CHAPTER II

POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC DIMENSIONS

The end of the Cold War has resulted in a 'paradigm shift' in the perceptions of nation-states all over the world. The 'bipolar world' model during the cold war era, with all its demerits, had offered clear and simple choices to the policy makers. But the evolving 'new world (dis) order' has thrown up both formidable challenges and opportunities in equal measure. While the developed countries have been making best use of the new opportunities, the developing countries—devoid of strong state and societal capacities—are encountering enormous difficulties in facing the new challenges. With the ever-increasing globalisation process leaving nothing untouched, the earlier option of insulation or isolation is getting eroded rapidly.

With the end of the US-Soviet and Sino-Soviet Cold War in the late 1980s, the basic premises on which international relations were conducted in the Asia Pacific region for more than four decades since the end of the Second World War had lost significance. While the states essentially adopted an ideology-based approach to the conduct of international relations during the Cold War era, today they are primarily guided by their own interests and needs. There are no overarching alliances. The multifarious nature of a nation's interests perforce compels the leadership to keep all options open with all others and strike an alliance with like-minded nations by building broad-based coalitions depending on the issue-area. It is in this context that this chapter discusses the political and strategic dimension of India-ASEAN
relationship. This chapter shows how internal and external factors combined to change mutual perceptions for better and laid a political foundation for forging a new relationship. It delineates the principles underlying external policies and relations of India and ASEAN, discusses the role of personality factors,

Now the states have relatively more freedom to chart their own course of action in the external sphere. According to Muthiah Alagappa,

Asia is now in the post-postcolonial era. Though Asian states were liberated from colonial rule and foreign domination some four to five decades ago, much of the international politics of Asia in the post-World War II period continued to be dominated by external powers—especially the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. Now that this dominating overlay has been removed, Asian states are interacting more autonomously with each other... for the first time in a long while, Asian states have greater freedom and control over their interests, goals, and destiny.¹

Nowadays states act to secure their national interests without the burden of adopting an ideological stand. India has, for instance, formulated the 'Look East' policy of its own volition. There were neither external pressures nor ideological compulsions for doing so. Similarly ASEAN states have initiated a partnership with India to serve their own respective national interests. As India and ASEAN have moved closer to each other out of their own interest and to that extent their relationship is determined more by intrinsic than extrinsic factors. They determine the direction and pace of the partnership although they are influenced by policies and actions of other states.

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to a flux in the international arena and every nation had to come to grips with the momentous changes sweeping the world. There is little disagreement that the collapse of the Soviet Union as a superpower has had a severe effect on Indian scholars, policy-and decision-makers in economic, defence, and foreign policy spheres. The almost sudden implosion of the Soviet Union caught India unawares and generated a crisis of confidence in the way India was being governed for the past four decades and the efficacy of premises underpinning various internal and external policies. India had to reorient its internal and external policies, especially in the economic realm, and had to chart a fresh course of action to find a role in the emerging regional and global order.

India has always aimed to pursue an independent foreign policy and not to willingly become a member of any bloc. The spirit of non-alignment pervades the worldview of India and it strives to maintain and enhance its strategic autonomy. "The emerging world is multipolar and Indian foreign policy is aimed at establishing equations with these emerging centres of influence in international relations."² Among the national security objectives of India in the light of its external security environment are:

To ensure a secure and stable environment conducive to unhindered economic growth; in particular, maintain regional stability to devote national resources for meeting rising socio-economic aspirations of the population. The key regions in this regard are the neighbouring countries and then the regions of Persian Gulf, Central Asia, Indian Ocean and South East Asia.

To promote a commonality of interests, to the extent possible, with other countries, particularly in India's extended neighbourhood, which share some of India's strategic concerns and objectives.\(^3\)

The five factors that are paramount in planning considerations for India's defence management are: first, India is a developing country with limited public resources subject to the intense competing priorities of a democratic polity; second, India is not a member of any military alliance or strategic grouping nor is this consistent with its policy of non-alignment and as a result it needs to maintain a certain deterrent capability independently; third, the Indian armed forces have a two-front obligation for securing India's borders; fourth, the Indian armed forces are involved in internal security commitments in the context of cross-border terrorism and insurgency that place certain demands on their structure; and lastly, India's interests in the Indian Ocean, including the security of maritime trade, India's EEZ and island territories, dictate the need for a commensurate naval capability.\(^4\)

**India Redefines its Neighbourhood and recasts its role in Asia**

India decided to redefine its neighbourhood and seek a role in the larger Asian region since early 1990s. It has been attempting a breakout from the narrow confines of the 'South Asian' region. Conventionally, most of the foreign and Indian strategic analysts interpret India's security concerns by using the term 'South Asia' to define India's neighbourhood. But, this term ill-defines India's neighbourhood and consequently distorts the analysis. South Asia has been a problematic concept in the sense that China is excluded from


\(^4\) Ibid.
it. India has, for this reason, forcefully rejected proposals for declaring South Asia a nuclear-weapon free zone. In stark contrast, it has strongly supported Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. India has always favoured universal nuclear disarmament over such regional proposals. However India's firm rejection of a South Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty flows from its security concerns relating to a nuclear China and its clandestine assistance to Pakistani nuclear weapon programme.

Since early 1990s Indian strategic analysts have been advocating the usage of the term 'Southern Asia' that not only expands India's neighbourhood on the eastern and western sides but includes China as well. One of the leading members of the Indian strategic community, Jasjit Singh, strongly argues in favour of disbanding the term 'South Asia'. He redefines the neighbourhood of India thus:

Both to understand our interests and to chart a future policy toward our neighbours requires us to rethink what conventional wisdom defines as our region. The unquestioning adoption of 'South Asia' as our region over the decades has deprived us of a complete and balanced perspective of our immediate neighbourhood, leave alone the region immediately beyond which might impact on our interests and future policy.

Look for example at the sheer geographical nonsense where South Asia so defined does not include three of our very important physical neighbours: China, Afghanistan and Myanmar! Our borders (a significant part of which are disputed) cover nearly 7,000 km out of the total of 16,000 km of our land frontiers. Over 94,000 sq km of Northeast India is claimed by (not to mention another 60,000 sq km in Northwest India occupied by) China that is not considered to be a South Asian country. Geographically Srinagar is north of Lhasa. The chain of Andaman Islands is closer to Indonesia and Thailand than the Indian mainland.\(^5\)

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\(^5\) Jasjit Singh, "Our Eastern Neighbour," *Seminar* (New Delhi), no. 487, March 2000, p. 48. Indian scholars such as V. Suryanarayan and Sanjaya Baru have been advocating the concept of a 'Bay of Bengal Community'. See V. Suryanarayan, "Prospects for a Bay of Bengal Community," ibid, pp. 58-62.
In a related sense, the concept of 'extended neighbourhood' was popularised by Indian leaders such as I.K. Gujral and Jaswant Singh. While delivering a lecture in Singapore, Jaswant Singh, India’s External Affairs Minister, defined India’s strategic region thus:

India’s parameters of security concerns clearly extend beyond confines of the convenient albeit questionable geographical definition of South Asia. South Asia was always a dubious framework for situating the Indian security paradigm. Given its size, geographical location, trade links and the EEZ, India's security environment and therefore potential concerns range from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca in the West, South & East, Central Asia in the North-West, China in the North-East and South East Asia.  

China has found the concept of 'South Asia' eminently suitable while formulating its security strategy towards India. The concept while tying India down to Pakistan, excludes China thus fulfilling its twin objectives of disassociating itself with India’s broader security concerns and nudging Pakistan to seek military parity with India. The way China has been taking advantage of this concept is, for instance, reflected in the following statement on the nuclear issue in South Asia in the aftermath of nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan in May 1998:

When addressing the nuclear issue in South Asia, the international community should continue to demand India and Pakistan to fully implement the UN Security Council Resolution 1172, and urge the two countries to unconditionally join the CTBT and the NPT, and to give up their nuclear weapon programs. China hopes that the two countries will exercise restraint, enhance dialogue and maintain peace and stability in South Asia, China will, as always, play a constructive role on the South Asia issue.  

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7 www.fmprc.gov.cn
Thus the concept of ‘South Asia’ has not proved to be really helpful in addressing India’s strategic concerns as far as they are related to China. Not only that, it has in fact tied India down to its immediate neighbourhood and narrowed down India’s vision.

The only regional association in South Asia, the SAARC, has turned out to be a non-performing entity. Despite regular summits and meetings at various levels, it has not made substantial progress. The gains from the process of regionalism for common South Asians, if any, are negligible. It has, unfortunately, remained an official movement devoid of any kind of popular involvement.

Even though South Asia is recognised internationally as a region, none of the states in the region is sincere about its South Asian identity. All the major members simultaneously consider themselves to be in and out of the South Asian region. Their divided loyalties have stood in the way of forging a strong South Asian identity. India feels that South Asia is too narrow a region and that it should break out of the narrow confines of its immediate neighbourhood and ought to play a role in the wider Asian region.

Pakistan views itself more as a bridge between South Asia and West Asia and of late, Central Asia. Some Pakistani scholars use the American coinage ‘Southwest Asia’ to define their regional identity. Its involvement with West and Central Asia is more owing to its Islamic identity. Bangladesh considers itself more as a bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia. Interestingly, Sri Lanka had applied for the ASEAN membership in 1980 as it
felt its culture is more akin to the Buddhist states of Southeast Asia and its resource endowment is similar to some of the states of Southeast Asia. Moreover during the Second World War, the Southeast Asia Command of the Allied Forces was based in Sri Lanka. Nepal considers itself as a buffer state between India and China. It even occasionally uses the 'China card' to sort out its differences with India. On the eve of the establishment of the SAARC, the question of the inclusion of Afghanistan and Myanmar was also raised. However, there is no unanimity over the question of including Afghanistan and Myanmar in the South Asian region.

**Table 2.1: Diplomatic Missions of SAARC members in South Asia**

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<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Bangladesh</th>
<th>Bhutan</th>
<th>India</th>
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<td>Sri Lanka</td>
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Note:  Y indicates presence of mission
Blank indicates absence of mission

Interpreting Table 2.1, it is to be seen that South Asia is among the least integrated regions in the world. Even though more than two decades have passed since the process of regionalism in South Asia has been initiated all the states in the region are not even diplomatically represented in the fellow member-states. In total contrast, in the neighbouring ASEAN region, all the member states maintain missions in all of the fellow member-states of the ASEAN. As shown in the table, only India and Bangladesh maintain diplomatic presence in all the fellow member-states of the SAARC. Pakistan and Sri
Lanka have five missions each in the region. Nepal has four; Bhutan two; and the Maldives only one. The Maldives does not have a diplomatic mission in India, the region's largest state. The Himalayan kingdoms of Nepal and Bhutan, despite being close neighbours, do not have diplomatic missions in each other. Though this state of diplomatic affairs in the region is on account of several factors, some of which are beyond their control, it only reflects the lack of any regular and meaningful interaction among all the member states of the region. The smaller states are wary of supporting either India or Pakistan in their disputes.

The intra-SAARC trade is below five percent. Most of it is bilateral trade between India and other SAARC members. There is hardly any trade among the other SAARC members. India has supported the SAARC Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA). But fears of economic dominance by India in the fellow members' markets have hampered substantial progress on this issue. Pakistan has not even extended MFN status to India. India's position as the preponderant power on the subcontinent has resulted in a situation of asymmetrical interdependence in its immediate neighbourhood. India's neighbours are at unease while dealing with it. For instance, none of its neighbours, with the sole exception of Bhutan, have extended their support to its candidature for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. Incidentally, eighty eight per cent of India's aid goes to its immediate neighbours. (Bhutan: 69%, Nepal: 15%, Sri Lanka: 2%, Bangladesh: 1%, and Maldives: 1%).

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India, thus, instead of persisting exclusively with an association in its immediate neighbourhood, SAARC, that has severe limitations, has embarked upon a quest for integrating itself with the broader Asian region. The 'Look East' policy was formulated to realise this larger vision. The term ‘East’ referred to the members of the Communist bloc during the Cold World era. Now, with the end of the Cold War, the usage is reverted to its traditional meaning, that is, the eastern part of the world. While Japan, North Korea, South Korea, and Taiwan form India’s ‘Far Eastern’ neighbourhood, the ASEAN region along with Bangladesh can be termed as India’s ‘Near Eastern’ neighbourhood. China, India’s immediate neighbour to its North with a long frontier, falls into an entirely different category.

ASEAN: A Collective Entity

It has now become essential on the part of the external actors to view Southeast Asia as a single entity. The earlier divisions along the lines of non-communist ASEAN, Communist Indo-china, and neutral Burma have gradually disappeared with the Cold War between the US and the USSR on the one hand and between China and the USSR on the other winding down in the late 1980s. The events moved rapidly regarding the issue of the expansion of the membership of the ASEAN owing to the earnest efforts launched by all parties. Indeed, by July 1992 Lao PDR and Vietnam acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia and their applications for Observer status were approved. The leaders of all the ten Southeast Asian nations came together for the first time during the Fifth ASEAN Summit in December 1995 in Bangkok and also signed the Treaty on the Southeast Asia
Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone. All the ten countries constituting the Southeast Asian region soon became members of the ASEAN. It seemed as if they were held back from doing so earlier solely by the external factors. With the realisation of the ASEAN vision of embracing the whole of Southeast Asia, the terms ‘the ASEAN region’ and ‘Southeast Asia’ have now become one and the same. Furthermore, ASEAN remains the cornerstone of foreign policy of all of its member nations. For example, they were unanimous in admitting Myanmar as a member of the ASEAN in the face of opposition from the US and the EU.

While a strong sense of regional identity characterises the relations within ASEAN, it seeks a high level of regional autonomy in its dealings with the external powers. Amitav Acharya has made two basic propositions about regionalism in Southeast Asia. The first proposition states:

...the international relations of Southeast Asia has much to do with conscious attempts by its leaders (with some help from outside scholars and policy-makers) to "imagine", delineate, and organise its political, economic, social, and strategic space... as a quest for common identity in the face of the region's immense diversity and myriad countervailing forces, including the ever-present danger of intra-regional conflict and the divisive impact of extra-regional actors and events." (Emphasis added).

And the second one states:

...regional cooperation... has played a central role in shaping the modern Southeast Asian identity. By seeking to limit external influences and developing a regulatory framework for managing inter-state relations, it has made the crucial difference between the forces of conflict and cooperation that lie at the core of the international relations of Southeast Asia. (Emphasis added).

Elaborating on the concept of “region” in Southeast Asia, Acharya says that,

The ‘regionness’ of Southeast Asia is a matter of considerable significance for its states and societies. It is a crucial issue for those who want to study the international relations of the region, ... (for) assessing not only the pattern of conflict and cooperation within the region but also the relationship between the region and the outside world. 10 (Emphasis added)

The Importance of ASEAN to India

This section discusses the importance of ASEAN in the new foreign and defence policies of India. The strategic location of the ASEAN region places it among the most crucial regions in the world. Three out of the sixteen world maritime chokepoints identified by the US Navy are spread across waters of the ASEAN region. The Malacca Straits (between Malaysia and Sumatra), Sunda Straits (Sumatra and Java), and Makassar Straits (between Borneo and Sulawesi) are passages between Indian and Pacific Oceans. These passages play a vital role in the international commerce. They also play a decisive role during international conflicts as it was proven during the Second World War. India naturally has a stake in the peace and stability of this region owing to its physical proximity. 11 It shares maritime boundaries with Indonesia, Thailand and land and maritime boundaries with Myanmar. “The end of Cold war, India’s own increasing outward economic orientation, and the view that in the emerging multipolar world many Asian powers particularly China,

10 Ibid. p. 4.
11 For a comprehensive discussion, see Daljit Singh, “The Geopolitical Interconnection between South and South-East Asia,” in Frederic Grare and Amitabh Mattoo, eds., India and ASEAN: The Politics of India’s Look East Policy (New Delhi, 2001), pp. 21-40.
Japan, Korea and the ASEAN nations, are likely to be important players, has shaped India’s renewed eastward journey.\textsuperscript{12}

Explaining the importance of the ASEAN for India from a strategic point of view, the then Indian Naval Chief, Admiral Vishnu Bhagawat said:

'Look East' policy has its roots in Chanakya’s 'Theory of Mandala' enunciated in his treatise “Arthasasthra” in the second century BC and his six fold policy of state interaction and alignment as also our agreed concept of 'Panchsheel... India attaches the highest priority to her traditional and time-tested relations with the ASEAN countries... As a Full Dialogue Partner and a participant in the ARF, we understand and share the aspirations and concerns of ASEAN. We cherish and value this friendship.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{The Personality Factor}

The history of international relations and the influences shaping contemporary history have for the most part been determined by the individual dictates of leaders. Leaders play a crucial role in setting the national agenda. While they encounter significant constraints in the domestic policy arena, they possess considerable leeway in formulating the foreign policy. Hence it is essential to take the personality factors into consideration in foreign policy analysis.\textsuperscript{14}

Leaders approach the past and future of their nations from different vantage points. As their ethnic, religious, geographic origins, personal experiences, ideological orientations differ, it is axiomatic that their policies towards internal and external issues also vary accordingly. The amount of power they wield may be a matter of a debate, especially in a coalition

arrangement. There is no doubt, however, that they possess a significant level of autonomy in the external sphere, which is normally not subjected to acrimonious debates that characterise the domestic policies. Being the ultimate decision makers, they are free to choose a particular policy from various options offered by their advisors and policy-makers.

Leaders do make a significant difference to a nation's policies. Henry Kissinger states, "As a professor, I tended to think of history as run by impersonal forces. But when you see it in practice, you see the difference personalities make." Indeed the policymaking community in New Delhi, like any other capital city, is concerned about who is the President of the US, or the Prime Minister of Britain, or the leaders of neighbouring countries as that has real repercussions for India. We shall now examine the role of the personality factor in the evolution of India-ASEAN relations since 1991. We shall focus on Indian leaders such as P. V. Narasimha Rao and Jaswant Singh and leaders from the ASEAN region such as Goh Chok Tong (Prime Minister of Singapore) and Dato' Ajit Singh (ASEAN Secretary-General) who played important roles in forging a closer partnership between India and ASEAN.

Conceiving of contemporary India without the economic restructuring initiated in 1991 is well nigh impossible. That year P. V. Narasimha Rao assumed charge as Prime Minister of India at a time when the Cold War ended as an over-arching influence in international politics. Rao, unlike in his previous stints as the foreign minister, was as much an initiator as an implementer of India's foreign policy. He played a prominent role in imparting

15 Quoted in Ibid.
an economic and consequently an eastward orientation to the formulation and implementation of India's foreign policy.

Rao gave a new sense of direction, literally, to India’s foreign policy by formulating the 'Look East' policy. India's strategic community normally views the external world through Kautilyan Mandala framework, which stipulates a circular orientation to the conduct of a state’s foreign relations.\(^{16}\) This naturally generates a siege mentality to the effect that India is being 'encircled' or 'surrounded' by states with hostile intentions. However, it is far more beneficial to adopt a directional orientation to relate us better with other states, particularly in the neighbourhood in all the four cardinal points. The terms like 'Near East', 'Middle East', 'Far East' and so on serve precisely such a function. Rao's 'Look East' policy has, thus, provided a directional orientation to India's foreign policy. By looking at the world from the vantage point of India, it has provided an eastward orientation to its foreign policy.

Rao has also infused the much-needed economic orientation to India’s foreign policy. He believed that diplomacy should be used to secure economic as much as political interests. Thus for the first time since independence, the Indian diplomatic missions across the world were instructed to work for securing economic benefits for the nation, in terms of enhancing trade and investment linkages. Thus 'Look East' policy has provided both an eastward and economic orientation to India’s foreign policy.

Dwelling upon the respective roles played by Nehru and Rao in the formulation of India’s policy towards the rest of Asia, Sanjaya Baru, said:

Nehru brought India’s relations with the rest of Asia, in particular East Asia, to the centre stage of India’s relations with the world immediately after India attained independence from British colonial rule. However, the Cold War and India’s insularity, on the one hand, and its western orientation, on the other, did not allow this process to move forward at the required pace. It was then left to the first head of a government in Delhi hailing from peninsular India, and indeed from very close to the Coromandel Coast, Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, to rediscover the value to India of its links with the East. It was Prime Minister Rao who first urged India to ‘Look East’ and himself chose to attach great importance to his diplomatic forays into South Korea, Singapore and other ASEAN nations.17

Many diplomats who worked closely with Rao have acknowledged his role in imparting an eastward orientation to India’s foreign policy. Mr A. N. Ram, who was the Indian Ambassador to Thailand and later a Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs in the early 1990s, says:

...Prime Minister Narasimha Rao ... took some bold and far-reaching initiatives to restore normal relations with ASEAN and the countries of Southeast Asia. His ‘Look East’ policy was well calculated and thought out. He saw the end of the Cold War as an opportunity to broad base India’s relations and to focus on countries, which were our traditional and long standing friends of special importance to India.

... in some ASEAN quarters, there were still lingering reservations about India’s reliability as a partner in view of the entrenched perception that India had failed the ASEAN countries during their most trying times. Mindful of the difficulties that existed about opening up, Narasimha Rao first wanted to dismantle the barriers and create a climate of confidence between India and Southeast Asia. His first visit abroad outside the Indian subcontinent after becoming prime minister was planned to Thailand, the closest ASEAN neighbour.

In my view, much credit is due to Rao for his foresight and vision that led to our ‘Look East’ policy of which he was the unquestioned author and architect. ...He directed that special attention be paid to strengthening and deepening bilateral relations with ASEAN countries

recognising that at the regional level it is the sum total of bilateral interactions which would make us a desired partner.\textsuperscript{18}

Acknowledging the role of P.V. Narasimha Rao, a Thai media personality, Kavi Chongkittavorn, said:

One has to give a lot of credit to former Prime Minister Narasimha Rao for his strong determination in putting India in the hearts and minds of the ASEAN leaders and their peoples. Without him, India would still be an obscure country on the fringe of South Asia. He knew that there was an urgent need to improve the competitiveness of the Indian private sector, forge commercial links with Southeast Asia and attract investment from the region.\textsuperscript{19}

The 'Look East' policy, although initiated by the Congress government, has enjoyed bipartisan support reflecting the total national consensus on the issue of India's relations with the ASEAN region. The top political leadership has shown continuous interest in this region as demonstrated by the frequent high level visits to the ASEAN member states. The new path charted out during Rao's tenure was continued by his successors too. The Indian Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in his Singapore Lecture, declared the Asia Pacific region as "one of the focal points of India's foreign policy, strategic concerns and economic interests."\textsuperscript{20}

The ASEAN region has emerged one of the most essential regions of interest to India since 1991. Perhaps, this region now receives more number of official Indian visitors than any other in the world. (For details, see Appendix 2) More Indian ministers and diplomats visit this region than India's

\textsuperscript{19} Kavi Chongkittavorn (Executive Editor, \textit{The Nation}, Bangkok), \textit{Brotherly Engagement: India, China and ASEAN}, New Delhi, 13 August 1998, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{20} Atal Bihari Vajpayee, \textit{India's perspectives on ASEAN and the Asia Pacific Region}, Singapore Lecture 2002, 9 April 2002, www.meadev.nic.in
immediate neighbourhood. The number of official visits to this region has substantially gone up due to the frequent meetings at different levels in various issue-areas.

The leaders in ASEAN countries have always played a dominant role in setting the domestic agenda and more so in the realm of foreign policy. Robert Tilman, who conducted an extensive study in the mid-1980s focusing on the impact of individual perceptions on the foreign policy of ASEAN members, pointed out the considerable leeway possessed by, and enormous influence exercised by, the leaders in setting the external priorities. He states:

At least in ASEAN policy making, individuals matter. Most ASEAN leaders enjoy considerable latitude in foreign-policy formulation, and many policies bear the clear imprint of the top leadership of the countries. That is not to say that the policy setting is unimportant. However, the setting serves more to structure or effect the nature of the perceptions of the leadership that to impose strict “yes” or “no” choices on the policy options available to leaders. In the ASEAN environment, if leaders choose to exploit their positions to the fullest (and some do not) the top leadership can have a significant impact on the course of their countries foreign policies. In ASEAN, in matters of foreign policy, leaders can lead if they choose to do so.\(^{21}\)

The influential roles played by the leaders such as Suharto, Lee Kuan Yew, and Mahathir in setting the internal and external agenda of ASEAN is quite well known. Personal interaction on a frequent basis plays a crucial role in the diplomatic world. It ensures an element of continuity and thus predictability in the foreign policy. Nowhere in the world is this fact more evident than in the case of the ASEAN region. The ASEAN states attach considerable importance to building up of strong personal rapport among the top leaders.

Goh Chok Tong, who succeeded Lee Kuan Yew as the Prime Minister of Singapore in November 1990 played a catalytic role in bringing ASEAN closer to India. He has consistently urged India to pay more attention to the Asia Pacific region. He was invited as the Chief Guest for India’s Republic Day in January 1994. He took active interest in India and has paid three visits so far. He has also visited the regional capitals in India such as Bangalore, Calcutta, Chennai, Hyderabad, and Mumbai. Under his leadership, Singapore has consistently extended its support to almost every proposal from India. It played a crucial role in granting Sectoral Dialogue Partnership status to India. It was during the Fourth ASEAN Summit held in Singapore in January 1992 that this decision was taken.

While his predecessor, Lee Kuan Yew was more favourably disposed towards China and worked for closer economic relations with it, Goh Chok Tong looked at India as an alternative economic partner. Michael Leifer argued, “it was almost certainly to counter any impression of any undue dependence on China that Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong... has encouraged a countervailing economic interest in India with a corresponding search for opportunities expressed in investment.”

Later he played a critical role in the decision of ASEAN to upgrade India to the Full Dialogue Partnership status during its Fifth Summit in Bangkok in December 1995. According to Leifer, “...at the fifth meeting of ASEAN’s heads of government in Bangkok in December 1995, Prime Minister

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22 Michael Leifer, *Singapore’s Foreign Policy: Coping with Vulnerability* (London, 2000), p. 120.
Goh Chok Tong secured the support of President Suharto in a successful attempt to have India recognised as a 'dialogue partner' of the Association.”

The first Secretary-General of ASEAN, after its reorganisation in 1992 was Dato' Ajit Singh, a Malaysian national and a person of Indian origin. He played a key role in bringing ASEAN closer to India through his strenuous efforts. He undertook as many as six visits to India during his five-year tenure (1993-97) to generate mutual awareness and enhance understanding between the two sides. ASEAN leaders have recognised the worth of India as an important partner. After a decade of India’s 'Look East' policy, ASEAN has sought greater engagement with India. Delivering the India-ASEAN Eminent Persons Lecture in New Delhi, the former Foreign Minister of Indonesia, Ali Alatas, said:

Today, India has an important role to play in the political, economic and social development of ASEAN. There are of course, reciprocal benefits if India plays that role to the full extent, not the least of which are the profits of trade and returns on investments. Engagement with ASEAN can give substance to India's 'Look East' policy. A deepening of dialogue relations between India and ASEAN will certainly have a positive impact on the environment for political and economic cooperation in the Asia Pacific—and from such an eventuality, all nations in the region will benefit. That will be good for India and ASEAN, for the region and for a world caught up in rapid and fundamental change.24

The leaders from both sides have, thus, laid firm political foundation for partnership between India and ASEAN.

23 Ibid.
The External Policy and Relations of ASEAN

We shall discuss in this section the external policy and relations of ASEAN towards extra-regional states.\textsuperscript{25} It is useful to recollect here the principles underpinning the external policy and relations of ASEAN.

The ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) that established the ASEAN on 8 August 1967 enunciated a significant principle concerning the relationship between Southeast Asia and the extra-regional powers. It was the considered opinion of the founder-members (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand) of the ASEAN that,

the countries of Southeast Asia share \textit{a primary responsibility for strengthening the economic and social stability of the region} and ensuring their peaceful and progressive national development, and that they are \textit{determined to ensure their stability and security from external interference in any form or manifestation} in order to preserve their national identities in accordance with the ideals and aspirations of their peoples.\textsuperscript{26} (Emphasis added)

The above-mentioned principle had since become the cornerstone of the collective external strategy of the ASEAN members. They reiterated strong commitment to this principle subsequently in their Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) Declaration (Kuala Lumpur Declaration) of 27 November 1971. They also agreed that, “the neutralization of Southeast Asia is a desirable objective” and that they should “explore ways and means of bringing about its realization.” They are “determined to exert initially necessary efforts to secure the recognition of, and respect for, Southeast Asia

\textsuperscript{25} For a comprehensive review of ASEAN’s progress, see Sukhumbhand Paribatra, “The ASEAN Experience: Lessons from the Past and Thoughts for the Future,” in Baladas Ghoshal, ed., \textit{ASEAN and South Asia: A Development Experience} (New Delhi, 1998), pp. 47-81.

\textsuperscript{26} ASEAN Secretariat, \textit{Handbook on Selected ASEAN Political Documents} (Jakarta, 1998), p. 2.
as a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, *free from any form or manner of interference by outside Powers.*" 27(Emphasis added)

As per the Declaration of ASEAN Concord of 24 February 1976, “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.*” (Emphasis added) It again declared that, “member states, individually and collectively, shall take active steps for the early establishment” of the ZOPFAN. 28 It also declared that, “member states shall vigorously develop an awareness of *regional identity* and exert all efforts to create a strong *ASEAN community.*” 29(Emphasis added).

The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia signed in Bali, Indonesia on 24 February 1976 stated clearly that the member states were “*anxious* to promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule or law and enhancing *regional resilience* in their relations.” 30 (Emphasis added) They expressed belief in “the need for cooperation with all peace-loving nations, both within and outside Southeast Asia.” As per the Article 6 of the TAC, the members, in order to accelerate the economic growth, “shall continue to explore all avenues for close and beneficial cooperation with *other States* as well as international and regional organisations *outside the region.*” 31 (Emphasis added).

27 Ibid. p. 9.
28 Ibid. p. 11 – 12.
29 Ibid. p. 13.
30 Ibid. p. 21.
31 Ibid. p. 24.
In the protocol amending the TAC on 15 December 1987, the ASEAN members expressed the desire “to further enhance cooperation with all peace-loving nations, both within and outside Southeast Asia and, in particular, neighbouring States of the Southeast Asia region.”\(^3\)\(^2\) (Emphasis added).

The common thread that runs through the collective external strategy of the ASEAN members is the strong determination to become the masters of their region by neutralising any negative impact of the extra-regional states. They strive to enhance collective space for manoeuvrability to attain their common interests.

Southeast Asia has emerged as the most intensely engaged of all regions in the developing world. (It also happens to be the most closely integrated of all regions in the developing world. e.g. transport links within the region). The governments of ASEAN countries over the years have together crafted a policy of successfully engaging all the major external actors. It is little wonder that the ASEAN emerged as the anchor of cooperative ventures in the Asia-Pacific such as the APEC and the ARF. They have largely succeeded in the task of creating stakes for all the significant extra-regional powers to continuously ensure the peace and stability in their region. The institution of ‘dialogue partnership’ was an ingenious effort by the ASEAN countries to collectively engage extra-regional powers on a regular and proactive basis. It is within this broader context that ASEAN’s interest in India has to be seen.

\(^3\)\(^2\) Ibid. p. 31.
Even though ASEAN governments have not come anywhere close to adopting a common foreign and security policy, one can discern a high level of coordination among them while dealing with the external world. They normally adopt a common approach towards major international political and economic issues and extra-regional powers. ASEAN leaders regularly come out with innovative ideas to engage with the external world. e.g. ASEM, ARF, EAEC, ASEAN+3 and so on.

Contemplating the fate of ASEAN in the emerging international system in the early 1990s, one of the founders of the ASEAN, Thanat Khoman says:

In the post Cold War world, the Western countries find it fit to assert with little restraint or moderation their ascendancy and dominance, and some even seek to establish their hegemony over the entire world by claiming undisputed leadership in a so-called New World Order framework because of the absence of Soviet challenge and rivalry. The ultimate result would be that other nations will, ipso facto, become nothing but mere pawns of different size. The smaller ones will shrink still further and become even smaller and less significant. In fact, they will count less on the world scene than before the advent of the New World Order. Therefore, if they do not combine their minuscule strength, they will lose all meaning.33

Since early 1990s, ASEAN members have overtly discussed security matters among themselves and with extra-regional powers. They were alarmed by the conflicting claims over the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea and their potential to destabilise the region. The disputants are China, the four Southeast Asian nations of Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Taiwan. With the sole exception of Brunei, the other five claimants, viz. China, Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam have maintained personnel and/or military hardware in their respective islands. ASEAN was

33 Thanat Khoman, *ASEAN Conception and Evolution*, www.aseansec.org
seriously concerned about the willingness of China to resort to force to settle its claims. The dispute assumed serious proportions when China granted concessions for oil exploration to a few American oil companies. ASEAN soon launched efforts to contain the potential of Spratly dispute to emerge as a flashpoint in the region. The ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea of July 1992 issued at Manila sent a serious message to China to abjure force to back its claims. It specifically referred to the principles in the TAC as 'the basis for establishing a code of international conduct over the South China Sea'. Indonesia took the lead to hold "workshop" discussions to explore the ways and means to peacefully resolve the claims.

The ASEAN states collectively attempt to shape the regional political and economic order. This feature is prominent whether in their selection of dialogue partners, or in the formation of the APEC, ARF, ASEM, and ASEAN+3. Through their preferred strategy of dialogue, they all want to collectively engage the non-regional actors. They want to possess enough leeway in their dealings. This policy has considerably enlarged their economic and strategic space and thereby enhanced their regional autonomy. The ASEAN member states involve as many external actors as possible, however, subject to their own requirements. And they do not let others overplay their roles in their regional affairs. An indicator of their collective will was evident in their response to the Human Right issue and the admission of Myanmar into the ASEAN. Similarly, they firmly held on to their ground regarding their

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collective dispute with China over their respective claims in the South China Sea.

The ASEAN wants all non-regional actors, including India and China, to get along well with each other at least on those matters that have a bearing on the peace and stability of their broader region, defined here as Asia Pacific. With this avowed objective, the ASEAN states established the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to regularly discuss all the issues impinging on their regional security. The concerns about the growing assertiveness of China on the one hand and the West on the other has made ASEAN take notice of the potential of India to emerge as a dependable partner. The recognition by the ASEAN of India's potential to positively contribute to the regional stability has resulted in its decisions to make India a Full Dialogue Partner in December 1995 and consequently a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum since July 1996.

**India becomes Sectoral Dialogue Partner of ASEAN**

India's interest in the ASEAN region since 1991 cannot be simply characterised as a policy of reengagement with a long forgotten neighbourhood. It was a far cry from the situation that prevailed in 1940s and 1950s when the Southeast Asian states had looked up to India. With the Cold War coming to an end towards the late 1980s, India had looked around for new allies and set off in quest of new markets and sources of investment. India has to come to terms with an entirely new, confident, and prosperous region in a vastly different regional and global environment. It was dismayed to find that it figured nowhere on the horizon of the ASEAN states. Indeed the
ASEAN countries that made great strides on the economic front looked down on India. Hence India had to invest considerable diplomatic energies and financial resources to make itself more appealing to the region.

The Fourth ASEAN Summit held at Singapore in January 1992 had decided to confer the status of a Sectoral Dialogue Partner on India signalling the growing convergence of their mutual perceptions and interests. The dialogue partnership is a unique mechanism through which ASEAN has established close and enduring ties with certain developed countries. The decision of ASEAN to accord a Sectoral dialogue status to India has set in motion firm moves from both sides to establish institutional linkages between India and ASEAN. Accordingly, the Meeting of ASEAN and Indian Senior Officials on the establishment of Sectoral Dialogue between ASEAN and India was held at New Delhi in March 1993. They established the ASEAN-India Joint Sectoral Cooperation Committee (AIJSCC), the ASEAN New Delhi Committee (ANDC), and the ASEAN-India Business Council (AIBC). The AIJSCC was set up as the inter-governmental consultative body to coordinate the ASEAN-India Sectoral Dialogue Relations, initially in the areas of trade, investment and tourism. The ANDC consists of the Heads of Diplomatic Missions of ASEAN member countries in New Delhi who shall facilitate Sectoral Dialogue Relations between India and ASEAN. The AIBC consists of representatives from the respective private sectors of ASEAN and India.
Upgradation of India as Full Dialogue Partner of ASEAN

The Fifth ASEAN Summit at Bangkok in December 1995 decided to elevate the status of India to Full Dialogue Partner, thus expanding and reinforcing the growing bonds. The upgradation of India as a full dialogue partner of ASEAN could be construed to be the result of India's 'Look East' policy and a tribute to the intense and high level diplomatic effort mounted by it, as well as a manifestation of the success of the Sectoral Dialogue Partnership.35

Among the reasons for the elevation of India's status from a sectoral dialogue partner to a full dialogue partner were: first, the tangible results of partial dialogue status cooperation, which included interaction between the private sectors of India and the ASEAN countries, were sufficiently satisfactory to convince the ASEAN countries of the desirability of expanded full dialogue status cooperation for mutual benefit; second, the pace and orientation of India's economic reforms, and market and joint venture potentialities of such cooperation were assessed as complementary and responsive to the interests of the ASEAN countries; third, the western democracies led by the United States which have considerable influence in the ASEAN region, might have advised the Government of ASEAN countries to expand their relations with India, arguing that it would support India's becoming an increasingly useful partner in new global economic equations being structured under the leadership of the United States; and lastly, a large economy like that of

India's getting involved with the ASEAN could have been considered a factor balancing the presence of other powerful economies in the ASEAN market.36

**Defence collaboration between India and ASEAN countries**

The ASEAN region is located in the proximity of India. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are geographically closer to the ASEAN countries than India. Both sides share maritime boundaries and signed demarcation treaties. Given the increasing salience of maritime trade for India, the security of Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs) in the ASEAN region is crucial. That a peaceful and prosperous ASEAN that straddles along vital sea-lanes between the Indian and Pacific oceans is in its best interests has long been recognised by India.

Since 1995 the Indian Navy has been organising ‘Milan’—a get-together of friendly navies of the Bay of Bengal littoral states—at Port Blair where naval personnel from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand have been interacting with the Indian Navy personnel. Joint exercises are also being conducted with navies of the ASEAN states in recent years.

ASEAN defence officers are regular participants in the courses conducted by the National Defence College (NDC), New Delhi and the Defence Services Staff College (DSSC), Wellington. As part of the military training under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme, many slots are allocated to ASEAN states. Tables 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4 show details about the number of seats allocated to the ASEAN states by India.

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### Table 2.2: Allocation of Seats to ASEAN members at NDC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Slots</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ITEC-I</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ITEC-II</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ITEC-I</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ITEC-II</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ITEC-II</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ITEC-II</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table 2.3: Allocation of Seats to ASEAN members at DSSC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Army</th>
<th>Navy</th>
<th>Air force</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ITEC-I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ITEC-I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ITEC-I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ITEC-II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ITEC-I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rec surrendered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ITEC-II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ibid., p. 175.

### Table 2.4: Allocation of Seats to ASEAN members for General Military Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Allocation</th>
<th>Acceptance</th>
<th>Utilisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23+1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * Allocation during the years 2000-01

Source: Ibid., p. 177.

Thus, defence collaboration between India and ASEAN at present is at a low level.
China as a Factor in the India-ASEAN Relationship

No objective observer can overlook the overarching role of China in the Asian drama that is being enacted. The economic prosperity formed the bedrock of China's growing pre-eminence in Asia and beyond. The Chinese ambitions for leadership in Asia are being challenged by Japan and even India. China looms large in the strategic perceptions of India and ASEAN.

The Indian strategic analysts are deeply divided over the question of how to deal with the rising China. Commentators such as George Tanham, Stephen Cohen, J. Mohan Malik, and C. Uday Bhaskar project that the ASEAN region, especially Myanmar, is likely to emerge as an arena for Sino-Indian rivalry. Some scholars exhort India to follow a policy of containment by joining hands with the US and the interested members of the ASEAN. In this regard, they mention the Chinese efforts to close forge relations with Pakistan, Myanmar, and other neighbours of India to 'encircle' the latter. The Indian navy is concerned about a possible threat from China in collusion with Myanmar. Certain others, however, advocate a cautious engagement with China to attain common objectives in the international forums and for mutual advantage.

The recent phase of normalisation of relations between India and China began with the visit of India’s Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi to Beijing in December 1988. Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng reciprocated the visit in December 1991 thus symbolising a new era in the relationship. The state of Sino-Indian relations largely shape India’s security interests and role in the Asia Pacific. Sino-Indian relations improved visibly in the post-Cold War era. Bilateral border tensions decreased, culminating in the signing of landmark border security agreements between India and China in 1993 and December 1996. The agreement covers reduction of troop levels and establishes the principle of non-use of force in bilateral relations.

India in its annual security outlook for the year 2000 submitted to the ARF had this to say about the state of the Sino-Indian relations:

There have been positive trends in the Sino-Indian relationship and the border areas have remained largely peaceful. However, China’s military modernization—in particular nuclear and missile, its support to Pakistan, growing defence links with India’s Bay of Bengal littoral neighbours, possible presence in the Indian Ocean, upgradation of defence assets in and doubts over the long term stability of the region abutting India, necessitate its consideration as an abiding security concern.

The outstanding issues such as the border dispute, Tibet, and Sikkim between India and China are impeding the path towards greater cooperation. China has, for instance, refused to recognise the integration of Sikkim into India in the middle of 1970s.

Commenting about future trends about India-China relations, Gen K. Sundarji, the then Indian Army Chief said:

China no longer sees Russia as its greatest threat. India that was earlier seen, rightly or wrongly as ganging up with the Soviet Union against China, is no longer seen in that light. This, coupled with the fact that India has explicitly accepted Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, is likely to place India in the category of potential friends and supporters than in that of potential adversaries.41

The ASEAN states did not let their military build up to vitiate the strategic environment and kept things under control. The ASEAN members, being pragmatic, have realised that there is no need to harp too much on the past or present disputes and instead it is better to shape the evolving environment to suit their economic and security interests.

China, for all its aggressive postures and gestures in Taiwan Straits and South China Sea, knows very well that it is in need of a stable external environment for its internal development. Hence it has responded favourably towards ASEAN's policy of engagement through the ARF mechanisms.

It is undeniable that an element of mutual competition exists between India and China exists in the ASEAN region, especially in common neighbour, Myanmar. But as Kanti Bajpai argues:

India is not a credible rival in Southeast Asia; nor is it likely to be, any time in the near future. China has assets India does not and will not possess for a long time, if ever. It is contiguous to most of the Southeast Asian states. There are powerful Chinese minorities throughout the region and Chinese military and economic power leave India far behind. Militarily, China has nuclear and conventional forces twice India's size, forces it is rapidly modernising with its growing economic strength. Economically it has reputedly been growing too to three times as fast as the Indian economy. It is projected to become the third largest economy in the world in the next decade or so, and it is a trading giant. In sum, China is a formidable presence in Southeast Asia. India, by contrast, is a sideshow.

... It is unlikely that there is a Chinese threat to India. The détente with China will become a measured entente. India's greatest strategic problem is not China but various internal instabilities and rebellions, and if these are managed wisely the country will be secured internally as well as externally.\textsuperscript{42}

Certain analysts from the ASEAN region tend to downplay the Sino-Indian rivalry in their region and are worried about its implications. In the words of Mak Joon Num, a leading defence analyst from Malaysia:

The greatest danger to Southeast Asia today is not the Indian navy and its power projection capability per se, but the potentially destabilising spill over effects of Sino-Indian rivalry. There is no escaping the fact that India and China, in the long term, are 'natural' and historical rivals. Unless contained and moderated, this rivalry will have a negative impact on ASEAN, since the contest for regional power will be played out across Southeast Asia's area of interests.\textsuperscript{43}

When asked for his opinion regarding the question of India as a balancing factor in the region against China, Mr. Kwa Chong Guan of Institute of Defence & Strategic Studies, Singapore, stated:

No! not at all; we don't see India as a balancing factor in the region against China. Because India doesn't have that much potential both in economic and military strength. This idea is just developed by some Indians themselves. I think not a single country in the Southeast Asia region sees in this front. We don't have such defence problems with China as India has. So, our perception towards China is much different from India's.\textsuperscript{44}

Owing to the relative stability of the Asia Pacific during and after the cold war, Southeast Asia found it unnecessary to expend scarce resources on external defence. As Syed Hamid Albar, the former Defence Minister and the


\textsuperscript{43} Mak Joon Num, "ASEAN-India Defence Interactions", in Frederic Grare and Amitabh Mattoo, eds., \textit{India and ASEAN: The Politics of India's Look East Policy} (New Delhi, 2001), p. 155.

\textsuperscript{44} Interview by the researcher, Singapore, July 2001.
present Foreign Minister of Malaysia said, ‘...we could not think about external
defence before looking at our internal “situation” to avoid internal stability.’
Economics before defence, and domestic before external stability, sums up
the general approach to security”.45 It would seem that ASEAN is perfectly
happy to have a stable Indian Ocean dominated by a friendly India. The
danger, of course, is that if ASEAN decides to go along with India's de facto
policy of arms race with China, it would be caught up in the rivalries of these
two regional powers46.

Kavi Chongkittavorn, a well-known commentator from Thailand has
stated that:

I believe that without cordial relations or the so called “culture of
dialogue” between India and China, they would not be able to act as
the main benefactors of Southeast Asia and the wider region. India and
China must not treat each other, as enemy because I am afraid one
would act as one. It takes two to tango. Both countries will not be able
to improve things between them when they just bash and confront
each other and do not quietly consult each other when problems arise.
However, they are still at loggerheads. Both of them are future
economic powers... it is very important for India and China, apart from
Japan, to play a role in the current economic crisis. I think we are too
dependent on western countries.47

The transformation of Myanmar from a background constant to a
foreground variable in the strategic assessments of India and ASEAN states
had begun in the late 1980s. The Chinese influence over the ruling junta has
been on the rise ever since the West imposed sanctions on the latter after its
crackdown on the pro-democracy activists. Myanmar in the assessment of

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45 Mak Joon Num, n. 43, pp. 156-7.
46 Ibid.p.158.
47 Mr. Kavi Chongkittavorn (Executive Editor, The Nation, Thailand), Brotherly Engagement:
Indian strategists is a theatre where Chinese influence has to be limited. India began engaging the military regime since early 1990s in a bid to maintain a working relationship with it. It gradually scaled down support to pro-democracy movement. Now Myanmar gets three percent of India’s aid.

A growing convergence of interests of India and the ASEAN states in Myanmar is noticeable. Though there is no formal coordination as such with the ASEAN insofar as its Myanmar policy is concerned, India has been generally supportive of the ASEAN’s policy of ‘constructive engagement’ with Myanmar. ASEAN tried to wean away Myanmar from the Chinese orbit by admitting it as member in the face of stiff opposition from the West.

Advocating that India should coordinate its policy on Myanmar with that of the ASEAN, a former Indian diplomat said:

India should coordinate its position with those of the most involved ASEAN states... they are aware that SLORC is taking shelter behind the policy of constructive engagements to have countries like Singapore and Thailand bail them out on the economic front. More important is the factor that this association with the ASEAN, to an extent, puts a lid on dependence on China—which includes the increase military expenditure and modernisation of SLORC’s defence forces. 48

India’s role in the ASEAN Regional Forum

The objectives of the ASEAN Regional Forum have been outlined in the First ARF Chairman’s Statement (1994), namely, to foster the habit of constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern; and to make significant contributions to efforts

towards confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region.\textsuperscript{49}

The ASEAN Regional Forum adopted four criteria for participation in July 1996.\textsuperscript{50} Firstly, commitment; that is, all new participants, which must be sovereign states, must subscribe to, and work cooperatively to help achieve the ARF's key goals. Prior to their admission, all new participants should agree to abide by and respect fully the decision and statements already made by the ARF. All ASEAN members are automatically participants of ARF. Secondly, relevance; that is, a state should be admitted only if it can be demonstrated that it has an impact on the peace and security of the "geographical footprint" of key ARF activities (i.e., Northeast and Southeast Asia as well as Oceania). Thirdly, gradual expansion; that is, efforts must be made to control the number of participants to a manageable level to ensure the effectiveness of the ARF. Lastly, consultations; that is, all applications for participation should be submitted to the Chairman of the ARF, who will consult all the other ARF participants at the SOM and ascertain whether a consensus exists for the admission of the new participant.

The 23 members of the ARF are Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, European Union, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Mongolia, New Zealand, North Korea, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, United States, and Vietnam.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid. pp. 27-28.
The evolution and concepts identifying the emergence of the ARF as a pivot in regional security dialogue is highlighted by Amitav Acharya:

...through the ARF ASEAN sought to influence and manage regional order in five ways. The first was to offset the strategic uncertainties of the post-Cold War period. A multilateral security forum could help to avoid misperceptions and generate new ideas about and approaches to regional order. The second was to “engage” China in a system of regional order to dilute the threat to regional stability posed by its unprecedented economic growth and military build-up. This strategy was seen as being preferable to the alternative of “containment” which ASEAN members saw as an impractical and dangerous strategic option. Thirdly, the ARF could be a useful devise to ensure the continued engagement of the US in the region’s security affairs. This in turn would preclude the emergence of an independent Japanese security role, a development which ASEAN viewed as highly destabilising. The fourth goal that ASEAN sought to pursue through the ARF was to ensure that intra-regional conflicts, such as the territorial dispute in the south China Southeast Asia, could be managed peacefully through multilateral norms and principles. To this end, the ARF sought to develop measures of confidence building and preventive diplomacy to constrain the use of force in inter-state relations. Finally, the ARF provided ASEAN a coalition of small powers, with a measure of influence of over great power geopolitics in the region. Acting collectively through a multilateral forum ASEAN could share the development of a set of ideas and principles which might persuade the region’s major powers to view diplomacy and “rules of acceptable conduct”, rather than arms races and alliances, as the principal means of preserving regional equilibrium.51

The ASEAN members, being primarily trading states, have attached considerable importance to preserve peace and stability in their neighbourhood. So naturally they are wary of Indo-Pak and Indo-China tensions. They are apprehensive of spill over effects of armed clashes between nuclear powers. They have not, so far, extended the membership of the ARF to Pakistan, as they are afraid that issues relating to India and Pakistan would dominate the forum. The ARF is primarily concerned with the

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51 Acharya, n.9, p. 147.
security issues that have a vital bearing on the ASEAN region such as South China Sea and Korean Peninsula.

India cannot remain unmindful to the security concerns and shifts in the Asia Pacific. It shares maritime frontiers with ASEAN members, viz. Indonesia, Thailand, and Myanmar. India also shares a long land border with Myanmar. Apart from this, India shares its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) with Malaysia.

India has tended towards a more independent security approach that is devoid of multilateral or bilateral alliances. However, this approach does not exclude regional cooperation in security matters, in a cooperative framework, as India's participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum demonstrates. India sees in the ARF, an experiment for fashioning a new, pluralistic, cooperative security order, in tune with the diversity of the Asia-Pacific region, and in consonance with transition from a world characterised by balance of power and competing military alliances. Though the ARF covers a broader region, India believes that its nucleus is ASEAN and that is why ARF should be ASEAN driven. India's participation in the ARF reflects its increasing engagement, both in politico-security and economic spheres contributing to the building of greater trust, confidence and stability in the region.

India is, now, a territorial and maritime neighbour of ASEAN with greater interactions on economic, political and security interests than ever before. The engagement of a militarily stronger, economically prosperous, democratic and secular India imparts greater stability to the ASEAN region. Both ASEAN and India have a joint stake in ensuring that the emerging order
reflects their shared objectives. Having realized the importance of India as a stabilizing factor in the Asia-Pacific region, ASEAN extended the membership of the ASEAN Regional Forum to India in July 1996.

The annual meeting of the ARF in July has become a regular feature on the Indian diplomatic calendar. Apart from the annual session of the UN General Assembly in September, this is the only occasion when India gets opportunity to interact with the P-5 members of the UN Security Council. The Indian delegation is able to meet delegations of, among others, the US, Russia, EU, China, and Japan on the margins of the ARF Meeting to exchange views on the bilateral, regional, and international issues.

India’s participation in a security dialogue forum like the ARF has been an important aspect of the 'Look East' policy. Commenting on India’s admission in to the ARF the Annual Report of the Ministry of External Affairs in 1997-98 stated that:

It can be seen as an acknowledgement of India’s strategic importance in the Asia Pacific region and special links with the ASEAN countries... our active participation in the ARF meetings is intended to contribute to a more stable and predictable regional security environment which is a desirable objective for India.  

From India’s point of view it was important to avoid condemnatory references to the 1998 nuclear tests during the ARF meeting in Manila in July 1998 and ensure that discussions were meaningful and not polemical or contentious. ASEAN countries, especially Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore supported India and refused to join in the condemnation of India by non-ASEAN members. The then Indonesian foreign minister, Ali Alatas, defended

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India by terming it as a non-aligned nuclear power.\textsuperscript{53} India recognised this non-condemnation or favourable position as ASEAN's "acknowledgement of India's role as a balancing power in Asia Pacific security is implicit in this".\textsuperscript{54}

The interaction and growing participation of India in a multilateral security dialogue forum like the ARF is brought out in an official survey by the Government of India:

As a member of the ARF, India seeks to contribute to the building of greater confidence and stability in the region. In its immediate neighbourhood, India continues its approach of offering greater economic and political space to its neighbours and building confidence and trust through dialogue. India has intensified its interaction with the rest of the world in expanding circles of engagement. Given India's size and potential, this engagement imparts stability to India's extended neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{55}

India's involvement in the ARF is now minimal.\textsuperscript{56} The disarmament division of the Ministry of External Affairs deals with matters related to the ARF. India doesn't support any proactive role by the ARF especially in the field of preventive diplomacy.

During the Cold War era, the role of US in Asia became a divisive issue in India-ASEAN relations.\textsuperscript{57} However, the American presence in Southeast Asia was welcomed by India in the 1990s. Similarly the US also recognised India's stabilising role in the region. The US had recognised that India could be a

\textsuperscript{53} G.V.C. Naidu, n. 38, p. 193.
\textsuperscript{54} Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, \textit{Annual Report 1998-99}, p. 77
\textsuperscript{56} Frederic Grare, "In Search of a Role: India and the ASEAN Regional Forum" in Frederic Grare and Amitabh Mattoo, eds., \textit{India and ASEAN: The Politics of India's Look East Policy} (New Delhi, 2001), pp. 119-145.
\textsuperscript{57} For a comprehensive discussion, see Christian Wagner, "The ASEAN-India Relationship: The Role of the United States" in Frederic Grare and Amitabh Mattoo, eds., \textit{India and ASEAN: The Politics of India's Look East Policy} (New Delhi, 2001), pp. 205-31.
leverage to counter the growing ambitions of China. As mentioned in the CFR report,

India's political, military and economic influence in Southeast Asia is likely to grow in the coming decades. As Washington develops its own new relationship with New Delhi, it should include coordinated approaches vis-à-vis Southeast Asia as part of its agenda. Indeed as the world's largest democracy and a state that has been transforming itself from a command to a free enterprise economy, India can closely work with the United States to bolster common interests, objectives, and policies in the region.  

Non-military threats

The concept of security is being widened to incorporate military, political, economic, societal and environmental concerns owing to the realisation that it is no more possible to view security exclusively in military terms. In the post-Cold War era, according to Ramesh Thakur, we are witnessing "a radical shift from 'national security' with its focus on military defence of the state to 'human security' with its emphasis on the individual's welfare." This growing concern about human or global security is also reflected in the 1994 UN Human Development Report, which contends, "the concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly... It has been more related to nation states than people... Forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives".

The trans-national nature of the non-military challenges like terrorism and spread of small arms, drug trafficking, maritime piracy, illegal migration,

environmental degradation, growing scarcity of energy resources, water and food and spread of infectious diseases has required multi-lateral efforts. Yet these are not normally considered security issues. The growing acceptance of the notion of 'comprehensive security', however, has turned them into matters of serious concern for many states. India has been rather quick to recognise the importance of non-military threats and include it as an important component of its security and economic policy framework. As Jaswant Singh observed in his lecture at Singapore in June 2000, "It is not possible that security be viewed in military terms alone. Both India and ASEAN face the challenge of tackling new, non-military threats... Non-military threats have assumed greater salience, as part of, and consequential upon globalisation."  

No responsible government can ever leave its citizens to the mercy of vagaries of nature. The government is responsible for safeguarding its citizens not only from traditional national security threats but also what can be appropriately termed as 'natural security threats' such as earthquakes, cyclones, floods, droughts, volcanoes etc. The colossal loss of life and massive damage to public and private property owing to natural disasters certainly place them at par with other national security threats. It is lamentable that despite the recurrence of natural disasters at regular intervals, not enough resources—material and intellectual—have been allocated to cope with them.

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61 Jaswant Singh, n. 6.
the Malacca Straits and the Philip Channel as the single most dangerous one for piracy attacks.\textsuperscript{64} An estimated 40,000 to 50,000 vessels pass through this sea route making it the busiest in the world.

Piracy attacks in crowded sea-lanes may also result in serious regional environmental problems. The damage to an oil tanker in case of an attack will result in a major oil spill and this will spell an ecological disaster for all the countries in the vicinity. The consequences include pollution, temporary closure of seaway and severe damage to the marine resources including fish.

**Drug Trafficking**

Drug trafficking is one of the most serious challenges to the political, economic and social stability of our societies. The illicit narcotics trade is currently the world’s most profitable and most truly multinational activity, with annual turnover estimated between US $ 500 billions and US $ 700 billions, surpassing even world oil revenues and is second only to that of the arms trade.\textsuperscript{65} The transnational drug cartels possessing enormous wealth and coercive capacities have emerged as a serious threat to national and regional security.\textsuperscript{66} The destructive consequences of drug trafficking include money laundering activities, corruption, high crime rate, ill health, an enormous waste of human potential and the diversion of scarce public resources to fight against its effects.


\textsuperscript{65} Alison Jamieson, “Global Drug Trafficking”, \textit{Conflict Studies}, September 1990, p.4.

The 'Golden Triangle' (consisting of Myanmar, Thailand and Laos) in the ASEAN region has the dubious distinction of the world's largest producer of opium. It presently accounts for nearly two-thirds of world's illicit opium production and contributed to growth of an underground industry worth over US $160 billion.67 Most of the poppy cultivation takes place in eastern Myanmar. After refining, the heroin is transported to Thailand from where it is sent to international markets. Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore are the other transit countries.

India, having long coastal belt and land borders, is one of the major transit countries in the trade routes followed by the drug traffickers. India's long porous boundary with Myanmar has provided drug smugglers an alternative land route via northeastern states. The drug traffickers use this route to carry Indian chemicals into Myanmar and refined heroin into India. For refining process, a chemical named 'acetic anhydride' is obtained mainly from India, where it is manufactured for legitimate purposes.68 Some of the illegal drug supplies are finding their way into Indian hands due to the 'leakage' during the transhipment. So though India is a transit country, the drug consumption is on the rise and India may soon emerge as a major consumer state with disastrous consequences for our societal progress. As per the 1997 report of the Paris-based Geopolitical Drug Watch, there has been a boom in consumption of all kinds of drugs with the emergence and rapid

67 For details, see Chalk, n. 63, p.10. Also see James Shinn, "Asia's Drug Menace and the Poverty of Diplomacy", Current History, April 1998, pp.174-78, Bertil Lintner, "Global Reach: Drug Money in the Asia Pacific", ibid, pp.179-82.
It is in this context that this section seeks to examine non-military threats that are common to both India and the ASEAN region. It will then discuss imperatives for, obstacles to, and prospects for, cooperation between India and the ASEAN region to face these growing non-military security challenges effectively. For the purpose of the following discussion, the term 'non-military threats' is used selectively to cover only maritime piracy and drug trafficking, as these issue-areas seem to provide feasible opportunities for cooperation between India and the ASEAN region. It is, however, used in a much broader sense.62

**Maritime Piracy**

Maritime piracy has emerged in recent years as an important threat with serious implications for security in economic and environmental spheres. Peter Chalk has identified three types of piracy attacks, viz. harbour and anchorage theft/attacks, ransacking and robbery of vessels on the high seas or in territorial waters, and hijacking of vessels to convert them for the purposes of illegal trading.63 With nearly 100 attacks reported annually, Southeast Asia is considered as the most pirate-prone region of the world. The presence of these threats to commercial shipping is damaging the reputation of the region.

In 1992, the London-based International Maritime Bureau (IMB) identified the sea route stretching from the northern trip of Sumatra through

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63 For details, see Peter Chalk, "Low Intensity Conflict in Southeast Asia: Piracy, Drug Trafficking and Political Terrorism," Conflict Studies, 305/306, January and February 1998, p. 3.
expansion of drug markets in the third world. The report made a specific reference to the growing consumption of heroin in India.\footnote{Geopolitical Drug Watch, "A Drug Trade Primer for the Late 1990s", \textit{Current History}, April 1998, p.152.}

Drug trafficking is not an isolated problem. Apart from the debilitating impact of the consumption of illicit drugs, the society also suffers from certain closely related threats. For example, the insurgent movements in Northeastern India and Myanmar are intimately linked with drug trafficking. The proceeds from the drug trade act as fuel to various insurgency movements in that region by providing vast financial resources to procure sophisticated arms and training. Many insurgents and drug smugglers work in tandem to achieve their respective objectives. Consequently, the integrity of genuine 'autonomy' movements becomes a casualty in the process. Indeed as K. Subrahmanyam argued, "it becomes difficult to distinguish between situations in which sub-nationalist or ideological insurgencies use drug traffic for raising resources and those in which such insurgencies form convenient and respectable covers for sustaining the drug trade."\footnote{Subrahanyam, n. 62, pp. 44-45.} The case of war-drug lord Khun Sa and his Shan State Army is a grim reminder of this phenomenon of 'narco-terrorism'.

The consumption of illicit drugs is directly contributing to the spread of AIDS as a result of sharing needles. Thailand and Myanmar have thousands of drug addicts, most of who are also carrying the HIV virus.\footnote{Chalk, n. 63, p. 10.} The Indian north-eastern state of Manipur bordering Myanmar has an estimated 30,000
to 40,000 heroin addicts, more than half of whom are suspected to be HIV positive.\textsuperscript{72}

Through money laundering activities, the 'dirty' money generated from the illegal drug trade is transformed into clean cash to be reinvested in legal or illegal activities, thus crippling the national official economies. Moreover, with their huge, untaxed profit margins, the drug barons are able to spread the corrupt influences and in the process doing incalculable and irreparable damage to the social fabric of our countries. Thus, the enormity of the problem posed by drug trafficking and the drug trade linkages between India and the ASEAN region are clearly evident from the above discussion.

**Imperatives for Cooperation**

India and the ASEAN region, being located so close to each other cannot escape the consequences of events-either good or bad--occurring in each other’s territory. So their cooperation is essential to combat these common challenges.

Maritime piracy in the Malacca Straits is a common threat to India and the ASEAN region. These sea-lanes are of enormous economic importance to all the states in the region as their economies are critically dependent upon sea borne trade. “An uninterrupted access to the Malacca Straits and the South China-Sea, vital for the economy of ASEAN region and India needs to be ensured.”\textsuperscript{73}

They are also of vital strategic value owing to the oil supplies from the Middle East. The Indian trade with the Asia-Pacific countries is conducted

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid, p. 31
\textsuperscript{73} Jaswant Singh, n. 6.
through this sea route. As ninety seven percent of the India’s global trade is
dependent upon seaways, the safety of this particular sea-lane is of vital
economic importance to India. With further expansion of sea borne trade and
the growth of fishing and other activities in the EEZ (Exclusive Economic
Zone), maritime safety is of crucial importance to India. In case of a major
oil spill, the ecological balance of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands will be
damaged as they are located closer to the Malacca Straits.

Similarly, in the case of drug trafficking, societies cannot be insulated
from the consequences of the illegal drug trade as the drug syndicates
operate on a global scale that recognise neither nationality nor borders. They
are governed only by the rules of supply and demand. As stated by Jaswant
Singh, “Asia remains one of the principal producers of narcotic substances
and there are growing linkages between drug trafficking, arms proliferation
and terrorism. There is a need for us to address this volatile mix, which is and
will remain a threat to regional security and to the security of individual states
therein.”74

The measures taken to control maritime piracy or drug trade for a
limited period in a single country prove to be inadequate because the sea
pirates and drug smugglers are capable of shifting those particular operations
to another location in no time. Hence unilateral or even bilateral attempts to
combat these threats are bound to meet with failure, as they are essentially
trans-national phenomena. So the need of the hour is to launch multi-lateral
efforts on a priority basis to tackle these growing menaces.

74 Ibid.
Obstacles to Cooperation

Despite the presence of several imperatives for cooperation between India and the ASEAN region to tackle these growing trans-national threats, one finds serious impediments to cooperative efforts. Firstly, following conventional security concepts, the policy makers treat drug trafficking and maritime piracy as criminal activities. The sea pirates and drug smugglers are not considered to be posing a direct threat to the territorial integrity of the state. Consequently these threats do not assume prominence in the security agenda resulting in minimal allocation of public resources.

Secondly, it is ironic to note that national boundaries while not obstructing the cross border illegal activities act as major barriers to cooperative efforts of the governments. Measures like extradition or use of foreign troops on national soil certainly lead to controversies. Thirdly, the presence of certain operational difficulties discourages the governments to launch cooperative initiatives. While the cultivation of drug plants takes place in remote mountainous and jungle areas, the piracy attacks commonly occur on the high seas. Lacking proper technical means, the law enforcement agencies are not very enthusiastic to face these challenges.

Fourthly, the corruption at various levels has been subverting whatever few measures that have been launched by the governments to check these threats. The drug smugglers are able to buy political protection by providing huge amounts of cash and services during electoral campaigns. This phenomenon is especially rampant in Thai politics. Indeed, Thai Parliament
has refused to pass a bill intended to check efforts to disguise drug money.\textsuperscript{75} Similarly, the collusion of the rulers of Myanmar with drug dealers has discouraged serious cooperative initiatives on the part of its neighbours.

Fifthly, the lack of resources is responsible for the absence of any concrete cooperative measures to check these illegal activities. The governments of both India and Southeast Asian countries are hard pressed to allocate more resources to tackle narco trafficking and maritime piracy in view of the more pressing concerns. This is clearly evident in the failure of the governments in the Golden Triangle belt to provide better alternatives to the farmers indulging in poppy cultivation. Moreover owing to the economic crisis, the ASEAN countries can muster only limited resources now.

Lastly, the lack of initiative on the part of the media and NGOs accounts for the absence of any serious public debate and international cooperation on these issues of vital importance to the well being of the society. The international NGOs that have launched effective campaigns lobbying for multilateral agreements on the environment and labour issues are surprisingly absent from the narcotics debate.\textsuperscript{76}

**Prospects for Cooperation**

The above stated obstacles to cooperation may appear to be insurmountable. However, with India becoming a full dialogue partner of the ASEAN in 1995 and subsequently a member of the ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum), the prospects for cooperation seem to have brightened up.

\textsuperscript{75} Shinn, n. 67, p. 176.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, p. 178.
The annual ASEAN-PMC (Post-Ministerial Conference) provides an important forum to address these common problems together by India and the ASEAN countries at the ministerial level. The ARF and the CSCAP (Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific) facilitate discussion on a much wider scale. It is appropriate to mention here certain cooperative mechanisms that are already in place. These can provide guidelines to initiate steps for cooperation between India and the ASEAN region.

In an effort to tackle drug trafficking, the 17th ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD) has adopted a plan of action on drug abuse control in 1994 by identifying four priority areas viz. preventive drug education, treatment and rehabilitation, law enforcement and research on drug abuse prevention and control programmes. Laos, Myanmar and Thailand joined with China in 1993 to coordinate anti-narcotic efforts under the aegis of the UN Drug Control Programme (UNDCP). In 1995, Cambodia and Vietnam were also brought into this cooperative mechanism. All these six states have decided to collaborate on projects covering demand reduction, alternative development, law enforcement and intelligence sharing.77

In the case of piracy, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore had anti-piracy measures in place since 1992. These include the agreements to conduct coordinated anti-piracy patrols and to provide mutual security assistance. The establishment of a Regional Piracy Centre in Kuala Lumpur by IMB has also helped in addressing this problem. Apart from acting as information and broadcasting centre, it maintains contact with regional law enforcement agencies.

enforcement agencies in a wide geographic area covering all states east of Sri Lanka to Southeast Asia and the wider Asia-Pacific.

India has taken important initiatives in recent years in the field of maritime cooperation. As mentioned earlier India has started hosting get-togethers of friendly navies of Bay of Bengal littoral states at Port Blair on the Andaman Islands. During 'Milan 95', naval personnel from Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand interacted with Indian Navy personnel. In the subsequent 'Milan 97' more countries participated, this included naval ships from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand participated. Though these events were essentially social, cultural and sports get-togethers, this interaction provided a forum to foster friendship, strengthen cultural ties and promote confidence building amongst the naval fraternity of the region. The navies of India and the ASEAN countries regularly undertake good will visits to each other's ports and also occasionally conduct joint exercises. The Indian Navy/Coastguard has made significant contribution to the issue of anti-piracy by successfully intercepting and confiscating the hijacked vessel belonging to Japan, MV Alondra Rainbow, in November 1999. India has also hosted an ARF workshop on Anti-Piracy at Mumbai in October 2000.

Having come together, India and ASEAN have to seriously engage in cooperative ventures to add substance their 'dialogue partnership' by moving beyond their pious declarations or else it will remain a mere 'dialogue' devoid of any meaningful 'partnership'. From the above discussion, it is clear that

drug trafficking and maritime piracy are not imaginary threats but clear and present dangers that need to be tackled effectively on an urgent basis. There are no 'quick-fix' solutions as these threats are permanent and India and ASEAN have to devise cooperative mechanisms keeping a long-term perspective in mind. The following suggestions may be considered in this regard.

Most important of all, public awareness has to be created about these growing unconventional security challenges. An acceptance of the multi-dimensional conception of security could, indeed should, lead to allocation of more intellectual and material resources to tackle non-military threats.

Secondly, there are clear limits to what governments can do. So media and NGOs have a vital role to play in this regard. They should not only highlight these dangers, but also contribute in combating them. For example, NGOs located in borders areas can help in rehabilitation of drug addicts.

Thirdly, India and the ASEAN countries should take steps to harmonise their regulatory and legal regimes across state boundaries. India should make efforts to be included under the existing cooperative mechanisms in the ASEAN region. Multi-lateral agreements may be reached on the need to exchange information, coordinate police activities, and establish more effective frontier controls. They can also explore the possibility of signing extradition treaties.

Fourthly, the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard can make a valuable contribution by offering to conduct surveillance missions and undertake joint patrols with ASEAN navies. India's joint services facility,
known as FORTAN (Fortress Andaman & Nicobar) which is located only 80 nautical miles west of the Straits of Malacca and the Indonesian island of Sumatra is capable of extending cooperation to the ASEAN efforts to check piracy activities as well as drug smuggling in the region. The Indian Coast Guard trained Maldivian Coast Guard personnel. They can offer similar training facilities to the interested countries of the ASEAN region.

Conclusion

India and ASEAN share the objective of protecting and enhancing their political autonomy. They can help each other in attaining this common objective by enhancing mutual cooperation in the economic sphere. While common concerns vis-à-vis China have brought India and ASEAN together, it is the capability to contribute to each other’s development needs that would provide the sustenance to their partnership. Only by attaining greater economic strength, India and ASEAN can help each other deal confidently with the rising China. The ways and means in which India and ASEAN infused greater economic content into their relationship would be discussed in the next chapter.

India and the ASEAN region are beset with serious threats originating from non-military sources. Any unilateral effort to tackle them will prove to be inadequate and hence ineffective. Hence the immediate need of the hour is to pool their scarce resources and jointly combat these threats. A multi-lateral approach to combat maritime piracy and drug trafficking may be useful in expanding the scope of defence linkages between India and the ASEAN

79 Ibid, p. 41.
region. Such an arrangement will be a relatively less controversial building bloc for more elaborate forms of defence cooperation. Indeed, these two security concerns provide India with an excellent opportunity to contribute to peace and stability of the ASEAN region in a constructive manner.

India sought to forge a multidimensional relationship with ASEAN since 1991. Mr. Shashank, Secretary (Economic Relations) in the Ministry of External Affairs, expressed India's desire "to develop a multi-faceted relationship with ASEAN moving on the four wheels of security, economy, culture and science and technology." The partnership does not merely cover political and security matters but extends to other issue areas as well. The subsequent chapters deal with each of these areas.

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