments in the region are not only for the securing of the sea-lanes of commerce but also build India's benign and cooperative accents of maritime presence that has cordial relations with Southeast Asia as well as augment its role as a major naval power in the Indian Ocean region having its presence in the region.

Naval and air forces modernisation in Southeast Asia are providing for increased interoperability between the navies of the region and the extra-regional naval forces. The imperative for the naval-air capabilities build-up by almost all Southeast Asian countries is due to their maritime connectivity to the Indo-Pacific Oceans and the expansive archipelagic sea-space of the region that connect with Northeast Asia and the Far East. It brings the convergence of the great power navies into the region and their passage through Southeast Asian waters funnelling in and out of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In terms of the technological impact and the operational effectiveness, the impact of defence transformation and the Revolution in Military Affairs has induced critical synergies in force multipliers and network-centric warfare capabilities in countries like Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand with comparable force modernisations.

Naval and Air defence transformation efforts are focused on rapid logistics, stealth platforms, precision strikes, Aerial Early Warning and joint warfare with the naval forces providing the platforms for mobility and strike and the air forces for reconnaissance and strike missions.

A second reason for the trend of modernisation in naval and air forces has been the presence of extra-regional naval forces in the region and their forward presence in the Indian Ocean Region,

South China Sea and the East Pacific. The forward presence of the U.S., Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Australian and the token presence of the Western navies of the United Kingdom and France has its impact on naval force modernisation in the region.

The third reason for the naval and air forces modernisation in Southeast Asia has been the impact of the Chinese military modernisation and its ripple effect on Southeast Asia. The growing fleet and capabilities build up of the PLAN in terms of long-range endurance surface combatants, conventional and nuclear submarines are a critical factor. The PLAN and the PLA-Naval Aviation have been expanding in terms of new surface combatants, maritime patrol craft and naval aviation rotary and fixed wing aircraft deployed in the South Sea Fleet. However, Southeast Asian naval and air forces are miniscule compared to the growing platform and performance capabilities of China's armed forces, though they do have a deterrent value.

The fourth reason for the naval and air forces modernisation in Southeast Asia is the Global War on Terror and the synchronising of the Southeast Asian armed forces to the asymmetric and low intensity conflicts. The role of special forces in conjunction with naval and air elements are optimal means in the combat of terrorism and insurgencies in the region. This is quite evident in Indonesia and Philippines. Their respective armed forces have relied on naval and air elements in enhancing tactical mobility and effectiveness in the combat of terrorism.

The fifth reason for the continuing naval and air forces modernisation is evident in the U.S. cooperation and arms sales to the countries of the region. This is to strengthen U.S.-Southeast Asian cooperation in the War on Terror with emphasis on interoperability and the defence transformation process. The United States declared Thailand and Philippines as non-NATO allies in October 2003 with a view to facilitate transfer and sales of military hardware.

The sixth reason is the role and new relevance of regional alliances and bilateral engagements of Southeast Asian countries with the United States and the Five Power Defence Arrangements. The Five Power Defence Arrangements had been reinvented. They are boosted for new grounds of cooperation among the naval and air

forces of Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom converging their security forces in the War against Terror.

India's transforming naval engagement commenced with Singapore in 2001 and it has steadily expanded into a variety of bilateral and multilateral naval exchanges including the Milan series that India hosts annually off the Andaman & Nicobar Islands since the 1990s.

India-Singapore military ties evolved from the Defense Cooperation Agreement of 2003 and the Joint Military Exercises Agreement of 2007. India's SIMBEX naval exercises with Singapore have been conducted in the Bay of Bengal, and in South China Sea in 2005, 2009, and 2011. They have been mainly joint anti-submarine warfare exercises. The 2005 Singapore-Indian Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX) exercise was an epoch event that saw the deployment of India's naval task force consisting of India's flagship aircraft carrier INS Viraat along with two powerful destroyers (INS Rajput and INS Ranjit), a missile corvette INS Khukri and a fleet supply ship (INS Shakti) that provided high visage through the deployment into South China Sea waters.¹¹ The SIMBEX 2011 exercises sustained a continuing willingness by India to project naval power into the South China Sea region with its exercises with the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN).¹²

The momentum in defence relations was built resulting in the enhancing of the ties in the form of Defence Cooperation Agreement in 2003 and subsequently in the economic sphere; the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) emerged. India's engagement with Singapore has been multifaceted, and has involved operational dimensions of joint naval exercises in South China Sea and in Indian waters; joint air exercises; co-locating Singapore air assets in India and also naval training in surface, sub-surface, naval aviation etc. Overall, the scope of the engagement had been multi-tiered employing UAVs, thermal imaging sights and joint execution of mission under a unified command structure. Singapore's participation in the *Malabar-07-02* naval exercises in the Bay of Bengal along

11 David Brewster, "India's Security Partnership with Singapore", *Pacific Review*, Vol. 22, No. 5 (December 2009), pp. 597–618.

12 "Indian, Singaporean Navies Hold War Game in China's Backyard", *IANS*, 24 March 2011.

with the U.S., Japanese, Indian and Australian naval platforms along with maritime air power has been grand signature event for the RSN as it engaged in a series of exercises with the naval concert in the region.

The RSN's naval exercises with India, MILAN and SIMBEX, have been one of the most successful bilateral exercises that have been in steady growth since 1993. The scope and complexity of these exercises have been increasing to include anti-submarine warfare exercises besides a host of other joint initiatives including sharing of maritime intelligence. India's non-intrusive approach to Southeast Asia has been noted by the ASEAN countries and there have always been convergences in the position of India and Singapore along with other ASEAN states in matters of regional economic cooperation and also in terms of cooperative maritime security contending against piracy, maritime terrorism, human smuggling, narcotics, etc. in the Andaman Sea and the approaches to the Straits of Malacca. India and Singapore have exercised in the South China Sea with units of the Eastern Naval Command sailing into the region and have undertaken a string of such exercises with Japan, Russia and the United States in the Eastern Pacific.

India-Malaysia naval engagement has been substantive and has involved reciprocal engagement in Milan, the Defence Expo, and the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (LIMA) exhibitions. Malaysia's interest in joint development of submarine warfare tactics, maintenance of the Scorpene submarines has been in priority with its engagement with India. Important initiatives have been made with regard to the capacity building of the Directing Staff of the Malaysian Defence Forces, specially the Royal Malaysian Navy to be trained in India.¹³ India's expertise in missile development, communication systems and the servicing of Russian military and naval hardware with regard to the Sukhoi 30 MM, the earlier purchase and maintenance of 18 MiG 29N Fulcrum aircraft and the training of Malaysian Sukhoi

13 Pankaj Kumar Jha, "India's Defence Diplomacy in Southeast Asia", *Journal of Defence Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, January 2011, http://idsa.in/system/files/jds_5_1_pkjha.pdf.

pilots are all high on the agenda of the joint endeavours.¹⁴

India-Indonesia maritime ties have been quite enduring. India-Indonesian security and naval cooperation ties emerged with the 2001 *Defence Cooperation Agreement*. The India-Indonesia Joint Commission discusses various maritime issues of concern and in the July 2012 meeting of the commission, Indonesia discussed with India about the overlapping disputed water stretches with China around the Natuna islands in the southern reaches of the South China Sea.

India has core competencies with regard to servicing of Indonesian naval hardware, while Indonesia has evinced keen interest in importing batteries for torpedoes, engines for Parchim-class corvettes, and repair facilities for its Type 209 submarines. Earlier in 2004, India sought to institutionalise the arrangement pertaining to joint patrolling of the Malacca Straits and the adjoining seas, although Indonesia was reluctant.¹⁵ Indonesia is keen to procure naval surveillance equipment from India like radars, and wants co-production of defence equipment based on the principle of maximising comparative advantage. Indonesia's armed forces especially its navy offers a reliable partner to the Indian Navy for joint exercises. In the context of China seeking access and basing with Timor Leste, India's engagement with Indonesia and the vast archipelagic network offers it several access advantages.

India-Vietnam maritime security relations commenced with the India-Vietnam *Defence Agreement* of 1994 that was later strengthened by a *Defence Assistance Agreement* in 2000, a *Strategic Partnership Agreement* in 2007, upgraded with Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on *Defense Cooperation* in 2009. Indian naval warships have been visiting Vietnam since 2000. The naval and strategic engagement had gained impetus since 2009 with the MoU on Defense Cooperation. It had enhanced the salience of coordinated patrols by the Vietnamese sea-police and the Indian coast guard, repair programmes for Vietnam Air force fighter planes and training of

14 "Malaysia to Ask India to Train Pilots for Sukhoi Jets", *The Hindu*, 11 June 2006.

15 Vibhanshu Shekhar, "India- Indonesia Relations: An Overview", IPCS Special report, No. 38, March 2007, http://www.ipcs.org/pdf_file/issue/477138183IPCS-Special-Report-38.pdf.

Vietnamese Air Force pilots. Indian avionics supplies for Vietnamese Russian made air-to-air missiles have been notable. In 2005, nearly 150 tonnes of naval accessories and ordinance were transferred to the Vietnamese Navy.¹⁶ Vietnam's strategic calculus in South China Sea is quite evident. Vietnamese cooperation in countering China in South China Sea and Indian Ocean region are vital pillars to India's Look East naval engagement. The imperative to strengthen the surveillance and communication network and assisting Vietnam along with crucial maritime intelligence sharing have emerged as vital objectives in the Indian collaboration with Vietnam. India's interest in the Danang naval base had been there for quite some time and its use of the Cam Ranh Bay for exercises with Vietnam in the South China Sea has been one of the locus points of India's naval engagement in the region.

India-Philippines naval ties have been derived from the 2006 *Agreement Concerning Defense Cooperation*, and the decision in 2009 to set up a strategic dialogue mechanism for policy coordination. In May 2012, four Indian warships of the taskforce had visited Philippines in Subic Bay even as they had journeyed across the South China Sea¹⁷ and the recent conflagration of Philippines with China over the Scarborough Shoal that had elicited tensions from both sides has enhanced Manila's interest in defence cooperation with India.

Besides the major countries of Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Vietnam, India's forward naval engagement is thus built incrementally with Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Philippines. Engaging these countries has accrued India the critical maritime access and the footprint into the region; built on the synergies of existing naval exchanges with the major countries. India's contribution in terms of capacity building, maritime infrastructure projects, turnkey projects and maritime intelligence sharing has been vital.

India's initiatives of the *Milan* and the *IONS* have accrued the institutional value addition to the prevalent ties and have fostered

16 "Enhancing Indo-Vietnam Defence Cooperation: Vietnamese Perspective", Paper Presented by Lieutenant Nguyen Thang Anh at Joint USI-IDIR Seminar, Delhi, 4 October 2007.

17 Indrani Bagchi, "Four Navy Ships in South China Sea to Mark Indian Presence", *Times of India*, 24 May 2012.

better naval engagement providing India 'a naval corridor in the South China Sea all the way to the East Pacific' to engagements with Japan, South Korea, Russia and the United States.

INDIA'S NAVAL ENGAGEMENT IN THE REGION: SYMBOLIC OR SUBSTANTIVE?

India's maritime engagement with Southeast Asia has all the benign elements of building maritime security in the region. It has a multilateral scope but the operationalisation has thus far been on a bilateral basis. Certain reasons attribute to this factor. The Indian naval presence in the form of benign exercises and the readiness to aid to build capacity in the navies of Vietnam, Philippines are incremental measures to sustain its forward presence. It aids in the quest of a sustained presence in the South China Sea as well as developing linkages to go beyond to the North-east Pacific and the Arctic. The maritime engagement in the form of naval exercises and maritime cooperation has varied, with higher levels of operability with Singapore, and diversified engagement with Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Philippines. Naval capabilities of the regional navies have determined the scope of India's naval exercises and the extent of technical collaboration.

One of the significant factors of India's naval engagement in the region has been that it has developed a benign approach to all the countries of the South China Sea region by engaging in varied levels of naval exercises. The 2012 naval exercises with the PLAN demonstrates the fact that India's articulation of its interest in the region is to maintain cordial relations with China despite China's continued opposition to India's presence in the region. Benign naval diplomacy has enhanced India's growing acceptance of India's presence in the region. In the face of assertive Chinese naval expansion, the Indian naval presence and engagement appear modest and sustaining in terms of its benign and cooperative intent of building regional capacity in various aspects of naval operations in the region.

India's defence diplomacy in terms of its naval engagement has involved provision of military spares supplies and aiding the prospect of sales and servicing of naval equipment including naval missiles, torpedoes and naval craft. These have been pivotal to the ongoing

naval exercises and they have strengthened the naval ties of India with the region. India's naval weaponry have been predominantly Soviet/Russian manufacture, which has helped aid the Malaysian and Vietnamese navies wherever the relevant spares and services have been required by them. Indian aid has also come by way of deputation of technical personnel as short-term training teams, in the capacity of civilian and military advisers being seconded to these countries.

India's naval engagements in the region have experienced an enhancing effect with every exercise and with the navies of the region as well as East Asia. The composition of the Indian naval task forces and the regional partners has created the impact that the Indian naval presence is for the long haul and regular annual operation in the region. Bilateral dialogue with the regional naval leadership has been addressing the traditional issues of naval power balance in the region as well as the management of various non-traditional maritime security challenges.

These factors have thus enabled India to elucidate its rights to trade and transit in the South China Sea and also create the space for its quest to access the Northeast Pacific and Eastern Pacific. India's naval engagements with the Pacific powers provide it the ambit and scope for its presence in the Indo-Pacific as a major player with benign naval ties with all the major powers in the region. India's trade and commerce as well as its ambitions to build an Arctic presence and bolster its Indo-Pacific presence motivate its eastward expansion and consolidation.

India's continued naval engagement in the region would provide it with its crucial strategic influence and economic connectivity to East Asia and the Pacific. India's naval engagement would serve three purposes. One, it would provide India the enduring footprint of its maritime trade with the region and the Pacific thus reinforcing the long-term Indian economic domain in the region's institutional frameworks. The Indian Navy's role is not only in terms of regional engagement with Southeast Asia, but it also emerges as the vanguard to the growing energy and economic interests in the region. Two, India's active naval engagement comes in the region at a time when the U.S. rebalancing of its naval and air forces are being initiated. The U.S. rebalance induces new strategic initiative from its close allies

of Japan, South Korea and Australia of reenergising their strategic commitments in the region in response to an enhanced Chinese naval and air build-up.

India's response to this strategic initiative is vital as it ensures a niche for India in the region in the context of India's commitment to the region and the decisive response to the Chinese build-up in the region. Three, as Southeast Asia expects greater Indian commitment in the region in the face of the Chinese assertiveness, the region's expectations go beyond India's naval deployments. They transcend to greater defence-industrial relations and defence diplomacy and India's greater role in the region's security. The greater salience given to the South China Sea dispute in the strategic dialogues that India has with Indonesia, Vietnam and Philippines reflect the region's expectations of India's continuing engagement and sustained commitment. Reinforcing U.S. alliance commitments and staking participation in the regional economic frameworks could be effective

The United States naval presence in the region and its recent efforts to rebalance its forces in the Indo-Pacific has been a strong determinant that induces the naval engagement of India in the Southeast Asian and Indo-Pacific region. The United States signal determination to economically engage in the region through its institutional frameworks of the Trans Pacific Partnership; the reinvigoration of bilateral alliance commitments to Japan, South Korea and Australia; the reinforcement of aid and security guarantees to Philippines and Thailand as allies, works to seal the greater U.S. presence in the region. The context of India's strategic engagement with the United States in the maritime domain adds greater salience to India's engagement in the region. This raises the prospects of expanding the India-United States *Malabar exercises* thus amplifying India's naval outreach in the Indo-Pacific oceans.

The *Malabar* engagements in the Arabian Sea and the East Pacific serve to enhance India's critical accrual of operational experience and a sustained footprint in the maritime region from the Arabian Sea to the East Pacific. The Malabar 07-02 exercises brought in Singapore along with the United States, Japan and Australia in the Bay of Bengal signalling the expansion of the naval engagement of the United States in the region along with India. The U.S. access to

Darwin in Australia, its access to the Changi naval base in Singapore and the continuous forward presence in the region transiting through the South China Sea provides the multiple engagement opportunities that it enjoys for naval engagement with Southeast Asia and with India. Expanding the Malabar exercises with Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and Philippines would be an approach that would provide India and the United States options to naval presence and engagement in Southeast Asia and the South China Sea.

INDIA'S FUTURE FOCI IN THE REGION

India's future directions and foci in the region lie with its intents and growing capabilities to a stake in the Arctic; its continued tryst in the South China Sea since much of its economic-commercial and strategic interests lie in the region; and also in the elucidation of its role in shaping the maritime commons in the Indo-Pacific. Southeast Asia thus provides for India the intermediate Mandala that provides it the ballast to launch and sustain the three different foci.

The Arctic Connection provides for India the rationale for proactive blue water capability that would provide India with its global power ambitions. India's engagement in the Arctic dates back to nearly nine decades when it signed the Svalbard Treaty as a dominion of the British Empire. In July 2007 India established a scientific research station Himadri at Ny Alesund that conducts its operations under the National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCAOR), under the Ministry of Earth Sciences. India has undertaken seven expeditions to the Arctic. It has also placed orders for a dedicated vessel for polar expedition which is expected to join the NCAOR in 2012. India's interests in the Arctic lie in the shaping of the evolving Arctic order.¹⁸ India is keen to conduct scientific surveys and experiments to study the impact of climate change and its impact on weather patterns; India has a proven Antarctic experimentation base and can use similar expertise to study the Arctic for

18 Vijay Sakhuja, "The Arctic Council: Is there a Case for India?", <http://voiceofindia.com/in-focus/the-arctic-council-is-there-a-case-for-india/996>. See also Shyam Saran, "Why the Arctic Ocean is important to India," *Business Standard*, 12 June 2011, <http://business-standard.com/india/news/shyam-saran-whyarctic-ocean-is-important-to-india/438716/>.

its resource assessment and exploitation. The imperative to conduct regular expeditions to the Arctic would thus involve transit through Southeast Asia accessing to the Northeastern Pacific bound for the Arctic. It would thus require dedicated shipping as well as secure sea routes in this direction. India's Arctic connection essentially motivates it to sustain its maritime footprint in the Southeast Asian region and beyond since they serve as the main routes.

The Indo-Pacific context constitutes the new vistas of India's ambient maritime/naval vision that would heighten its economic and strategic engagement with the Indian and Pacific Oceans. India's engagement with Japan, South Korea, Australia, Russia and the United States expands its strategic vistas that encompass trade and commercial flows towards the Pacific. The Indo-Pacific perspective for India counters the Chinese assertion that India's presence in the South China Sea is irrelevant and non-essential. Expanding India's economic ties with Australia and New Zealand has become a new reality given the larger Indian diaspora in the region. Thus India's eastward focus is now omni-directional, radiating into the Pacific in all directions.¹⁹ The U.S. recognises this geo-political and geo-strategic reality since the U.S. Navy's engagements with the Indian Navy encompass the Malabar series naval exercises in the Indian Ocean as well as the Pacific Ocean where the Indian Navy joins with its Japanese and U.S. counterparts. The U.S. elucidation of the Indo-Pacific rests on the premise that the Indian and Pacific Oceans constitute an inter-linked geopolitical space, not only because it is important to "global trade and commerce" but also because they impact on strategy. India's engagement in the Indo-Pacific opens the vistas of developing strategic partnerships that would perch India in a system-shaping role in the region. The Indo-Pacific opens for India partnerships in the outer concentric circle or Mandala that is beyond the intermediate Mandala of Southeast Asia.

The South China Sea access would continue to be in the inclusive scope of India's maritime interests even as economic and commercial and energy opportunities abound. China's assertive claims in the

19 Shyam Saran, "Mapping the Indo-Pacific", *The Indian Express*, 29 October 2011, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/mapping-the-indopacific/867004/0>.

region injure all the Southeast Asian nations' littoral and continental claims. As a non-littoral state and trade and transit state, India's maritime access to trade and transit is vital since the sea lanes link to India's economic, commercial and energy interests in the Pacific and also the strategic ties that are now evolving in the Pacific. China's denial of the same to India thus forms the exclusionary policy that China has been crafting in the region while vigorously denying the littoral countries claim. India's naval exercises with Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and Philippines are all within this maritime theatre and they are being conducted in international and the respective national territorial waters. India's access to the resources in the region through joint development and the rights of maritime passage constitute the unequivocal interests upon which India's Arctic connection and the evolving contexts of the Indo-Pacific engagement are elucidated.

In summation, India's naval strategy towards Southeast Asia has an ambient scope and vision that is convinced of its growing deeper engagement with Southeast Asia in its bilateral as well as multilateral scope and would be the basis of cementing enduring strategic partnerships with the region and the Asia-Pacific as a littoral and the Indo-Pacific as a maritime basin. The synchronisation of India's diplomatic and strategic objectives would go along with the growing commercial-economic-energy ties that India has weaved with Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific. India's build-up of naval capabilities, maritime infrastructure, closer naval partnerships and the capacity building of the Southeast Asian navies goes to build benign and cooperative partnerships between India and the region. Southeast Asia thus serves as the strategic bridge for India even as it sets its sights for the Indo-Pacific and the desire to its blue-water ambitions.

ASEAN PERSPECTIVES ON NAVAL COOPERATION WITH INDIA

SINGAPORE AND VIETNAM

Koh Swee Lean Collin

The maritime dimension of ASEAN-India defence cooperation has always occupied a premier position given the geographical nature of Southeast Asia. Unlike air and land forces, naval forces offer policymakers the strategic flexibility in the pursuit of foreign policy objectives in areas where maritime interests coincide. However, the ambiguous nature of naval forces could also be controversial, particularly in maritime zones of potential geopolitical rivalry.¹ The dual nature of naval forces is best manifest in India's naval cooperation with her ASEAN counterparts. While the Indian Navy (IN) essentially serves as a flexible diplomatic instrument of New Delhi's 'Look East' policy since the end of the Cold War, its role in the regional security dynamics is not without controversy especially in the context of recent simmering tensions in the South China Sea. Hence, this paper aims to examine the dynamics of ASEAN-Indian defence cooperation in the naval sphere, using the case studies of Singapore and Vietnam. These two case studies are chosen because both countries enjoy some of the most longstanding diplomatic linkages with India to begin with. For example, Vietnam has maintained

1 For instance, read Ken Booth, *Navies and Foreign Policy* (London: Croom Helm; NY: Crane, Russak, 1977) and Harold J. Kearsley, *Maritime Power and the Twenty-First Century* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1992).

close political ties with India dating from the Cold War era² while Singapore proved to be pivotal in socialising India into the ASEAN-centric regional architecture since the early 1990s³. Interestingly, despite Vietnam's longer political ties with India compared to Singapore's, the scope of naval cooperation appears to be rather limited. This paper argues that the different geopolitical circumstances faced by Singapore and Vietnam, particularly with respect to the ongoing South China Sea sensitivities, impose varying limitations on the scope of their bilateral naval cooperation with India. While improvements could be made in some areas of naval cooperation, India's future role would look set to continue to be circumscribed by such constraints faced by her ASEAN counterparts, especially in the case of Vietnam. This paper first examines some common macroscopic features of the defence and foreign policies of Singapore and Vietnam. Next, the paper examines various microscopic aspects of these ASEAN countries' bilateral naval cooperation with India. Finally, this paper concludes with some policy recommendations for future prospects of India's naval cooperation in the region.

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- 2 Notwithstanding different political systems, India-Vietnam relations dated as far back to the 1950s. Common historical animosities with China also seemed to cement this bilateral relationship. Vietnam should have regarded India as the most trustworthy extra-regional power it can rely on for all-weather support. For instance, India openly voiced support for Vietnam after the latter's invasion of Cambodia in 1978 despite global condemnation of Hanoi's aggression while the latter backed New Delhi's stance on the dispute with Pakistan over Jammu and Kashmir. In 1998, Vietnam backed India's nuclear weapon state status when New Delhi's nuclear tests were condemned by most in the international community. In recent times, Hanoi had expressed consistent support for India's quest for the UN Security Council non-permanent seat and eventual permanent membership.
 - 3 India was a sectoral dialogue partner since 1992 until it became a full dialogue partner of ASEAN in 1995, after which Singapore helped promote India as a dialogue partner of the regional grouping at the summit level in 2000. "Singapore to approach ASEAN nations over dialogue invitation to India", *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific – Political*, 12 November 2000. See also "Singapore hopes India will play a growing role in intl affairs", *Press Trust of India*, 20 June 2007 and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore: *Transcript of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's Keynote Address at the Business Summit hosted by the Confederation of Indian Industry, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India* at Taj Palace Hotel, India, 11 July 2012.

DEFENCE AND FOREIGN POLICIES OF SINGAPORE AND VIETNAM: SOME OBSERVATIONS

It is important to first examine the defence and foreign policies of Singapore and Vietnam because by identifying the underlying principles underpinning those national policies, it facilitates better understanding of the nature of their bilateral naval cooperation with India. This paper does not desire to outline a monotonous description of these two ASEAN countries' defence and foreign policies. It is more relevant here to put forth a broad survey of their policies. The first task is to understand the general ASEAN approach towards extra-regional powers in the Asia-Pacific security architecture.

ASEAN and extra-regional powers: A pod of porpoises amongst the whales

When one looks at the map of Southeast Asia, it appears hard to avoid the observation that from the geostrategic point of view, the ten countries of ASEAN simply resemble a pod of porpoises surrounded by large whales on all sides: China, Japan, Australia and India, not to forget also the resident Asia-Pacific power—the United States. This geostrategic conundrum ASEAN faces is a reality that will not change, though regional or national interests do change. Since 1967 till this very day, ASEAN as a regional grouping strives to maintain a neutral or non-aligned stance, as a result of previous historical experience of European and Japanese colonial occupation as well as numerous proxy wars initiated by surrounding great powers during the Cold War. That Southeast Asia garnered so much attention and interests amongst the great powers within and without Asia is not without reason, for the region is well-endowed with a vast potential of diverse and commercially-viable natural resources. Southeast Asia's predominantly maritime geography also makes it a strategic zone for global civilian and naval shipping, particularly the highly crucial sea lines of communication (SLOCs) plying through the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS) and the South China Sea which link the petroleum-rich Middle East to the economic powerhouses of Northeast Asia. This geostrategic location presents both a bane and a boon for Southeast Asia.

The abundant natural resources, especially fishery and offshore

hydrocarbons, as well as commercially critical SLOCs will only become increasingly more important for Southeast Asian socio-economic growth in the foreseeable future. In an era of ballooning populations which heightens the need to hasten socioeconomic development, these attributes become focal points for sharpening interstate competition over scarce resources. Therefore, ASEAN strives to foster a regional security environment peaceful and conducive for socioeconomic prosperity. As part of its strategy in so doing, ASEAN does not desire to be perceived as aligning with any particular extra-regional great power because doing otherwise will risk sliding the region back into Cold War-like geopolitical polarisation and interstate confrontation that does little good for ASEAN. Its strategy strives to manage great power relations through a process of socialising them to the ASEAN norms of interstate behaviour and promoting interdependence amongst these larger and stronger powers so that the costs of engaging in a confrontation would far outweigh the benefits. Naturally, therefore, each ASEAN member country would have vested interest in the continued credibility of the regional grouping to serve as the 'driver' of the regional security architecture in order to maintain its centrality in managing great power relations so as to ensure minimal disturbance to this stable equilibrium. Failure to do so could potentially put ASEAN's credibility into question and expose potential avenues for Cold War-style rivalries and possible predation of the smaller and weaker ASEAN countries by stronger powers. This conviction has been demonstrated numerous times in the past, the most recent example being in July 2012, when ASEAN for the first time failed to issue a joint communique over the South China Sea disputes, Jakarta spearheaded member governments' attempts to control the political fallout, which thereafter resulted in the issuance of a joint declaration on the Six-Point Principles on the South China Sea.

The above discussion on ASEAN sets the stage for the subsequent examination of the defence and foreign policies of Singapore and Vietnam. For this purpose, the author broadly surveys a variety of sources, for example the rare handful of official publications on national defence policies, speeches and press remarks over time from

1980s to present days.⁴ By so doing, common themes and principles underpinning their defence and foreign policy discourses could be identified even though the author concedes that in general, there is no common defence and foreign policy in ASEAN in a similar vein as the European Union.

Common principles of defence and foreign policies

The first observation is that Singapore and Vietnam regard ASEAN's key goal is preserving the security and the stability of the region since only in a peaceful environment can ASEAN focus its energies on economic development and growth. This is particularly critical for Vietnam, whose post-Cold War foreign policy is simply part of its overall national grand strategy to promote its socioeconomic development through the "Renewal" (or "Renovation") process known as Doi Moi. The development of diplomatic ties is crucial for facilitating Hanoi's access to international markets, capital investment and technologies.⁵ In

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- 4 In the case of Singapore, such notable documents include a speech by Mr Lim Hng Kiang, then Minister for National Development and Second Minister for Foreign Affairs on "The Challenges to Small Nations' Foreign Policies" at the Ministry of National Development Auditorium on Saturday, 29 July 1995 (Document no: 52/JUL 09-1/95/07/29); *Speech by Senior Minister Professor S Jayakumar at the S. Rajaratnam Lecture at Shangri-La Hotel*, 19 May 2010; and finally the only white paper ever published to date by the Singapore government on its national defence policies, entitled *Defending Singapore in the 21st Century*, Ministry of Defence, Singapore, 2000. By contrast, Vietnam has to date published three defence white papers: *Consolidating National Defence, Safeguarding The Homeland*, 1998; *Vietnam's National Defence in the Early Years of the 21st Century*, Ministry of Defence, The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2004 and *Vietnam National Defence*, Ministry of National Defence, The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2009. In addition to these, an article written by then Vietnamese defence minister Pham Van Tra, entitled "Vietnam: Building and sustaining People's Defence", *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 36, December 2004, pp. 97-101, also provides very useful insights into Hanoi's security outlook and perceptions.
- 5 "Phan Van Khai Delivers Government Report to National Assembly", *BBC Monitoring Service: Asia-Pacific*, 1 April 1995. See also "Foreign Minister Nguyen says Vietnam to seek to "diversify" international ties", *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific – Political*, 21 April 2001.

this regard, ASEAN not only helps ending its isolation but also facilitates its reintegration with the international community and its efforts to catch up on economic development.⁶ Therefore, notwithstanding their unique historical experiences and geostrategic circumstances, Singapore and Vietnam regard ASEAN as the cornerstone of their foreign policies to ensure continued national survival and prosperity. Both countries appear aware that drastic deviations from the long-held ASEAN principles of fostering an open regional architecture could endanger ASEAN's cohesion and thus threaten its continued survival and buoyancy as a regional grouping, which in turn would pose a challenge to their security.⁷

The second observation is that Singapore and Vietnam generally regard the security environment as uncertain, characterised by a complex gamut of traditional and non-traditional security challenges. Both countries' security outlook encompasses a strong maritime dimension. As a maritime nation highly dependent on unimpeded access to the sea for its survival and prosperity, Singapore has traditionally strived to ensure that vital SLOCs are not disrupted by

6 Then Vietnamese vice foreign minister Vu Khoan described Vietnam's full ASEAN membership as a "historical chapter", and he remarked that in the post-Cold War era, Vietnam had come to realise that it "cannot stand outside international organisations to see their members surging ahead" and added that "we cannot let time pass in isolation, left behind in the (process of economic) development". "Vietnam sees ASEAN entry opening 'historical chapter'", *Japan Economic Newswire*, 7 July 1996.

7 This has been a consistent view propounded by Singapore and Vietnam since the 1990s till this day. See for instance: Ministry of Defence, Republic of Singapore, "Asia's Evolving Security Architecture and the Role of the U.S.", speech by Mr Teo Chee Hean, Minister for Defence, at *Statesmen's Forum* organised by Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 18 January 2008, www.mindef.gov.sg/ (accessed on 2 November 2012) and see also "A more united Asean will ensure prosperity", *Straits Times*, 5 February 1990; "Strong, integrated ASEAN a key cornerstone of Singapore's foreign policy", *Channel NewsAsia*, 7 November 2006; Zakir Hussain, "Grouping needs to strengthen links and boost unity, says PM Lee", *Straits Times*, 18 November 2011. In the case of Vietnam, see "Vietnam: ASEAN tops Vietnam's foreign policy priorities", *Thai News Service*, 21 October 2009; "Politics: Vietnam Urges ASEAN Countries to Strengthen Bloc Solidarity", *Vietnam News Brief Service*, 16 July 2012.

both state and non-state security threats. It is a somewhat different context for Vietnam, which had during the Cold War placed primary emphasis on terrestrial security, as reflected in the spending priorities given to first and foremost land and air forces whereas the navy was least prioritised. Vietnam's security conception only appeared to alter in the late 1980s, especially when it suffered a disastrous naval defeat at Chinese hands during a brief but bloody skirmish in the disputed Spratly Archipelago in 1988, which drove home the need to look seaward to secure Hanoi's maritime interests. Unlike Singapore, however, Vietnamese defence policy discourse appears to lend greater weight to the possibility of armed conflict in the South China Sea.⁸

The third observation is that Singapore and Vietnam generally aim to maintain good neighbourly relations within and outside ASEAN regardless of different political systems. This has always been the case for Singapore since it gained independence in 1965, whereas post-Cold War Vietnam seeks to cultivate friendship and cooperation with all countries.⁹ In line with this foreign policy principle, the defence policies of both countries exhibit certain common characteristics. First, defence preparedness expressed in military modernisation should not reflect the harbouring of aggressive or threatening intent, lest it might create

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- 8 Especially in 2011 onwards, Vietnam's political and military leadership have intensified explicit references, compared to the past, to such a likely contingency. "Vietnam naval chief says East Sea conflict an international issue", *Thanh Nien News.com*, 28 July 2011; and "Vietnam diplomat warns of war in South China Sea", *Agence France Presse*, 4 November 2011.
- 9 For instance, refer to full-text of Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung's speech to the 62nd session of the United Nations General Assembly held in New York on 27 September 2007, carried in "Vietnam: PM addresses 62nd session of UN General Assembly", *Thai News Service*, 1 October 2007.

unnecessary misperceptions for other countries.¹⁰ Also, a consistent feature in both countries' defence planning discourses has been the absence of identifying any external aggressor. Second, both countries do not appear to propound the formation of Cold War-style alliances, preferring to work with as many foreign partners as possible especially in tackling common security problems.¹¹

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- 10 Judging from the press remarks of Singapore and Vietnamese political and military leaders, this seems to be a longstanding theme. See for instance then Singapore's defence minister Yeo Ning Hong who best summed this up in May 1991: "We have no enemy. We threaten nobody. To threaten anybody is to create instability that we have so assiduously worked to prevent. But by appropriate investment in defence, we ensure that nobody threatens us and destabilises our economic growth." "Investment in defence small price to pay to protect assets: Dr Yeo", *Straits Times*, 26 May 1991. *Jane's Defence Weekly* quoted then deputy secretary of policy at Singapore's Ministry of Defence Chua Siew San as saying: "As we build up our capability we don't want people to get the wrong idea". Robert Karniol, "Country briefing: Singapore – Diplomacy teams up with deterrence", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 20 April 1997. In 2005, then Singapore's President S.R. Nathan said that "The Singapore Armed Forces will continue, in its 'quiet and non-provocative way', to provide for deterrence". Chua Mui Hoong, "President points the way forward for S'pore", *Straits Times*, 13 January 2005. In the case of Vietnam, refrain from arms race and pre-emptive military strikes, as well as emphasis on the defensive nature of its defence policy has regularly featured in policymakers' discourse. For instance, during an interview with Vietnamese press in January 2011, deputy defence minister Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Vinh stressed that an arms race "should be avoided at all costs". "Politics: Vietnam do not participate for arms race: deputy defence minister", *Vietnam News Brief Service*, 17 January 2011. See also "Vietnamese army paper: worries over weapons procurement plan 'groundless'", *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, 19 January 2010. Official Vietnamese discourse also held that, having undergone the brutality of past wars, it is in Hanoi's interest to refrain from war and therefore defence preparedness is purely aimed at preserving its national independence and sovereignty. Then Vietnam's foreign minister Nguyen Manh Cam said that "we don't want to make war because we had had enough of wars" in response to whether Vietnam would resort to arms over the South China Sea dispute. "Vietnam wants formal talks on Spratlys", *Reuters News*, 23 July 1992.
- 11 This is especially the case for Vietnam, which had a history of alliance with the former Soviet Union. Since the end of the Cold War, a non-alliance foreign policy had been consistently elaborated by Hanoi since end of the Cold War. "Vietnam vows to steer clear of military alliances", *Reuters News*, 20 March 1996; "Miscellaneous – Vietnam Reaffirms Policies on Relations with China and US", *Vietnam News Brief Service*, 17 March 2000; and Ma Liyao, "Vietnam not seeking alliance", *China Daily – Hong Kong Edition*, 26 August 2010.

The final observation is that, given their cognizance of the multi-faceted nature of security challenges, both countries appear to advocate comprehensive national security approaches, as evident in Singapore's 'Total Defence' and Vietnam's close equivalent termed 'People's War' which could be seen as a 'total defence' approach leveraging on Vietnam's aggregate national power—economic, military and diplomatic instruments.¹² Stemming from this conception, both countries' defence and naval policies are generally underpinned by three pillars: defence, deterrence and diplomacy. Defence self-reliance is by no means the only strategy in this respect. It appears that in recent times, the defence diplomacy pillar has become more salient in both countries' discourse. Cooperation with foreign militaries generally helps foster interstate confidence-building and in pooling collective strengths to tackle common security challenges. However, in the case of Singapore especially, such cooperation also takes on the dimension of compensating for national shortfalls such as limited space for military training, and to promote interoperability with foreign counterparts.

A CLOSER EXAMINATION OF BILATERAL NAVAL COOPERATION WITH INDIA

Attention ought to be drawn, in line with the primary thrust of this paper, to the naval dimension where defence diplomacy is concerned. Notwithstanding its relatively modern capabilities, the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) continues to be hamstrung by small physical capacity and could not plausibly handle, single-handedly, the multitude of maritime security challenges. The RSN accordingly designed its cooperative activities with deriving 'security through numbers'¹³ in mind. The Vietnam People's Navy (VPN) had to make do with limited resources and therefore incremental enhancement of its power projection capabilities since national priorities had

12 Besides the defence white papers, see also "Vietnam: PM Dung says army greatly contributes to the country's achievements", *Thai News Service*, 26 July 2009 and "Politics: Vietnam party chief urges to strengthen people-based army", *Vietnam News Brief Service*, 21 September 2010.

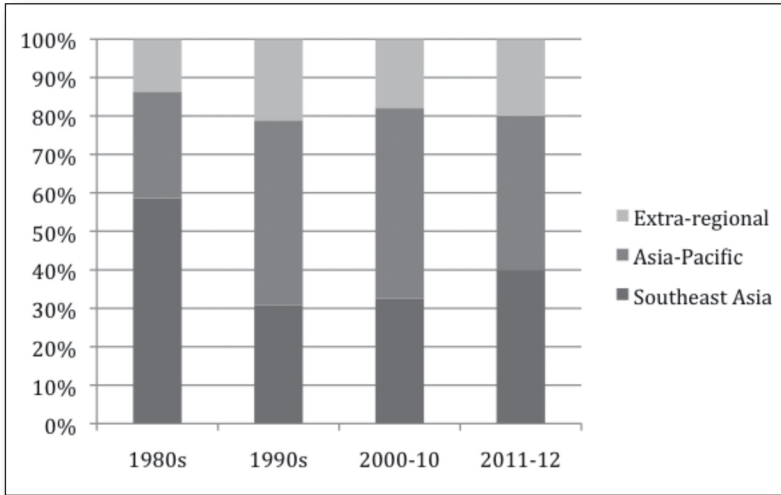
13 "In Pursuit of Excellence: An Interview with the Chief of Navy, Rear Admiral Richard Lim", *Naval Forces* 18, No. 2, Special Issue (1997), p. 4.

been given to Doi Moi. This means that for the foreseeable future, there is probably too much for a limited VPN, even when combined with the marine police and the air force, to handle at the national level. Consequently, defence diplomacy has become increasingly crucial for Hanoi to compensate for its own capacity shortfalls vis-à-vis a diverse and broad array of maritime interests which need to be safeguarded.¹⁴ Naval cooperation with foreign partners has in recent times been given greater emphasis. As Figures 13.1 and 13.2 illustrate, generally both navies have witnessed an expansion of linkages with mostly counterparts in the immediate Southeast Asia and broader Asia-Pacific region. The RSN has customarily enjoyed the most varied forms of cooperation with a wide multitude of foreign partners, including those from beyond Asia, since the Cold War till present times. The VPN is a relative latecomer, with naval cooperation during the Cold War largely confined to arrangements with its patron, the Soviet Union. However, in the 1990s, Hanoi ramped up naval cooperation with her ASEAN neighbours.¹⁵ Only beginning in 2000 it started to expand such cooperation with counterparts from the wider Asia-Pacific region. Within this period until 2010, naval cooperation with China—the widely perceived primary foe of Vietnam—actually constituted the bulk of the VPN’s cooperation with Asia-Pacific partners. However, ever since tensions resurfaced over the South China Sea disputes in recent years, Hanoi began to call for greater intra-ASEAN naval cooperation.¹⁶

Perhaps the most significant interpretation of Figures 13.1 and 13.2 is that naval cooperation undertaken by Singapore and Vietnam since

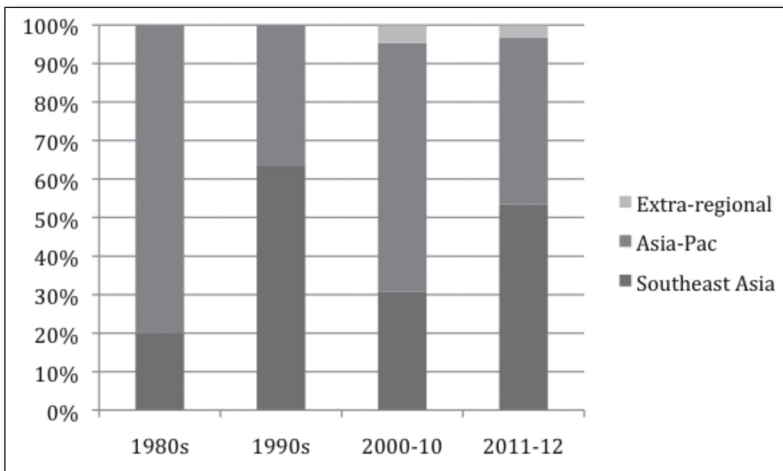
-
- 14 “Security at seas tops Vietnam’s military cooperation priorities”, *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, 21 December 2009; see also “Vietnamese deputy defence minister asserts naval cooperation for maritime peace”, *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, 15 August 2010.
- 15 This appears to correspond to the overall defence diplomacy thrust primarily directed at ASEAN during the 1990s. See Robert Karniol, “The Jane’s Interview with Senior General Dao Dinh Luyen, Vice Minister of National Defence and Chief of the General Staff of the People’s Army of Vietnam”, *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 10 April 1993.
- 16 This call came from the deputy VPN chief Nguyen Van Hien in response to what he termed as violations of Vietnam’s sovereignty in the South China Sea, in oblique reference to China. “Vietnam asks ASEAN navies to unite amid China forays”, *Manila Standard*, 28 July 2011.

FIGURE 13.1
Singapore's naval cooperation with foreign partners



Source: Author's database comprising multiple sources.

FIGURE 13.2
Vietnam's naval cooperation with foreign partners



Source: Author's database comprising multiple sources.

the 1990s has traditionally reflected the ASEAN principle of inclusivity, involving partners within and beyond the immediate Southeast Asian regions. Even at the height of tensions in the South China Sea from 2010 onwards, there appears to be greater emphasis on closer naval cooperation within Southeast Asia instead of extra-regional partners, probably as part of the ASEAN community-building process. Seen in this vein, India's naval role in Southeast Asia—just like any other extra-regional powers—cannot be overemphasised. The IN is simply one of the extra-regional navies regarded by ASEAN in general to have a direct stake, but not exclusively so, in regional security. Exclusive naval cooperation with any one particular extra-regional power could be perceived by at least these two ASEAN countries to carry the potential of engendering rivalries at sea which could potentially undermine instead of enhancing regional security. At the microscopic level, however, it is important to point out that different geopolitical sensitivities impose varying extent of limitations on the scope of bilateral naval cooperation undertaken by Singapore and Vietnam with India. In the next section that follows, the discussion of naval cooperation takes on the functional approach of comparative study between the two dyads, namely naval training and exercises; military-technical collaboration; and the maintenance of naval presence in the region (with specific reference to Southeast Asia).

Naval training and exercises

Training and exercises constitute the most important facet of India-Singapore naval cooperation. After both navies conducted their first passage exercise (PASSEX) in 1993, bilateral naval exercises became regular beginning in 1994 under the codename Exercise Lion King, focusing primarily on anti-submarine warfare (ASW). Bilateral naval cooperation was further institutionalised in 1998, providing the RSN access to Indian naval training facilities as well as opening new avenues of cooperation, such as search and rescue.¹⁷

17 It was said that Singapore had proposed the MOU back in 1994 but it was not cleared until 1998. "India, Singapore discuss naval tie-up", *The Hindu*, 25 August 1998.

TABLE 13.1
India-Singapore naval exercises

Year	Singapore participating assets	Indian participating assets	Location
1993	RSS <i>Valour</i> ; RSS <i>Sea Lion</i>	INS <i>Arjuna</i> ; INS <i>Kirpan</i>	Bay of Bengal
1994	RSS <i>Victory</i> ; RSS <i>Valour</i>	INS <i>Taragiri</i> ; INS <i>Kursura</i>	Andaman Sea
1995	RSS <i>Vigour</i> ; RSS <i>Vigilance</i>	INS <i>Vindhyagiri</i> ; INS <i>Arnala</i> ; INS <i>Saryu</i> ; INS <i>Sindhuraj</i>	Andaman Sea
1996	RSS <i>Vengeance</i> ; RSS <i>Courageous</i> ; RSS <i>Daring</i>	INS <i>Vindhyagiri</i> ; INS <i>Sindhuraj</i> ; Kiran FGA	Andaman Sea
1997	RSS <i>Victory</i> ; RSS <i>Vigour</i>	INS <i>Godavari</i> ; INS <i>Shanku</i> ; INS <i>Sujata</i>	Arabian Sea
1998	RSS <i>Valour</i> ; RSS <i>Vigilance</i> ; RSS <i>Brave</i> ; RSS <i>Dawnless</i>	INS <i>Godavari</i> ; INS <i>Shanku</i>	Arabian Sea
1999	RSS <i>Vengeance</i> ; RSS <i>Daring</i> ; RSS <i>Gallant</i>	INS <i>Gomati</i> ; INS <i>Shanku</i> ; Tu-142MMPA; helo	Arabian Sea
2000	2 FSGs; 2 APVs	INS <i>Rajput</i> ; INS <i>Taragiri</i> ; INS <i>Amiri</i> ; INS <i>Sindhuraj</i>	Andaman Sea
2001	RSS <i>Vengeance</i> ; RSS <i>Courageous</i> ; RSS <i>Daring</i>	INS <i>Gomati</i> ; INS <i>Suvarya</i> ; INS <i>Sindhuraj</i> ; MPA; helo	Arabian Sea
2002	RSS <i>Victory</i> ; RSS <i>Dawnless</i> ; RSS <i>Fearless</i>	1 FFGH; 1 P50H; 1 SSK; MPA; helo	Arabian Sea
2003	RSS <i>Valiant</i> ; RSS <i>Vigour</i> ; RSS <i>Brave</i>	INS <i>Gomati</i> ; INS <i>Sukanya</i> ; INS <i>Sujata</i> ; INS <i>Vela</i> ; INS <i>Shanku</i> ; 'Lakshya' aerial target drone; MPA; FGA	Arabian Sea
2004	RSS <i>Vigilance</i> ; RSS <i>Victory</i> ; RSS <i>Brave</i>	INS <i>Brahmaputra</i> ; INS <i>Taragiri</i> ; INS <i>Ambar</i> ; INS <i>Shanku</i> ; Tu-142M and Dornier MPA; Sea King and Chetak helo; FGA	Arabian Sea
2005	RSS <i>Valiant</i> ; RSS <i>Vengeance</i> ; RSS <i>Sea Dragon</i> ; RSS <i>Dawnless</i> ; RSS <i>Chieftain</i> ; Folcker-50MPA	INS <i>Ranvijay</i> ; INS <i>Gomati</i> ; INS <i>Kora</i> ; MPA	South China Sea
2006	RSS <i>Victory</i> ; RSS <i>Vengeance</i> ; RSS <i>Dawnless</i> ; 1 Folcker-50MPA	INS <i>Ranvijay</i> ; INS <i>Karmuk</i> ; INS <i>Kulich</i> ; INS <i>Sindhuraj</i> ; MPA	Bay of Bengal
2007	RSS <i>Valour</i> ; RSS <i>Vigour</i> ; RSS <i>Sea Dragon</i> ; RSS <i>Gallant</i> ; RSS <i>Chieftain</i> ; Folcker-50MPA	INS <i>Rana</i> ; INS <i>Ranjit</i> ; INS <i>Kuttab</i> ; MPA	South China Sea
2008	RSS <i>Formidable</i> ; RSS <i>Vigilance</i> ; RSS <i>Valour</i> ; RSS <i>Persistence</i> ; 1 Folcker-50MPA	INS <i>Rajput</i> ; INS <i>Gomati</i> ; INS <i>Kirch</i> ; INS <i>Kuttab</i> ; INS <i>Vinash</i> ; INS <i>Nishank</i> ; INS <i>Vagti</i> ; MIG-27 and Kiran FGA; Dornier MPA	Bay of Bengal
2009	RSS <i>Tenacious</i> ; RSS <i>Vigilance</i> ; RSS <i>Vengeance</i> ; RSS <i>Conqueror</i> ; 1 Folcker-50MPA; KC-135RS AAR; F-5 and F-16 FGA	INS <i>Mumbai</i> ; INS <i>Ranvijay</i> ; INS <i>Zhanjar</i> ; INS <i>Jyoti</i> ; 2 Dornier MPA	Malacca Strait and South China Sea
2010	RSS <i>Intrepid</i> ; RSS <i>Victory</i> ; 1 Folcker-50MPA	INS <i>Ranvijay</i> ; INS <i>Kora</i> ; INS <i>Mahishi</i> ; INS <i>Nirbhik</i> ; INS <i>Nishank</i> ; INS <i>Batti Mahi</i> ; INS <i>Jyoti</i> ; 1 SSK; Tu-142M and Dornier MPA; Ka-28 and Chetak helo	Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal
2011	3 FFGHs; 1 FSG; 1 SSK; 1 Folcker-50MPA; FGA	INS <i>Delhi</i> ; INS <i>Ranvijay</i> ; INS <i>Ranvijay</i> ; INS <i>Kirch</i> ; INS <i>Jyoti</i> ; MPA	South China Sea
2012	RSS <i>Stalwart</i> ; RSS <i>Victory</i> ; 1 Folcker-50MPA; S-70B helo	INS <i>Ranvijay</i> ; 1 FFGH; 1 FSG; 1 AORH; 2 PCFGs; 1 SSK; MPA; Kiran FGA; helo	Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal

Source: Author's database comprising multiple sources. See also Table 13.2 for glossary of technical terms used.¹⁸

18 Sources are compiled from G. M. Hiranandani, *Transition to Guardianship: Indian Navy 1991-2000* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 2010), 39-40, as well as news articles, press releases from the Singapore Ministry of Defence at http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/news_and_events/nr.html (accessed on 2 November 2012) and also the RSN's quarterly periodicals entitled *Navy News*, http://www.mindef.gov.sg/content/imindef/mindef_websites/atozlistings/navy/navynews/2012.html (accessed on 2 November 2012). Not all platforms participating in the exercises are identified by name though possible by type.

TABLE 13.2
Glossary of technical terms

AAR	Air-to-air refuelling aircraft
AORH	Replenishment ship, helicopter
APV	Anti-submarine patrol vessel
FGA	Fighter, ground attack
FFGH	Guidedmissile frigate, helicopter
FSG	Guidedmissile corvette
Helo	Helicopter
MPA	Maritime patrol aircraft
PCFG	Guidedmissile fast patrol craft
PSOH	Offshore patrol ship, helicopter
SSK	Diesel-electric powered submarine

Source: Based on standard naval vessel classification in Jane’s Fighting Ships and the Military Balance.

Exercise Lion King gradually expanded in scope and complexity to include other dimensions such as surface strike and platform-specific exercises in ship damage control and weapons (including missile) live-firing. Standard operating procedures were said to be also developed between both navies to bolster interoperability.¹⁹ As Table 13.1 shows, the scope of Lion King from 1993 to 2004, judging from the assets committed, appeared to consistently exhibit a primary focus on ASW training with other training components having secondary focus. The RSN customarily sent ASW-capable

19 “India-Singapore naval war game begins in Bay of Bengal – agency”, *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, 3 April 2010.

combatants to the exercises while the IN would always commit at least a submarine in the ‘adversarial’ role for RSN participating units. This aspect is noteworthy when viewed in the context of the RSN’s ASW capacity-building efforts, when its first ASW-capable platform—the Victory class missile corvettes—started to enter service from the late-1980s to early-1990s. Prior to the acquisition of its own submarines in the mid-1990s, the RSN had no means of conducting realistic ASW training. Seen in this light, IN’s provision of realistic ASW training for the RSN is highly valuable as part of Singapore’s efforts to establish a ‘balanced navy’. Practically speaking, Lion King serves as an annual ASW training school for the RSN’s 188 Squadron, which operates the corvettes. The IN’s pivotal role in building up RSN’s ASW capabilities became even more evident in 2003, when for the first time in RSN history, a missile corvette RSS Valiant fired an exercise ASW torpedo at a moving ‘enemy’ submarine simulated by the IN submarine INS Vela. According to the commanding officer of RSS Valiant, prior to this event the RSN had conducted numerous exercise torpedo firings on only static targets.²⁰ This ASW exercise marked the 10th anniversary of Lion King.²¹ It was also in the same year that both countries signed a wide-ranging memorandum of understanding (MOU) on defence cooperation which called for more defence exchanges and intelligence-exchanges.²²

In 2004, Singapore and India also institutionalised a joint work-

20 “Singapore navy vessel test fires torpedo in anti-submarine exercise”, *Channel NewsAsia*, 10 March 2003.

21 Ministry of Defence, Singapore, “India and Singapore Navies in Anti-Submarine Warfare Exercise”, 10 March 2003, http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/news_and_events/nr/2003/mar/10mar03_nr2.html (accessed on 2 November 2012).

22 Ever since this MOU was signed, not only India has become one of the Singapore Armed Forces’ regional training grounds, both armed forces have begun conducting joint training across all three services, for instance joint air force training since 2004; the Singapore Army armour training in Babina, Uttar Pradesh since 2005 and artillery training in Deolali in Maharashtra since 2006; as well as a bilateral agreement in 2007 to allow the RSAF to train its personnel at the Indian Air Force base in Kalaikunda in West Bengal. Both armies had also conducted joint combined-arms exercises codenamed Agni Warrior, which falls under the auspices of the Bilateral Agreement for Joint Army Training and Exercises. “Singapore defence minister makes first official visit to India”, *Associated Press Newswires*, 12 October 2003.

ing group on intelligence cooperation against terrorism and transnational organised crimes. Given the common interests shared by Singapore and India in SLOC security, bilateral naval exercises in the eastern Andaman Sea approaches to SOMS customarily incorporated a training component for SLOC security. In the same year, the then RSN chief Rear Admiral Ronnie Tay invited the IN to hold the bilateral naval exercise in the South China Sea, a significant departure from pre-existing iterations that took place in the Indian Ocean.²³ Hence, bilateral naval exercise took place for the first time in the South China Sea in 2005 and renamed Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX) to reflect its expanded geographical and functional nature. By then, as both navies built up their capabilities, the scope of SIMBEX also became more complex. Land-based maritime strike-capable fighter jets of both countries were often used to simulate realistic conditions for testing both navies' anti-air capabilities. Another area of interoperability that deserves attention is underway replenishment. This particular capability has been conspicuously missing throughout the RSN capacity-building process, which meant that if the RSN desires to operate in "out-of-area" missions in distant waters, it would have to rely on either friendly port access or foreign counterparts with such afloat support capabilities. Hence, the IN's provision of training in underway replenishment also proved valuable to the RSN.

Besides SIMBEX, the RSN has also regularly engaged in multilateral exercises with India and other partners, notably the IN-led multinational Exercise Milan since 1995. Of noteworthy mention was the one-off RSN participation in the 13th Exercise Malabar in September 2007. Malabar was originally an Indian-U.S. bilateral naval exercise but the edition in 2007 for the first time took on a multilateral nature, comprising five participating navies and staged in waters stretching from Vishakhapatnam on India's eastern seaboard to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands which guard the approaches

23 During the visit by RADM Tay, both sides also discussed the possibility of Indian and Singaporean navies undertaking joint patrols in the Malacca Strait. "India, Singapore joint naval exercise in South China Sea", *The Press Trust of India Limited*, 28 September 2004.

to the Malacca Strait.²⁴ The reported Chinese consternation could have been understandable, given that the exercise came after an earlier meeting among Australia, India, Japan and the U.S., possibly provoking speculations of an attempt to forge a quadrilateral anti-China alliance. Exercise Malabar 2007 also came after an India-Japan-U.S. naval manoeuvre off the Japanese coast in April 2007, which provoked strong response from Beijing which demanded an explanation for such a wargame close to Chinese territory.²⁵ India tried to downplay the significance of Exercise Malabar 2007, claiming that it was merely an enlargement of regular exercises held with the U.S. Navy.²⁶ Nonetheless, following this saga from 2008 onwards, Exercise Malabar reverted to a bilateral activity.²⁷ Singapore apparently did not suffer from any fallout as a result of its participation in Exercise Malabar 2007. However, if this exercise had continued as a multilateral one from 2008 onwards, Singapore might have to face considerable pressure in deciding whether or not to continue its participation for fear of provoking the wariness of China.

In the field of naval training and exercises with India, Vietnam faced greater constraints than Singapore's case. IN and the VPN did stage a rather highly publicised counter-piracy drill in the South China Sea, in conjunction with a bilateral SLOC security cooperation agreement between in 2000.²⁸ However, no more such major exercise was heard of since, except for small-scale PASSEX conducted during IN port calls to Vietnam. A bilateral naval training arrangement took place in 2006 when New Delhi agreed to help provide naval professional education and training for VPN personnel.²⁹ Under the

24 "Five-nation naval drill begins in Bay of Bengal Tuesday", *Indo-Asian News Service*, 3 September 2007.

25 "Indian navy starts exercise with U.S., Japan", *Xinhua News Agency*, 16 April 2007.

26 Sandeep Dikshit, "India downplays significance of naval exercises", *The Hindu*, 1 August 2007.

27 "Antony nixes expansion of India-US Malabar naval exercise", *Indo-Asian News Service*, 24 September 2008.

28 Atul Aneja, "India, Vietnam partners in safeguarding sea lanes", *The Hindu*, 15 April 2000.

29 "Education: India to help Vietnam train cadets", *Vietnam News Brief Service*, 29 May 2006.

bilateral Action Plan 2011–13, India agreed to provide submarine training for VPN, two years after Hanoi inked a deal to acquire six Russian-built Kilo class submarines, at INS Satavahana.³⁰ Since then, there has been no projected expansion in bilateral naval training and exercises arrangements.³¹ A number of reasons could be attributed to this disparity compared to Singapore, notwithstanding Vietnam's longer ties with India. The first reason could be technical in nature: the VPN does not possess oceangoing-capable platforms which could allow it to conduct regular exercises with the IN in the Indian Ocean, geographically away from such geopolitically sensitive area as the South China Sea. By and large, the VPN is made up of warships mostly confined to coastal operations while the larger existing ones are stretched to their limits by operating even in the South China Sea. The second, perhaps most crucial reason, could be geopolitical. Given Hanoi's direct claims in the South China Sea, a major bilateral naval exercise arrangement equivalent to SIMBEX might have amounted to a highly sensitive—and politically risky—endeavour for both India and Vietnam.

Military-technical collaboration

Compared to naval training and exercise arrangements, India-Singapore military-technical collaboration in the naval, and even broadly in the defence arena is deemed limited. India reportedly expressed interest in defence research and development (R&D) with Singapore as early as in 1996.³² However, inroads appear to have only been made after 2000, when Singapore revealed that it was already discussing with India about defence and security R&D cooperation including the establishment of joint defence laboratories, expressing the hope

30 While VPN submariners received training on Russian Navy submarines, the Indian training provision is said to be confined to onshore syllabus and probably not involving VPN's training access to IN's Russian-built *Kilo* boats. Rajat Pandit, "India to help train Vietnam in submarine operations", *The Times of India*, 16 September 2011.

31 Interestingly, India and Vietnam's first bilateral military exercise arrangement had been in the field of mountain and jungle warfare training which reportedly first began in 2011.

32 "India eyes weapons research, ports development programs with Singapore", *Agence France Presse*, 20 August 1996.

for this area to “crystallise soon”.³³ In February 2006, Singapore and India agreed to convene a joint study into bilateral defence R&D cooperation.³⁴ Subsequently, a bilateral defence technology steering committee meeting was inaugurated.³⁵ However, it would appear that India-Singapore defence R&D remains confined to only a few niche areas, such as unmanned ground systems³⁶, but no known projects in the naval sphere. There could also have been cooperation in the field of remote-sensing and space-based technologies, as exemplified by the reported launch of Singapore’s first indigenous X-Sat micro-satellite using an Indian-built Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle from India’s Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Andhra Pradesh.³⁷

Unlike Singapore, India-Vietnam naval cooperation consists of rather heavy military-technical content. As part of a low-key bilateral defence cooperation agreement inked in 1994, India helped service Vietnam’s Soviet-made equipment.³⁸ Given its extensive use of Soviet-era military hardware, New Delhi was in a good position to offer military-technical support for Vietnam, whose Soviet-built arsenal had fallen into gradual disrepair since the end of the Cold War, with the largely Soviet-equipped VPN fleet being particularly badly hit. Therefore, in the 1990s, bilateral naval cooperation

33 This appeared to be focused on technologies to counter transnational terrorism, not specifically in the naval sphere. “Singapore keen on defence technology tie-up with India”, *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, 28 October 2004.

34 “India, Singapore to study scope for cooperation in defence”, *The Press Trust of India Limited*, 2 February 2006.

35 “Indian defence secretary in Singapore to discuss defence cooperation”, *Channel NewsAsia*, 10 October 2006.

36 India’s Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) and Singapore’s Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA) developed an unmanned ground vehicle that can be used for conducting reconnaissance in times of war and in a nuclear environment. “DRDO makes unmanned vehicle”, *Deccan Chronicle*, 2 October 2010.

37 X-Sat was reported to weigh 105 kg and would spend three years orbiting at an altitude of 800 km, and capable of taking photo-imagery to measure soil erosion and monitor environmental changes on Earth. P. S. Suryanarayana, “Singapore’s delighted at ISRO’s launch of X-Sat”, *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, 21 April 2011.

38 “India, Vietnam sign defence, diplomatic accords”, *Reuters News*, 7 September 1994. See also Harish Mehta, “India secures deal to overhaul Vietnam’s MiG-21 fighters”, *Business Times Singapore*, 30 September 1994.

mainly focused on keeping the existing VPN units seaworthy and operational. This was helpful since Vietnam then had barely sufficient resources to reverse the decay of the existing naval capabilities, let alone modernising them. In 2000, both countries promulgated a new defence protocol to institutionalise the 1994 MOU, again focusing on military-technical collaboration, most notably including Indian assistance for Vietnam's naval capacity-building covering repair, upgrade and even new-construction of warships for the VPN.³⁹ Following a similar intent in the 1990s, Vietnam was said to be keen on acquiring Indian-built littoral warships but did not pursue the idea due to cost concerns. In 2003 a visiting VPN delegation discussed the potential sale of equipment spares.⁴⁰ In 2005, as part of the first bilateral Action Plan 2004–2006, India transferred a major consignment of warship spares to Vietnam,⁴¹ possibly tapping on redundant stocks left over from the IN's decommissioning of many Soviet-era warships. This allowed the VPN to extend the service life-span of the existing warships as an interim measure prior to later induction of new-builds.

In 2007, bilateral ties were elevated to a strategic partnership, under which India would provide Vietnam support in naval shipbuilding and military technology transfers in particular.⁴² Following

39 "India and Vietnam sign wide ranging defence agreement", *Press Trust of India*, 28 March 2000. See also Man Mohan, "India, Vietnam expand defence cooperation", *The Times of India*, 29 March 2000.

40 The VPN delegation reportedly expressed interest in Indian naval shipbuilding capabilities, with the likelihood of seeking Indian technical expertise to help establish its own equivalent capabilities. "High-ranking Vietnamese naval delegation in Mumbai", *Organisation of Asia-Pacific News Agencies*, 26 August 2003 and "India offers to sell sophisticated warships to Vietnam", *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, 29 August 2003.

41 In all, the Indian Navy transferred 900 boxes, weighing over 150 tons, of spares for the VPN's existing Soviet-era *Petya* class light patrol frigates and *Osa II* class missile fast attack craft. These vessels as of October 2012 remain listed as frontline vessels of the VPN, probably slated for replacement by the newly procured Russian-built warships. "India to ship weapon spares to Vietnamese navy", *Xinhua News Agency*, 7 June 2005. See also *The Military Balance 2012*, Volume 112, Issue 1 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2012), p. 293.

42 "India, Vietnam agree to enhance defence cooperation", *The Press Trust of India Limited*, 29 November 2007.

similar moves in 2005, India transferred 5000 spare parts to the VPN, plausibly using surplus stocks left over from the decommissioning of IN's Soviet-era Petya class light frigates.⁴³ In 2011, as part of an agreement to deepen the strategic partnership, India and Vietnam signed onto Action Plan 2011–13 which aimed at enhancing defence cooperation, including intensified collaboration in VPN modernisation efforts. This move apparently carried huge promise in further advancing bilateral military-technical collaboration beyond mere transfer of naval equipment spares, since unlike the previous agreements, the action plan covered potential Indian technical support for Vietnam's nascent naval shipbuilding industry and also explored Hanoi's possible acquisition of advanced Indian military technologies.⁴⁴ Most recently in 2012, as part of their pledge to strengthen strategic partnership both countries agreed to bolster defence and naval cooperation.⁴⁵ This would probably be of a predominantly military-technical nature again. A Vietnamese Ministry of Science and Technology delegation visited India in October 2012 to explore plausible areas for scientific and technological (S&T) cooperation. It reportedly met with the Indian Space Research Organisation to discuss space S&T cooperation, especially in micro-satellites.⁴⁶ Seen in the context of Vietnam's recent launch of its first indigenous F-1

43 "India and Vietnam announce measures to boost defence cooperation", *Asian News International*, 17 December 2007.

44 "India will continue to assist Vietnam in armed forces modernization: Mukherjee", *Asian News International*, 4 May 2011.

45 "Politics: Vietnam, India Pledge to Boost Naval Cooperation During Warship Visit", *Vietnam News Brief Service*, 23 May 2012.

46 "Vietnam and India for technological cooperation", *Electronics Bazaar*, 1 November 2012. In fact, preliminary tie-up in this area could have begun since 2003 when Vietnam and India mooted an accord to promote comprehensive cooperation, including space and remote-sensing technologies. "India, Vietnam to develop economic, strategic cooperation", *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, 2 May 2003.

micro-satellite,⁴⁷ India's space S&T expertise could have been eyed by Hanoi to assist in its building of remote-sensing maritime surveillance capabilities over the South China Sea.

However, throughout the almost two decades since 1994, beyond the mere provision of spares to the VPN, military-technical collaboration in the area of Indian transfer of advanced naval technologies desired by Vietnam did not make any inroads. In November 2011, Vietnam's president reportedly made an unscheduled visit to New Delhi to seek military assistance, particularly the transfer of naval armaments including BrahMos anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs) and 1,000–1,500 ton warships.⁴⁸ Negotiations over the BrahMos sale still remain 'work in progress' while Vietnam has already acquired an equivalent system from Russia.⁴⁹ There is also nothing heard of the warship request. While India fits within Vietnam's broader arms diversification efforts, apparently there is still much ground for India to cover in this respect. Until then, Russia would remain Vietnam's primary source of advanced armaments. In 2012, as part of a five-year defence cooperation plan under the Vietnam-Russia strategic partnership agreement, Moscow supplied spare parts and

47 The F-1 satellite was developed by Space Research Division (FSpace) of Vietnam-based FPT Technology University, capable of taking low-resolution (640x480) photo-imagery. It was delivered into orbit in October 2012, following delays. According to the head of FSpace Vu Trong Thu, Hanoi aimed to master space technologies for monitoring maritime activities in the South China Sea, support maritime search and rescue operations, amongst a range of purposes. "1st Vietnam-made satellite departs space station tonight", *Vietnam News Summary*, 5 October 2012.

48 According to Indian official sources, Vietnam's president overlooked protocol to meet senior Indian officials and ensured that the timing of the commercial flight to New Delhi was revised to accommodate the unscheduled meeting. Sandeep Dikshit, "Vietnam's plea puts South Block in a predicament", *The Hindu*, 9 November 2011.

49 Since the Indian Government has to approve every foreign sale of the BrahMos, it is likely that political considerations by New Delhi could have slowed down the negotiation even though BrahMos Aerospace had expressed willingness to sell the missile to Vietnam. "India to sell BrahMos missile to Vietnam", *Deccan Chronicle*, 20 September 2011. Hanoi and Moscow were said to be cooperating on a joint venture for "supersonic cruise missiles similar to India's BrahMos". "Politics: Vietnam, Russia Show Further Cooperation for Strengthened Defence Ties", *Vietnam News Brief Service*, 30 July 2012.

services for the operational Vietnamese arsenal. During an inter-governmental commission meeting on military-technical cooperation in October 2012, Vietnam and Russia agreed to undertake joint military-technical S&T cooperation, including co-production of a modified variant of the Kh-35 Uran ASCM⁵⁰, VPN's current mainstay strike armament that replaced the obsolete Soviet-era P-15 Termit. It also covered the establishment of hardware servicing centres and supply of additional naval armaments, including more K-300 Bastion-P coastal defence missile complexes (land-based variant of the Yakhont, on which the India-Russia BrahMos was based), a further batch of maritime strike-oriented Sukhoi Su-30MK2V Flanker multi-role fighters and two more Gepard-3.9 light frigates. All these developments seemed to highlight Vietnam's continued reliance on Russian military technologies and Hanoi's apparent displeasure over the lack of progress in military-technical collaboration with India.⁵¹ Nonetheless, to some extent India's assistance could have helped Vietnam develop its nascent naval shipbuilding industries.⁵²

Maintenance of naval presence in the region

As far as Singapore is concerned, there appears to be no particular focus on maintaining an exclusive Indian naval presence. In fact, the Australian, New Zealand and U.S. navies have been the most frequent

50 "Politics: Russia to assist Vietnam to manufacture anti-ship missiles", *Vietnam News Brief Service*, 16 February 2012; "Vietnam may soon become Russia's No. 1 military-technical partner in Southeast Asia", *Interfax: Russia & CIS General Newswire*, 20 October 2012.

51 In September 2012, apparently reflecting the lack of progress in the military-technical sphere, Vietnam's deputy defence minister Senior Lieutenant-General Nguyen Chi Vinh urged closer bilateral defence cooperation with India. "Vietnam: Vietnam, India strengthen defence cooperation", *Thai News Service*, 12 September 2012.

52 In December 2007, New Delhi agreed to train 50 Vietnamese naval shipbuilding personnel in warship construction and repair techniques at the Mazagon Dock Limited while also considering warship sales to VPN at discounted rates. While no Indian-built warships have been procured to date, Indian (along with Russian and Ukrainian) help in Vietnam's naval shipbuilding could have paid off with recent inductions of new indigenously-constructed warships into VPN service. "Politics: Vietnam PM says to bring military ties with India to new heights", *Vietnam News Brief Service*, 18 December 2007.

users of RSN berthing facilities. Following the 1990 agreement to grant American military access to local facilities, Singapore signed a Strategic Framework Agreement in 2005 which saw the U.S. Navy beginning to use the new deep-water berths at the new RSN base in Changi. As such, IN port calls to Singapore could merely be part of Singapore's overall strategy to maintain foreign military presence, albeit not permanent, in the region as part of its defence policy. Nonetheless, events of 2001 probably opened new avenues for India to elevate its naval presence from surface to air. In June 2010 for example, the IN deployed 4 Dornier maritime patrol aircraft to Singapore on a four-day coordinated surveillance in waters—ostensibly the Malacca Strait and the South China Sea—where a flotilla of IN warships were operating on their way back to base after a month-long deployment on the eastern seaboard.⁵³

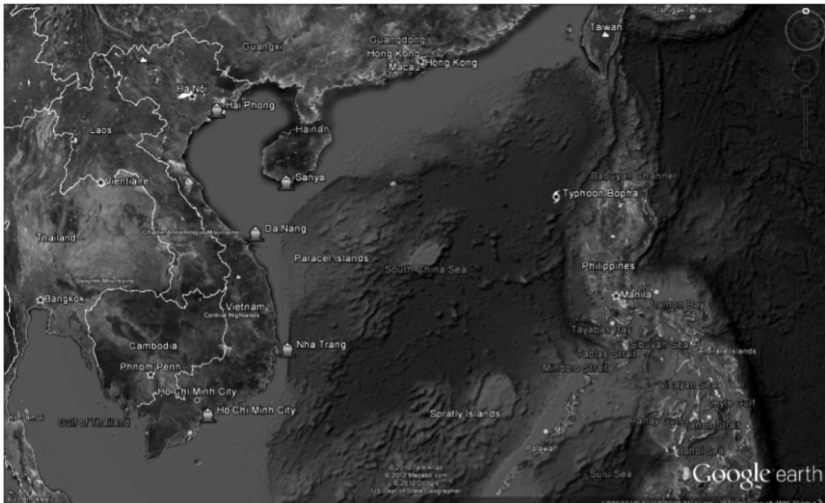
In the case of Vietnam, a symbiotic relationship seems to exist in India's naval presence in the region. On the one hand, India has a vested interest in maintaining its naval presence in the South China Sea given its dependence on oil supplies from Russia's Sakhalin-I oilfields, while 55 percent of India's trade passes through the area.⁵⁴ As such, India views Vietnam as a highly important partner in ensuring freedom of navigation through the area given the latter's ideal geostrategic location. On the one hand, like Singapore, Hanoi strives to maintain foreign naval presence in Vietnamese waters to complement its own defence efforts. Cam Ranh Bay for instance is no longer meant to be any external power's permanent military base but accessible to all foreign navies.⁵⁵ However, the IN appears to be a more frequent visitor compared to other foreign navies, considering that U.S. naval port calls to Vietnam were relatively recent by comparison.

53 "Navy deploys four Dornier aircraft in Singapore", *The Press Trust of India Limited*, 14 June 2010.

54 India's OVL owns a total of 20 percent stakes in Russia's Sakhalin-I oilfields, which amounts to India's largest offshore hydrocarbon investment and which provides India 50,000 barrels of oil daily. The SLOC utilised for the transport of oil from Sakhalin to India's Mangalore spans over 5700 nautical miles and passes through the South China Sea. See official website of OVL: <http://www.ongcvidesh.com/Assets.aspx> (accessed on 2 November 2012).

55 "Vietnam to reopen Cam Ranh Bay to foreign fleets: PM", *Agence France Presse*, 30 October 2010.

FIGURE 13.3
Major Vietnamese ports open for access to the Indian Navy



Source: Google Earth accessed on 21 December 2012.

IN warships had called on Vietnam's ports since 1951 but it was only after 2000 such visits become regularised. As tensions brewed up in the South China Sea in recent years, Vietnam appeared even keener to facilitate an increased IN presence in the area. While this apparently fits within the broader pattern of welcoming foreign warships' access to Vietnamese berthing and servicing facilities, there appears to be a deliberate attempt by Hanoi to not just expand but also draw Indian naval presence closer to China's Hainan Island where a major PLA Navy base in Sanya is located (see Figure 13.3 and Table 13.3).

From previous port calls made to the southernmost Ho Chi Minh City, IN warships had in recent years expanded visits to the central ports of Vietnam. In a bilateral defence cooperation MOU inked in 2010, Vietnam offered India maintenance and repair facilities at its ports, such as in Haiphong, in exchange for Indian assistance in Vietnam's military capacity-building efforts.⁵⁶ Later in 2011, in return for India's provision of submarine training, Vietnam granted the IN access to the new Nha Trang port in the central province of Khanh

56 Manu Pubby, "Vietnam offers repair services for Indian warships", *Indian Express*, 14 October 2010.

TABLE 13.3
IN port calls to Vietnam since 2000

Date	Number of ships	Names of ships	Port of visitation
Oct 2001	2	INS <i>Mumbai</i> and INS <i>Jyoti</i>	Ho Chi Minh City
Oct 2003	1	INS <i>Magar</i>	Ho Chi Minh City
Nov 2004	6	INS <i>Ranjit</i> , INS <i>Ranvijay</i> , INS <i>Godavari</i> , INS <i>Kirih</i> , INS <i>Sukanya</i> and INS <i>Jyoti</i>	Ho Chi Minh City
Jun 2005	1	INS <i>Magar</i>	Ho Chi Minh City
Nov 2005	1	INS <i>Sudarshini</i>	Danang
Jun 2006	3	INS <i>Rajput</i> , INS <i>Kulish</i> and INS <i>Kirpan</i>	Danang
May 2007	2	INS <i>Mysore</i> and INS <i>Ranjit</i>	Ho Chi Minh City
Apr 2008	2	INS <i>Kova</i> and INS <i>Kirpan</i>	Haiphong
Sep 2008	2	INS <i>Kulish</i> and INS <i>Gharial</i>	Ho Chi Minh City
Apr 2009	2	INS <i>Mumbai</i> and INS <i>Ranvir</i>	Haiphong
May 2010	2	INS <i>Ranjit</i> and INS <i>Kulish</i>	Haiphong
Mar 2011	1	ICGS <i>Sankalp</i>	Ho Chi Minh City
May 2011	2	INS <i>Mysore</i> and INS <i>Ranjit</i>	Ho Chi Minh City
Jul 2011	1	INS <i>Airavat</i>	Nha Trang
May 2012	2	INS <i>Shivalik</i> and INS <i>Karmukh</i>	Haiphong
Dec 2012	1	ICGS <i>Samrat</i>	Ho Chi Minh City

Source: Author's database comprising multiple news sources.

Ho Chi Minh City⁵⁷ which, according to Indian press reports, is the first for any foreign navy granted such access by Hanoi.⁵⁸ Compared to Ho Chi Minh City port facilities, Nha Trang and the northernmost Haiphong

57 Rajat Pandit "India to help train Vietnam in submarine operations".

58 "Paper reports on India-Vietnam "naval cooperation" in South China Sea", 27 June 2011.

would give the IN even more convenient geographical reach into the South China Sea and which invariably also positioned Indian naval presence much closer to the heart of China's naval power in the South China Sea, most likely to Beijing's chagrin. In July 2011, the first IN warship which docked in Nha Trang—INS *Airavat*—was transiting in international waters off the Vietnamese coast, about 45 nautical miles from Nha Trang and heading towards the port of Haiphong, when an unidentified radio call claiming to be “Chinese Navy” demanded that the ship explain its presence.⁵⁹ This incident came about after Beijing's warning over the OVL-PetroVietnam joint venture in one of the South China Sea oil blocks. New Delhi appeared unperturbed by the incident, if it really took place, with IN port calls to Vietnam and the joint offshore hydrocarbon venture continuing right into 2012.⁶⁰ So far, regular Indian naval presence in the South China Sea had been successful and serves as a testament to India's commitment towards an all-weather friendship with Vietnam. It constitutes a win-win situation for both countries. ‘Flag-showing’ by the IN constitutes a low-cost and low-risk strategy compared to high-profile naval exercises. Notwithstanding Hanoi's recent calls for

59 Beijing denied that such an incident took place. Ben Bland and Girija Shivakumar, “China confronts Indian vessel in South China Sea”, *Financial Times*, 31 August 2011; “No face-off with Chinese Navy in South China Sea: Govt”, *United News of India*, 1 September 2011 and “China dismisses report of confronting Indian naval ship”, *Political & Business Daily*, 5 September 2011.

60 Almost two months after the reported naval encounter by INS *Airavat*, OVL and PetroVietnam inked their joint venture agreement. Nirmala George, “India, Vietnam sign oil exploration agreement, ignoring China's objections”, *Associated Press Newswires*, 12 October 2011. Notwithstanding Beijing's protests in 2012, OVL stood by its decision while New Delhi stressed that it is no party to the South China Sea dispute, in apparent reiteration of its existing offshore energy cooperation with Vietnam as a ‘purely commercial’ joint venture. “India re-evaluating Vietnam oil block in South China Sea”, *Indo-Asian News Service*, 3 August 2012. In December 2012, as tensions brewed up after Chinese fishing vessels allegedly harassed a Vietnamese marine seismic survey ship, OVL revealed that no activity is taking place at all in the contentious OVL-PetroVietnam oil block, which meant that OVL's presence is merely symbolic as far as Hanoi is concerned. “No activity by OVL in hydrocarbon block in South China Sea: India”, *The Press Trust of India Limited*, 5 December 2012.

New Delhi to take up a greater role in regional security affairs,⁶¹ it would appear that both countries would continue to tread carefully in their bilateral naval cooperation. This seems to reflect longstanding mutual agreement on pursuing security cooperation without causing detriment to any third party.⁶²

CONCLUSION

This study of Singapore and Vietnam's bilateral naval cooperation with India sheds light on the following observations. First, on the macroscopic level, the foreign and defence policies of both ASEAN countries have largely revolved around upholding the fundamental ASEAN principles of inclusivity in co-opting extra-regional powers within the regional security architecture, notwithstanding certain national-specific contextual variations. This is illustrated in the broad geographical scope of naval cooperation in general undertaken by both ASEAN countries. India fits in as part of this grand geopolitical strategy in accordance to ASEAN norms, and this furnishes a basis on which bilateral naval cooperation involving India is premised.

However, at the micro-level, differences in the scope of bilateral naval cooperation reflect the varying geopolitical circumstances faced by Singapore and Vietnam. For one, Singapore's consistent adherence to its foreign policy principles helped in some way to free its defence dealings with external partners, notwithstanding its fair share of controversies back in late 1989 when, in the face of impending U.S. military withdrawal from the Philippines, Singapore offered to host U.S. military facilities—a plan which was pursued in earnest despite initial neighbourly criticisms of the move.⁶³ Principled foreign policy also allowed Singapore to pursue comprehensive

61 "Vietnam needs India's help in South China Sea row", *The Statesman*, 7 July 2012.

62 Amit Baruah, "Vietnam for dynamic ASEAN-Indian ties", *The Hindu*, 10 January 2001.

63 Jose Katigbak, "Singapore stands firm on offer to U.S. forces to come in", *Reuters News*, 15 August 1989. The offer to host U.S. military facilities was pointed as merely an extension of such foreign presence as the hosting of Australian and New Zealand forces by Singapore and Malaysia under the Five Power Defence Arrangement. "GPC supports Govt stand", *Straits Times*, 15 August 1989.

training arrangements with foreign counterparts without necessarily provoking external backlash. The case of Taiwan is instrumental, for Singapore has persisted in maintaining Project Starlight—which facilitated the SAF's access to training facilities in Taiwan—in the face of Beijing's criticisms and enticements.⁶⁴ Consistent and principled foreign policy coupled with Singapore's absence of claims in the South China Sea, provided a wide berth of freedom for its naval cooperation with India, most notably in the field of training and exercises such as SIMBEX. In the case of Vietnam, its historical legacy of Cold War-era foreign policy alignments and longstanding historical animosities with China constrain defence cooperation with external partners. Unlike Singapore, Vietnam also has direct claims in the South China Sea, which places it in a somewhat tenuous position and limits its scope of naval cooperation with external partners. Training and exercises do not feature in India-Vietnam naval cooperation when seen in this light. It is plausible that Hanoi does not wish to be viewed as being closely aligned to any individual or groups of extra-regional powers that could be potentially misconstrued by China as a form of containment strategy. This situation might not change much in the foreseeable future, even if the VPN might be able to circumvent it by persisting in its own capacity-building program to allow its fleet to conduct 'out-of-area' forays into the Indian Ocean to plausibly start any form of regularised exercise arrangement with the IN, away from such geopolitically sensitive waters as the South China Sea. But economic realities meant that this would take time. In any case, Hanoi appears keen to water down its involvement in any multinational naval exercises that could potentially be perceived

64 Project Starlight began in 1975 and it had been an open secret that the SAF has routinely deployed troops to Taiwan for combat training. In 2002, Singapore's defence ministry expressed its intent to keep the project with Taiwan despite China's offer of Hainan Island as an alternative. Sherman Wu and Sofia Wu, "Singapore denies removal of 'Starlight' Project to Taiwan", *Central News Agency English News*, 26 September 2002.

as an anti-China endeavour.⁶⁵

In the area of military-technical collaboration, India-Singapore naval cooperation probably lags behind due to Singapore's traditional inclination towards Western and Israeli military technologies. Some inroads in niche areas of defence R&D with viable naval application could be made, and could potentially be expanded in future as both India and Singapore strive to promote defence industrial self-reliance. In the case of India, its quest for military-technical indigenisation and recent induction of Western and Israeli equipment might offer useful commonalities for this purpose. Hanoi would have to painstakingly ensure that those activities are low-key and, as far as possible, non-provocative. As such, military-technical collaboration is probably the most promising area of bilateral naval cooperation, given huge technical compatibility between both navies which still primarily utilise Soviet/Russian technologies. India could potentially be the most ideal non-Russian source of military technologies for Vietnam's arms diversification attempts. However, this day would probably only come if India is willing to introduce concrete measures in areas of advanced technology transfers to Vietnam. As Vietnam gradually begins to seek non-Russian military technologies, as seen in its recent ongoing negotiations and deals with Canada, Israel, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden, India will have to ramp up efforts to keep in pace with Vietnam's naval modernisation needs. In early December 2012, during a visit to New Delhi by a Vietnamese official, Indian President Pranab Mukherjee pledged to add "more content" to the bilateral strategic partnership, including defence and S&T fields.⁶⁶ This could possibly mean better implementation of previ-

65 Hanoi appears to have shied away from active participation in multinational exercises which could potentially be viewed as antithetical to its professed non-alliance policy. For instance, even though Vietnam had sent observers to India-hosted Exercise Milan, in 2012 it stressed that it did not participate in the drills, or the U.S. and Thailand-led Exercise Cobra Gold. These coincided with simmering tensions in the South China Sea. "Politics: Vietnam rejects to participate in naval drill Milan 8: BBC", *Vietnam News Brief Service*, 3 February 2012; "Politics: Vietnam not participate in Cobra Golden naval drill: BBC", *Vietnam News Brief Service*, 8 February 2012.

66 "India ready to diversify partnership with Vietnam: Pranab", *Press Trust of India*, 8 December 2012.

ous bilateral military-technical collaboration, particularly advanced naval technology transfers to Vietnam. The practical outcomes of this remain to be seen, and it might again still be mere ‘talk’ like the previous agreements.

Like naval training and exercise arrangements, Singapore would most likely now and in the foreseeable future encounter no controversies with respect to Indian naval presence via access to Singapore port facilities. Again, this is probably attributed to Singapore’s lack of claims in and the island city-state’s geographical distance from the South China Sea. The picture is not as rosy for Vietnam, however. Indian naval presence in Vietnamese waters has in recent times come under the spotlight and featured as part of the ongoing tensions in the South China Sea. For instance, in December 2012, in response to China’s promulgation of expanded maritime law enforcement powers for Hainan’s authorities against foreign transgressors in the disputed waters, Indian Navy chief Admiral D K Joshi was reported in press to have raised the possibility of deploying warships to the South China Sea to defend Indian economic interests, referring to OVL’s stakes in Vietnam’s offshore oil blocks.⁶⁷ This invited an almost immediate response from Beijing which did not seem to take the comment lightly⁶⁸, followed by reported discord between the Indian Navy leadership and the Indian Ministry of External Affairs over the IN’s role with respect to the South China Sea situation⁶⁹. Therefore, like advancing military-technical collaboration, expanding naval

67 “China’s naval modernisation a ‘major, major concern’: Indian navy chief”, *Indo-Asian News Service*, 3 December 2012.

68 Sutirtho Patranobis, “Respect our sovereignty: China responds to India’s navy chief”, *Hindustan Times*, 5 December 2012.

69 The Indian Ministry of External Affairs is believed to have objected to the comments made by Indian Navy chief Admiral D K Joshi who talked about the possibility of sending warships to protect Indian economic interests in the South China Sea. “Navy Chief’s remarks: MEA asks for restraint”, *Indian Express*, 6 December 2012. A day after the IN chief’s comment India’s National Security Advisor Shiv Shankar Menon said that New Delhi feels uneasy about publicly committing itself to this remark because it might hurt Chinese sensibilities, adding further that the Admiral Joshi had been misled by the media into making such a remark about sending warships into the South China Sea. Saibal Dasgupta, “Navy chief misled by media, says NSA”, *The Times of India – Hyderabad Edition*, 5 December 2012.

presence in Vietnam would require a great deal of soul searching on the part of New Delhi. If anything, Hanoi has been rather circumspect and cautious with regard to handling sensitivities with China.⁷⁰ It would seem that Hanoi does not desire any escalation of tensions in the South China Sea, and as such might oppose permanent IN deployments to the area. It might be correct to say that the maintenance of status quo—i.e. regular not permanent foreign naval presence—is most probably not just the desire of Vietnam but Singapore’s as well, judging from their general adherence to the ASEAN principles of interaction with extra-regional powers, particularly in the defence and military spheres.

70 For example, in July 2011, when asked about Vietnam’s response to China’s anticipated launch of its first aircraft carrier, Vietnam’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs remarked that China should play a bigger role and contribute positively in maintaining regional and international peace and stability. “Politics: Vietnam wants China to play bigger role in world peace, stability”, *Vietnam News Brief Service*, 29 July 2011. In June 2012, Vietnamese deputy defence minister Nguyen Chi Vinh remarked to the press that he “did not share” the idea that Vietnam was building up its defence capabilities against China, and the remark came just before U.S. defence secretary Leon Panetta was poised to visit Hanoi in the midst of rising tensions in the South China Sea. These instances reflected Hanoi’s apparent attempt not to provoke Beijing. Greg Torode, “Hanoi plays up Beijing ties ahead of Panetta visit”, *South China Morning Post*, 3 June 2012.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

David Brewster is a former corporate lawyer, specialising in complex cross border acquisitions and financing. He has practised in Sydney, Washington D.C., New York, London and Paris. He is now a Visiting Fellow at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University. David Brewster's research interests focus on Indian strategic affairs and especially on India's strategic relationships throughout the Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean regions. He is the author of *India as an Asia Pacific Power* (Routledge, 2012), and is currently completing *India as an Indian Ocean Power*. He can be contacted at dhbrewster@bigpond.com

Dr Mely Caballero-Anthony is Associate Professor and Head of the Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Until May 2012, she served as Director of External Relations of the ASEAN Secretariat. Dr Anthony has recently been appointed as a member of the UN Academic Advisory Council on Mediation and Conflict Prevention, and the World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Agenda Council on Conflict Prevention. She is also the Secretary-General of the Consortium of Non-Traditional Security Studies in Asia (NTS-Asia).

Dr Anthony's research interests include regionalism and regional security in the Asia-Pacific, multilateral security cooperation, politics and international relations in ASEAN, conflict prevention and management, as well as human security. Her latest publications, both single-authored and co-edited, include: 'The Responsibility to Protect in Southeast Asia: Opening Up Spaces for Advancing Human Security' (*Pacific Review*, 2012), 'ASEAN and Climate Change: Building Resilience through Regional Initiative' (Routledge, 2012), *Energy and Non-Traditional Security (NTS) in Asia* and *Rethinking Energy Security in Asia: A Non-Traditional View of Human Security* (both Springer, 2012). Her current research focus takes on the broad theme of Governance and Non-traditional Security issues. She is also working on a project on Revisiting Regionalism in Asia.

Mr Ajaya Kumar Das is a PhD candidate at RSIS, focussing on India's soft power relationship with the U.S. Additionally, he is a Senior Analyst with the South Asia Programme of the RSIS. His research interests include International Relations theory, international security, defence and strategic issues in Asia, India's foreign and security policy, India's traditional political ideas, and South Asian affairs. Prior to joining RSIS, he completed his M. Phil in South Asian Studies from the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Air Commodore Jasjit Singh, AVSM VrC VM, IAF (ret'd) is Director General, Centre for Air Power Studies, New Delhi since 2001. A veteran fighter pilot of the Indian Air Force (IAF), he was awarded the PADMA BHUSHAN by the Indian president for a life-time contribution to national security and defence. Earlier, he was Director Flight Safety and subsequently Director of Operations of the IAF before heading the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) as Director from 1983 to 2001.

Jasjit, MA(History) and FAeSI, has been visiting lecturer at defence and war colleges in India, USA, USSR, NATO, Japan, China, Iran, Germany, etc. He was a member of the three-man Task Force that helped to set up India's National Security Council (NSC) in 1998. His numerous published books include *Air Power in Modern War*, *India's Defence Spending*, *Indian Aircraft Industry*, *Defence from the Sky: IAF in 75 Years*, and *The ICON: Biography of the Marshal of IAF Arjan Singh*. He is currently a Council Member of the Indian Council for World Affairs (ICWA), the Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR), and is Adjunct Professor, Manipal University.

Mr Koh Swee Lean Collin is an Associate Research Fellow with the Military Studies Programme, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, a constituent unit of RSIS. He also teaches at the Singapore Armed Forces Training Institute. Earlier, Collin worked at the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies, RSIS, from 2008 to 2010, focusing primarily on energy security in Asia, especially nuclear power

development. Collin graduated with a Masters' degree in Strategic Studies from RSIS in 2008, with his dissertation on North Korea's nuclear politics. His research interest covers mainly military and security affairs in the Asia-Pacific as well as Scandinavian defence affairs. He is interested in the study of naval arms control and non-provocative defence in particular.

Currently, Collin is engaged in doctoral research in RSIS, focusing on naval modernization in Southeast Asia. His publications include (co-edited with Rajesh M. Basrur) *Nuclear Power and Energy Security in Asia*; "Seeking Balance: Force Projection, Confidence Building, and the Republic of Singapore Navy," *Naval War College Review* (Winter 2012); and "ASEAN's View on the U.S. Military Role in the Region," in Pavin Chachavalpongpan, ed. *ASEAN-U.S. Relations: What are the Talking Points?* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012.) He has also contributed to *RSIS Commentaries* and *The Diplomat*.

Rahul Mishra is a researcher at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, where he specialises on Southeast Asia, Australia and Asia-Pacific security issues.

This paper was written during his tenure as a Visiting Research Fellow at RSIS during 2012-13. In 2012, Rahul was a visiting fellow at the National University of Singapore. He is a former fellow of the Australia-India Council of the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, where he worked on Australia's nuclear disarmament policy.

Rahul has also worked as a Research Associate at the Centre for Air Power Studies on a Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India Project. He was awarded a Junior Research Fellowship (2006-09) of the University Grants Commission (UGC), India. Rahul has recently submitted his Ph.D. thesis in International Relations at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

C. Raja Mohan is currently the head of the Strategic Studies Programme at the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi. He is

also an Adjunct Professor with the South Asia Programme at RSIS and a non-resident senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC. He is a columnist on foreign affairs for *The Indian Express* and has been a member of India's National Security Advisory Board. He has a Master's degree in nuclear physics and a PhD in international relations. He has taught at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

Raja Mohan's major publications include *Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian Maritime Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012); *Impossible Allies: India, United States and the Global Order* (New Delhi: India Research Press, 2006); and *Crossing the Rubicon: The Shaping of India's New Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: Viking, 2003).

G. V. C. Naidu is currently Professor and Chairperson of the Centre for South, Central and Southeast Asian & Southwest Pacific Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi. He holds a doctorate JNU. He specializes in Asia-Pacific issues, including China, Southeast Asian affairs, Japanese foreign and security policies, Asia-Pacific regionalism and multilateralism, maritime security, political economy of East Asia, and India's relations with East Asia.

His visiting appointments/fellowships include Research Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore; Japan Foundation Visiting Professor at the Daito Bunka University, Japan; Visiting Fellow at the East-West Center, Honolulu; Visiting Fellow at the Japan Institute of International Affairs, Visiting Professor at Gakushuin University, Tokyo, and visiting appointments with several universities in India. He has to his credit three books, five monographs and a large number of articles, chapters in books, and research papers published in India and abroad.

K. S. Nathan is currently Professor and Director of the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS) in Universiti Kebang-

saan Malaysia, Bangi. Previously, he was Head of the Centre for American Studies (KAMERA) in the Institute of Occidental Studies (IKON), UKM, and also Deputy Director of IKON. He holds a B.A. Hons. in History from the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur (1971); Ph.D. in International Relations from Claremont Graduate University in California, USA (1975); LL.B. Hons from the University of London (1992), Certificate in Legal Practice (CLP) from the Legal Profession Qualifying Board, Malaysia (April 1996), and LL.M. from the University of London (November 1996). He also holds a Certificate in Education (Cert.Ed.) from the Malaysian Teachers College-Regional Training Centre, Kuala Lumpur.

Prior to his present appointment, Nathan was Professor of International Relations at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur (1994-2001), Senior Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), Singapore (2001-2007), and Editor of the ISEAS journal, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, from 2003-2007. His teaching, research and publications are primarily in the area of Malaysian politics and foreign policy, ASEAN security, and U.S. policy towards Asia.

Bilveer Singh is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore. He obtained his Bachelor of Social Science (Honours) from the National University of Singapore and Masters and PhD in International Relations from the Australian National University. His current research interests include the rise and management of Islamist terrorism in Southeast Asia, security issues in Indonesia, especially the challenge of separatism in Papua, the role of great powers in Southeast Asia, especially China and India, and the foreign and defence policies of Singapore.

Formerly the Deputy Head of the Department of Political Science, Bilveer has been a Fulbright Scholar at the University of California, Los Angeles; Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs' ASEAN Scholar; Research Fellow at the Department of International Relations, Australian National University; Research Fellow, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University; Visiting Professor, Gadjah Mada University; Visiting Professor, University

of Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta. Bilveer was also a Resource Person to the Indonesia-East Timor Commission on Truth and Friendship from 2006-2008.

Currently, Bilveer is the Vice-President of the Political Science Association of Singapore, a position he has held since 2006. Some of his recent publications include: *Radical Islam Network in Indonesia – The Journey of the Suicide Bombers* (with Munir Mulkhan), (Jogjakarta: Jogja Bangkit Press, 2012); *Politics and Governance in Singapore: An Introduction*, Second Edition (Singapore: McGraw-Hill Education, 2012); and *Indonesian Democracy under the Shadow of an Islamic State* (with Munir Mulkhan) (Jakarta: Kompas Press, 2011); *Politics and Governance in Singapore: An Introduction* (Singapore: McGraw-Hill Education, 2007); *The Talibanization of Southeast Asia: Losing the ‘War on Terror’ to Islamist Extremists* (Boulder: Praeger Security International, 2007); *Papua: Geopolitics and Papua’s Quest for Nationhood* (New Jersey: Transaction Publications, 2008); *Arming the Singapore Armed Forces Trends and Implications* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 2003); *Defense Relations Between Australia and Indonesia in the Post-Cold War Era* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002); *Civil Military Relations in Democratizing Indonesia: The Potentials and Limits to Change* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 2001).

Mr Ristian Atriandi Supriyanto (“Andi”) is a Senior Analyst with the Maritime Security Programme of the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS) at RSIS. He was previously a researcher with the Center of Southeast Asian Cooperation Studies (CEACoS) at the University of Indonesia. He obtained a Bachelor’s degree in International Relations from the University of Indonesia and a Master’s degree in Strategic Studies from RSIS. His research interests include Indonesian defence and naval policy, maritime strategy and naval history, as well as international relations and geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific region.

Dr Lawrence Prabhakar Williams is Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Madras Christian College, University of Madras, Chennai, India. He is Founding Member, Centre for Security Analysis, Chennai, India; Visiting Professor, Department of Geopolitics and International Relations, Manipal University, India; and Adjunct Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology-Madras, Chennai, India.

Among his numerous publications are: "Maritime Security Triangulation of ASEAN-Australia-India: An Indian Perspective," in William Tow & Chin Kin Wah, eds. *ASEAN-India-Australia: Towards Closer Engagement in a New Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Studies Press, 2009); "China's 'String of Pearls' in Southern Asia-Indian Ocean: Implications for India and Taiwan," in M. J. Vinod, Yeong-kuang Ger, and S. Y. Surendra Kumar, eds. *Security Challenges in the Asia-Pacific Region: The Taiwan Factor* (New Delhi: Viva Books International, 2009); and "Can the Indian Ocean be a Zone of Peace?" in Harjeet Singh, ed. *South Asia Defence and Strategic Year Book 2010* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2010).

The engagement between India and the states of ASEAN has acquired a significant defence dimension. This volume explores the relationship in three aspects: the broad strategic arena, the narrower space of defence cooperation, and the focused area of aerospace and maritime cooperation. The authors' findings suggest that, notwithstanding evident limits to collaboration, much can still be done to further India-ASEAN defence cooperation. Ultimately, since the chief aim of defence cooperation between India and ASEAN countries is regional stability, the final outcome will benefit the interests of not only the countries directly involved, but the region as a whole and the interests of all states active in it.



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