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From look east to act east policy: India's regional cooperation with ASEAN

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Abstract

India and Southeast Asian countries have had a lot of interactions over the years. Trade was the initial point of contact, but it quickly spread to other domains. Indian religion, art, and culture have had a profound influence on numerous nations. The early 1990s saw significant shifts in the political and economic landscape worldwide, and India's progress toward economic liberalization has bolstered the complex relationship between ASEAN and India. The Look East policy (LEP) has been a major component of India's foreign policy since 1991. Although LEP's original focus was solely on the economy, it has since expanded to include political, strategic, and cultural aspects, evolving into an active, goal-oriented Act East policy. India and ASEAN had been a Sectoral Partner of ASEAN since 1992, a Dialogue Partner since 1996, and a Summit Level Partner since 2002. In 2012, the partnership was elevated to a Strategic Partnership. India and ASEAN have over thirty platforms for dialogue covering different topics. India's engagement with ASEAN for Act East and the goal of the "Indo-Pacific" geopolitical construct will remain crucial. The present study seeks to analyse issues and challenges associated with India's the Act East policy and the Look East Policy while examining their implications on relations shared between India and the Southeast Asian countries. In the light of the elevation of India-ASEAN relations from Strategic Partnership to the Comprehensive Partnership in multiple areas, the paper also attempts to evaluate nature and implications of India's efforts being taken in countering China's growing influence in the South East Asian region.

Keywords: Act east policy, ASEAN, look east policy, Southeast Asia, SAGAR

Introduction

In order to maintain its independence of action on the global stage, India refused to join the alliances of the United States or the Soviet Union during the Cold War, adhering instead to the doctrine of non-alignment. Nonetheless, India's foreign policy, like that of many other third-world nations, would be shaped by developments throughout the world during the Cold War. Although there was a brief period of closer ties between India and the United States in the early 1960s, India's relationship with the Soviet Union grew closer over the next few decades. India was at odds with many of the Southeast Asian nations that were closer to the United States because of its ties to the Soviet Union (Malone, 2011) [6]. India was also preoccupied with handling its rivalry and conflict with China, as well as managing ties with its immediate neighbours in South Asia, particularly Pakistan. India consequently spent a large portion of the Cold War ignoring the Southeast Asian region.

India was compelled to reevaluate its foreign policy following the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War (Haokip, 2011) [11]. All of a sudden, India lost its most important strategic ally, a dependable supply of military hardware and financial support, and first dibs on markets in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The fall of the Soviet Union brought with it opportunities and challenges for forging new relationships with both developed and developing nations. The US and other Western nations saw a significant improvement in relations. More international engagement with the global community and the pursuit of new allies and partners resulted from the development of new trade and commercial ties, the attraction of foreign investment, and the search for energy supplies. The "Look East" policy, which was introduced by Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao in 1991, was intended to further these goals by strengthening India's ties with Southeast Asia and promoting general peace and stability in the region, both of which would be beneficial to India's development.

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This essay will show how the modest origins of the Look East policy have changed over time. The new "Act East" policy of the current Modi administration aims to broaden these connections to include stronger defence and security cooperation as well. Building relationships with nations in the larger Asia-Pacific area, such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea, is another goal of the new policy. Currently, Look East/Act East is intended to address China's ascent and growing influence in the region while simultaneously advancing India's economic development.

Understanding India's Look East Policy

To varying extents, Buddhist, Chinese, Islamic, and Indic influences have shaped Southeast Asian culture. India has connections to the area in the areas of religion, language, folklore, customs, arts, and architecture. Some of these old cultural ties were intended to be strengthened by the creation of the current Look East policy. It was also influenced by the fall of the Soviet Union, the ascent of China, and the goal of elevating India's stature in post-Cold War geopolitics. India needed to develop economic and commercial relationships with new players and regions in order to pursue its goals of increased trade and commerce, foreign investment, and energy supplies. These goals were aligned with the Look East policy (Sikri, 2009) ^[25]. There were other contributing factors. One of the main ones was India's wish to profit from the economic prosperity of the nations in Southeast Asia and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation's (SAARC) meagre success in promoting regional economic ties (caused by tensions between Pakistan and India on a bilateral basis).

In the beginning, the Look East policy aimed to strengthen ties between the nations in the area and ASEAN in particular on an economic and cultural level. The foundation of the Look East policy is thought to be the ten-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which stretches from the Philippines in the east to Thailand in the west, and from Myanmar in the north to Indonesia in the south. ASEAN had just six members when the Look East policy was first announced in 1991. In the early years, ASEAN's relationships with Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia were prioritized. At the top of the agenda was the creation of new trade and investment ties with ASEAN member nations. India's relations with the CLMV countries-Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam-have also grown since the year 2000.

India's engagement with ASEAN grew over the course of the 1990s. This decade has seen India promote a number of initiatives with the main goal of increasing trade, investment, energy, and security ties. For the ASEAN economies that are more focused on exports, access to the expanding Indian market for trade and services was a desirable opportunity. In 1992, India joined ASEAN as a Sectoral Dialogue partner; in 1995, it became a Full Dialogue partner; and in 1996, it joined the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) (MEA, 2016). With its focus on fostering measures that foster confidence and engaging in preventive diplomacy in the region, the Asia-Pacific Foundation (ARF) serves as the principal forum for multilateral dialogue on political and security issues of concern for the Asia-Pacific region. India has also hosted yearly summit meetings with ASEAN and ASEAN+3 (South Korea, China, and Japan) since 2002. In 2002, the

inaugural India-ASEAN summit took place in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

India and ASEAN have developed various bilateral institutional links since the policy's outlines. This is consistent with India's post-Cold War goals of establishing new trade and business relationships, drawing in foreign capital, and looking for alternative energy sources. Up to thirty yearly dialogue mechanisms, including ministerial-level sectoral and summit-level discussions, existed between India and ASEAN by 2015. India and ASEAN have jointly made three funds, the ASEAN-India Green Fund, the ASEAN-India Science and Technology Development Fund, and the ASEAN-India Cooperation Fund, as part of the Look East Policy's objectives, which include fostering greater trade and commercial ties. These funds are intended to facilitate the implementation of projects of shared interest, foster cooperative research and development endeavours in the scientific and technology sectors, and support cooperative efforts aimed at addressing climate change and environmental degradation in the surrounding area.

India has also participated in subregional cooperation with a few ASEAN members (Yahya, 2005) ^[10]. These programs were created to make it easier to work with some of the ASEAN nations that had been recognized as having interests in both India's economy and security. Among them are the Bay of Bengal Initiative Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC). Since its founding in 2000, the MGC has expanded to encompass not only India but also Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. This sub-regional organization's goal is to promote collaboration in the fields of tourism, education, communications and transportation, and culture. Another sub-regional organization, BIMSTEC was founded in 1997 and comprises Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. The member countries have identified fourteen "priority sectors" for cooperation, which include: Agriculture, Climate Change, Energy, Environment, Natural Disaster Management, Tourism, Technology Trade and Investment, and Communication and Transport (Kundu, 2014) ^[31]. Although India's intention to influence states of strategic interest to China has not been hidden by these joint ventures, it remained evident that India was much more successful in establishing ties in trade and commerce through ASEAN nations than with its SAARC members. However, strengthening ties between India and ASEAN could potentially serve as a model for future regional integration in South Asia.

The Look East policy has contributed to India's economic growth in a number of ways. Trade has significantly increased between India and ASEAN since it was outlined. In 2015-16, trade between India and ASEAN totalled US\$65.04 billion, or roughly 10.12% of India's overall trade with the world. In 2018, just before the COVID-19 pandemic, that amount was \$142 billion (Business Standard, 2021). In 2001-2002, this amounted to US\$7.4 billion only. In the period from April 2007 to March 2015, foreign direct investment (FDI) into India from ASEAN was approximately US\$32.44 billion, while FDI outflow from India to ASEAN was approximately US\$38.67 billion. A free trade agreement (FTA) was signed by India and ASEAN in 2009 for goods, and in 2014 for investment and trade in services, realizing the benefits of trade for both

parties (Ibid.). Now, India's fourth-largest trading partner is ASEAN (MEA, 2016).

It is probable that a number of planned regional connectivity projects will strengthen trade and commercial ties in the future (Sikri, 2009) [25]. The proposed Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project is intended to link the eastern side seaboard of India and ASEAN through Myanmar and the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, which is currently under construction. This project is expected to enhance the flow of passengers and cargo between India and ASEAN. It is anticipated that the Trilateral Highway will benefit the restive northeastern states of India by lessening their geographic isolation, promoting economic growth, and lowering their reliance on the rest of the country. The states in the northeastern region offer their citizens economic opportunities, which should lead to a decline in the number of new members joining the various insurgent and secessionist groups operating there, improving the security environment overall.

India received an invitation to join the East Asian Summit (EAS) organization in 2005 as a consequence of its increasing integration with the Southeast Asian region. The primary objective of this organization is to foster strategic communication and collaboration among sixteen nations from East, South, and Southeast Asia, as well as between the United States and Russia. Tensions in the Korean peninsula, sustainable development, nuclear non-proliferation, maritime security, and counterterrorism are among the issues at hand (David, 2011) [6]. The East Asian Summit's Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) dialogue, which has been aiming for an Free Trade Agreements among its member nations during 2012, included India as well. India's desire to counter China's expanding influence in Asia and to usher in a new era in its relations with East Asia was evident in its entry into the EAS.

Scholars from both the West and India have argued that the diplomatic initiative Look East has been largely successful. This view seems to be supported by the quickening growth of India's connections with ASEAN during the 1990s and the first ten years of the current century. These ties have been made easier by the lack of political and economic disputes between India and ASEAN. Early relationships were based on trade and investment, but in the first ten years of the twenty-first century, those ties turned to security and defence, the relationship has changed over time. India-ASEAN relations enjoy broad support in India's political spectrum. By presenting the new Act East policy, the Modi administration has recently reiterated the strategic significance of Southeast Asia for India.

Act East Policy and Regional Cooperation

The Act East policy was formally announced by Narendra Modi prime minister of India in 2014 during 12th East Asia Summit (EAS) in Myanmar (Parameswaran, 2014) [28]. Numerous official declarations underscoring India's intention to play a proactive role in the East have been made since the policy's rebranding to Act East. Prime Minister Modi has mentioned Act East in passing on multiple occasions. The first took place in November 2014 at the EAS Summit. Act East was brought up again when he visited South Korea in May 2015, highlighting the significance of South Korea as a partner in the policy. In June 2015, Sushma Swaraj, who was the External Affairs

Minister at the time, visited Bangkok and spoke about India's endeavours to establish alliances with countries in Southeast Asia by means of the Act East policy. She described Thailand as a crucial strategic ally for India in this regard (Press Trust of India, 2015a). During the August 2015 leaders of the Pacific Island nations' meeting in Delhi, former Indian President Pranab Mukherjee also brought up the policy in his speech (NDTV, 2015). Prime Minister Modi outlined the policy's ambitious vision during a second visit to Singapore in November 2015. The policy's deeper strategic depth, greater comprehensiveness, and wider scope are its most notable differences from the LEP. The objective of the policy is to establish India as a prominent player in the region, aligning with the aspirations of the Modi administration to enhance its geopolitical clout both globally and locally. The Act East policy seeks to engage with larger Asia Pacific nations like New Zealand, Japan, Australia, and South Korea in addition to ASEAN nations. Because of this, the policy represents the Indian government's goal of gaining worldwide clout.

One could argue that India's effective diplomatic influence has attracted foreign investment from nations like Japan, which has supported vital infrastructure projects like the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor and India's high-speed rail network. More defence and security cooperation has been carried out, such as cooperative maritime drills with Malaysia, Myanmar, Vietnam, and other Southeast Asian nations. The road, rail, and aviation infrastructure connecting India and Southeast Asia has been upgraded and expanded. By including them in Indian development projects, India has also reached out to the Indian diaspora living in Singapore and Malaysia (Rajendram, 2014) [5]. Among the significant achievements of the Act East policy are the transformational and closer bilateral relations with Australia, Japan, and Vietnam. As a result, Act East policy has emerged as one of India's most important foreign policies.

The two primary goals of the Act East policy are to: i) strengthening economic relations and ii) countering the rise of China prominence and expanding regional influence. This section provides a brief explanation of these goals.

Modi Regime and Strengthening of Economic Relations with ASEAN

During his 2014 General Election campaign, Prime Minister Modi made a commitment to combat corruption, improve governance, and advance India's economic growth. Thus, in order for him to fulfil the promises made by the voters to quicken the expansion of India's economy, the Act East policy is essential. Under Modi's direction, India's foreign policy has been more focused on advancing the country's economic growth and development, which calls for large investments in infrastructure, manufacturing, and international trade agreements. India must therefore equally recognize the importance of the Asia-Pacific region.

India signed a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CECA) with ASEAN on July 1, 2015, in addition to in January 2010 it has made its Free Trade Agreement, to enhance exports of goods and services for market access. There will be talks about the FTA and CECA with Indonesia and Thailand soon. Other important steps India takes to boost economic development are Digital India, which allows citizens to receive government services online, and made in India, which allows foreign

manufacturers to produce goods in India. Other related projects include the Smart Cities Mission, which aims to improve municipal services, infrastructure, housing, educational opportunities, and healthcare facilities across the nation, and the "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan," which aims to clean up streets and neighbourhoods in Indian cities and towns.

A major initiative of the Modi government to modernize India's physical infrastructure is the high-speed rail network being built along the Mumbai-Ahmedabad corridor, which got its start in 2015 with funding from Japan. The project would require US\$12 billion in financing, which would be paid back over 50 years at an interest rate of 0.1% with a 15-year repayment moratorium. Japan provided 81% of the project's funding, with the state governments of Gujarat and Maharashtra covering the remaining costs (Press Trust of India, 2015b). Japan is now India's most significant and vital strategic ally. Because of their friendship, Shinzo Abe and Narendra Modi have been able to work together on a number of issues.

During the industrial era of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the primary commercial energy sources were oil and natural gas. India has greatly increased its oil imports since the end of the Cold War due to an inadequate amount of energy produced per person in the country. Given its massive population and growing industrial output, oil demand is expected to increase in the second half of the twenty-first century in India. India's low fossil fuel reserves have led it to look for oil exploration sites abroad. In collaboration with Petro Vietnam (PVN), one of India's oil companies, "Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Videsh Limited" (OVL), has made investments to explore off shore oil blocks that have garnered interest from Vietnam. Furthermore, India has agreements to explore for oil and natural gas off shore in Myanmar and Vietnam (Borah, 2016) ^[4]. India's economy will benefit from the discovery of gas and oil deposits in its "extended neighbourhood," which will also satisfy the nation's growing energy demands.

India signed agreements for civil nuclear cooperation with Australia in 2015 and Japan in 2016. India will receive nuclear power plant equipment as a result of these agreements with Australia and Japan. Furthermore, Australia would consistently supply India with uranium. This agreement will enable India to increase its nuclear energy supply in order to meet the nation's growing energy needs in the upcoming years. Along with improving living standards, this will help reduce pollution brought on by the burning of fossil fuels in Indian cities and address climate change concerns to a minimal extent. India is receiving assistance from Australia and Japan in building new nuclear reactors. Although India is not a signatory to the NPT, these agreements on atomic cooperation represent important political achievements nonetheless.

Significance of ASEAN in Countering China's Rise

China is India's biggest trading partner; in 2021-2022, bilateral trade exceeded US\$125.66 billion for the first time (Press Trust of India, 2022). However, because of their conflicting historical, geographic, and geopolitical goals, China and India's relationship has been difficult. The bilateral relationship between India and China has been harmed by a number of issues, including territorial disputes, China's persistent military incursions into areas that India considers to be its territory, China's support of Pakistan in

politics and the military, their rising regional influence, China's opposition to India's membership in the NSG, and the profusion of Chinese goods on the Indian market. The prospect of low-cost Chinese goods entering the Indian market and the ensuing unresolved Indian issues played a significant role in India's decision to withdraw from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

Bilateral relations between India and China were severely damaged by border disputes in October and November of 1962. During the disputes, India suffered major setbacks that continue to shape its perception of China. However, ties between the two nations have steadily improved since 1976. According to analysts, this will lead to the two countries' relations becoming more amicable and cooperative (Jain, 2004) ^[13]. These conclusions, though, might be drawn too soon. It doesn't seem likely that the two countries' long-standing rivalry will end anytime soon. Asia's two leaders were involved in a power struggle following the end of the Cold War because of their shared goals of attaining political influence worldwide, economic growth, military superiority, and regional hegemony, if not global power status. The Chinese military's presence in Tibet, China's expanding ties with Myanmar, Pakistan's arms supply from China, the Dalai Lama, India's apparent cooperation and support of the US in order to counterbalance China, and China's dominant position in Asia are other significant factors influencing Sino-Indian relations.

The Strategic rivalry between China and India is unavoidable in the post-Cold War era as both nations fight for resources, foreign investment, and markets" (Malik, 1995) ^[18]. These two countries' distinct historical experiences have influenced their strategic cultures. The rivalry is a result of each country's desire to reclaim the historical prominence and sway it once held over Asia prior to the advent of European powers. Every party thinks it is the dominant force in Asia. As a first step toward regaining their former greatness, both countries have controlled their neighbours (Malone, 2011) ^[7]. Rising aspirations resulting from developing economies will probably lead to confrontations between the two in Asia and other regions. Given that their "spheres of influence" overlap, competition between the two nations is unavoidable. As far as status and influence abroad are concerned, China presently enjoys a considerable advantage over India. India and China are more competitive because of their desire to catch up to each other. India benefits from China's threat in a number of ways. India's international standing was enhanced, Pakistan's attempt to achieve strategic parity with India was weakened, and China's expansionist ambitions brought India closer to the US and other Asia-Pacific countries. All of these factors led to India being regarded as a country that the Asia Pacific region and other countries should look to if they were concerned about China's increasing influence. The future of the Asian region will increasingly depend on the relationship between China and India, both the countries plays a significant role in international politics, of which they have perceives as being poised to become momentous power centers in international arena.

India has recently expressed concern over allegations that China is building civil maritime infrastructure in the Indian Ocean region, thereby expanding its naval presence there. China has financed the construction and renovation of port facilities in Myanmar (Kyaukpyu), Sri Lanka (Hambantota), and Pakistan (Gwadar) in what is known as a "string of

pearls". This gave the impression that China was surrounding India. The establishment of Bangladesh's first deep-water port at Matabari by China, Japan, the US, and India has intensified geopolitical rivalry (Shepard, 2016) ^[32]. As China makes progress in the South China Sea, India has the chance to work with ASEAN countries like Vietnam to thwart China's rise. The necessity of open navigation, energy transit, and trade is drawing countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including Indonesia, Singapore, Japan, and others, closer to India. In conclusion, Palit (2016) ^[21] states that India's worries about being shut out of trade and commercial relations with Central Asia have been made worse by China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). India has not yet indicated that it would be interested in joining the BRI, despite China's offer.

India -ASEAN Relations and Shared Strategic Interests

The original goal of the Look East policy was to strengthen India's economic ties with Southeast Asia by promoting trade and investment. In addition to growing geographically over time to encompass South Korea, Japan, and Australia, it has also taken on major strategic and political scopes. Since Modi implemented the Act East policy, the strategic element has become more important. India currently has strategic alliances with Australia, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Vietnam. Furthermore, they have improved strong relations with both the IOR and the BIMSTEC countries.

SAGAR, which positions the Security and Growth for All in the Region, is the acronym used by Prime Minister Modi to express India's regional strategy. By the way, the word ocean in Hindi is sagar. India has numerous strategic interests in the area. India's primary concern is the strategic ambiguity that has resulted from the US's waning influence and China's explosive rise in the region. Therefore, India is eager to participate in the emerging new regional order that is rules-based, open, and free from the influence of a single hegemon, along with other like-minded nations. Modi emphasized, "Such an order must believe in sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as equality of all nations, irrespective of size and strength," in the speech at the Shangri La Dialogue in 2018. The agreement of all should form the foundation of these laws and customs, not the authority of a select few. This needs to be predicated on trust in communication rather than reliance on coercion (MEA, 2018) Second, it acknowledges the inherent rights of all nations to freedom of navigation, over flight, and unhindered commerce in open seas, as a nation reliant on maritime trade for its survival. An essential component of India's Act East policy is maritime security.

Third, India agrees that no nation should settle its differences by using force. Fourth, the Act East policy of India encourages connectivity initiatives that foster regional integration and cooperation. The current Act East, in contrast to the Look East Policy, places a strong focus on the connectivity initiatives that connect ASEAN nations and Northeastern India. There is a strong alignment between South Korea's New Southern Policy and Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy and India's Act East policy. All three acknowledge the importance of the ASEAN area, and the convergence of their strategic and economic interests in the Indo-Pacific offers a great chance for cooperative efforts. Regarding the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific region, South Korean President Moon's efforts to

strengthen Seoul's ties with India and ASEAN bear significant consequences. His 2018 visit to India served as a powerful catalyst for increased engagement between the two nations in a number of areas, including trade, investment, nuclear disarmament, defence, maritime security, and energy cooperation. Moon's focus on the ASEAN's centrality aligns well with India's desire to forge stronger ties with those nations. India would especially welcome Vietnam's increased prominence in the ROK's New Southern Policy given its own developing ties to Hanoi. It is significant to remember that Moon and Modi decided to investigate tripartite partnerships for development in third countries, starting with Afghanistan's capacity building, in their July 2018 joint vision statement (Modi and Moon, 2018) ^[14]. South Korea might support Japan's and India's development initiatives, which have already been implemented in nations like Bangladesh, Myanmar, Kenya, and Sri Lanka.

Conclusion

The political spectrum in India is largely in agreement that increased engagement with Southeast and East Asian nations is imperative. India opened up new communication channels with ASEAN nations in the post-Cold War era in an effort to secure energy supplies, draw in foreign investment, and establish new trade and commercial ties. P.V. Narasimha Rao's Look East policy was intended to increase engagement with these nations. The relationship's initial focus was on trade and investment ties, but it eventually grew to include defence alliances and security cooperation.

The Modi government has recently reaffirmed India's intention to engage with the East Asian region and the ASEAN countries on a deeper level. The Modi govt is eager to strengthen strategic alliances with nations like Australia, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam as part of the Act East policy. It needs to demonstrate India's commitment to stepping up its geostrategic profile in the Asia-Pacific area, improve connectivity within the region, support India's economic development, and counter China's ascent and growing influence in the area. India has signed nuclear cooperation agreements with several of the region's nations as part of the Act East policy, and it has also participated in talks to establish free trade agreements within the region.

Modi has shown that India is prepared to work with the nations in the area on issues of shared interest by implementing the Act East policy. India is expected to interact with all of the major powers and support the preservation of Asia's power balance. The Act East policy aims to establish new connections between India and the rest of Asia in the areas of trade, investment, security, and defence. It could contribute to greater stability and peace in Asia. India's ability to help Southeast Asian and East Asian nations meet their security challenges will probably change the strategic equations in Asia, even though there won't be a formal alliance between India and the ASEAN countries to contain China. India may be looked to by the US more and more to assume security-related duties in the area. With the advancement of its military prowess and the expansion of the strategic reach of its Navy, India will ultimately fulfil the role that the other nations in the region have long anticipated from it.

Consequently, the Indo-Pacific Ocean can benefit from India's Act East Policy, which is a driving force behind India's engagement with ASEAN. India's main challenge is to develop a compelling strategy that incorporates political involvement, economic cooperation, science and technology, and a strategic interest in the South East Asian nations in the immediate future. It will represent a significant advancement for India's standing as a maritime power in the Indo-Pacific area and the Indian Ocean region. Furthermore, India's standing as an effective economic collaborator in these regions and a stabilizing force in the dynamics of up-and-coming influence could serve as evidence of its relevance. In order to accomplish these goals with a workable plan and its implementation in the future, the modern Indian government must agree and demonstrate political will.

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