Preface

Australia and India’s growing prosperity has implications beyond the economic realm as they can continue on their growth trajectories only if there is a secure and stable external environment. This has propelled their efforts to carve out a larger international space for themselves by strengthening their political and economic ties with other countries, especially those in their immediate regions. It has also propelled them to enter into some strategic partnerships, including with other global players. Australia and India will invariably, also leverage on their “soft power” to expand their access to markets and to secure their access to critical resources. As these two countries continue to grow, with their growing economic power and expanded security interests, has to an extent helped to enhance their military capabilities and positive assertiveness. This thesis has tried to see, how far they succeeded in concluding and have engaged others in order to determine the complexion of the security landscape in the Asia-Pacific region to their advantage.

Australia’s foreign policy like any other country in the world aims to advance the security of the Australian nation and the prosperity and wellbeing of the Australian people. In response to the dynamic and challenging international environment, Australia is pursuing a wide range of bilateral, regional and multilateral strategies to achieve this aim. Key objectives include tackling terrorism, countering the spread of weapons of mass destruction and other global threats to Australia’s security, and securing further improvements in access to overseas markets for Australian goods and services. Key components of Australia’s strategy include a strong national defence capability; the alliance relationship with the United States; bilateral defence and security relationships with Asia Pacific countries; and multilateral security links, especially through the (ASEAN) Regional Forum. Close engagement with Southeast Asia is an imperative for Australia, and bilateral political, security and people-to-people links between Australia and many Southeast Asian countries are already strong. Economic relations are characterised by extensive two-way trade and investment and the development of comprehensive bilateral Free Trade Agreements with a number of countries in Asia. In October 2003, the Australian and Thai prime ministers announced the conclusion of negotiations on a Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. Thailand–Australia Free Trade Agreement was signed in 2004, and established a new trade platform for Australia and the second-largest economy in South-East Asia when it entered into force in January 2005. The Singapore–Australia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) came into
force in July 2003. Singapore is Australia’s seventh-largest trading partner, with Australian merchandise exports to Singapore worth $3.5 billion in 2003.

No country can afford not to be engaged with its neighborhood. The concept of neighborhood has also undergone a change. Today, it is not the immediate neighborhood alone but it is the extended neighborhood. The ‘near’ far as some people describe it or the ‘far neighborhood’ as others choose to call it. Therefore, India’s engagement with this extended neighborhood should not come as a surprise. Southeast Asia has, in India’s foreign policy perceptions, evolved from an enticing new frontier of economic cooperation in the early 1990s to a sphere of new possibilities for security convergence in the 21st Century. In addition, when security is defined as a comprehensive security, it is inclusive of economic cooperation. India’s ‘Look East’ policy under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who served as the Finance Minister under P. V. Narasimha Rao, is fashioned on this definitive approach to make a success of the oft-stated goal of Look East policy. Concrete steps have been taken in terms of strategic policy towards Southeast Asia keeping the internal dynamics of these countries in mind.

The focus of the research is on the policy initiatives of Australia and India after the Cold war and the impact of the USA’s “war on terror” after 9/11. This research however, goes beyond to present the results of an empirical study that attempts to look into the conceptual thinking that underlies India and Australia’s linkages with Southeast Asia. It seeks to understand key issues that have influenced the ASEAN’s shaping of the new regional order. It also takes into consideration Southeast Asian states distinct conceptualizations of the two main pathways in the region – one, regional order and balance of influence and two, a concrete vision of the preferred power distribution outcome. With the new geopolitical conditions; the rise of China, the end of Cold war ideological divide and bipolar world, and the role of regional powers in the security strategies of Southeast Asia, Australia and India have more role to play in the security framework of Asia-Pacific.

The main Objectives of this study are the security policies of Australia and India towards a region which is viewed by them of great strategic importance. The converging security approach of Australia and India, towards Southeast Asia is also examined in the study. The broadened security (Maritime Piracy, Terrorism) involving the India, Australia and Southeast Asia needs security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region is focused in the study.
The introductory chapter gives an overview of the development of strategic thinking in Australia and India towards Southeast Asia. It discusses the development of security thinking in the post Cold War in the two countries.

The second chapter undertakes a conceptual analysis of Australia’s “constructive engagement” policy towards the ASEAN nations. Various initiatives linking Australia to the ASEAN are analysed and explained with special reference to Indonesia.

The third chapter analyses and assesses India’s “Look-East” policy in the context of its strategic relevance. It also discusses and examines critically the impact of globalization and new security challenges (like maritime terrorism and piracy) on India’s strategic interests.

The fourth Chapter is comparative chapter on Australia and India’s security policies and interests’ vis-à-vis Southeast Asia. Comparison of the strategic attitudes of Australia and India towards Southeast Asia are particularly attempted in the background of the Financial Crisis of 1997, Indonesian political upheaval, East Timor issue, and global war on terrorism. This chapter also discusses the bilateral and multilateral security cooperation against what is perceived to be a common threat. The concluding chapter focused on the concluding observations and suggestions.

In the study the main research question that has to be proved are the following:

Political stability and economic growth in the ASEAN countries led to India’s Look East Policy and Australia’s Look West Policy. Australia’s regional security doctrine for Southeast Asia is a departure from past security thinking. New challenges like 9/11, have led to a new framework of regional cooperation in Southeast Asia, involving India and Australia. Both the countries are acceptable in the region as they follow the ASEAN norms in their pursuit of security. Australia-India relations have been strengthening by their growing linkages with the ASEAN. Principal focus of the study is India’s and Australia’s regional security policy is to maintain peace and stability by balancing the influence of various powers converging in Southeast Asia.

This thesis has adopted both descriptive and analytical methods based on primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include statements, interviews, official documents, parliamentary records, and database of organizations like the United Nations and ASEAN. Secondary sources include books, articles, journals, magazines, Newspapers, research papers and internet websites etc.