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How India Perceives Southeast Asia?

ABSTRACT: India, a country from South Asia, gained independence in 1947, after receiving British's approval. British's approval also meant the division of India into two large territories, that is India and Pakistan. When India emerged as a new power, it caused worry in the security aspect among the countries in the Southeast Asian region. This is mainly due to its geographical location. India is a country that has the strength and ability like that of what China has currently, and it is also the second largest country after China. India has the second largest population in the world after China, and has the potential of becoming a massively powerful country in the world. India is capable of serving power balance in Asia by facing China and Pakistan with a few evolution made in the country's foreign policy. At the same time, India also hopes to have a good relationship with Southeast Asia; and it is seen from its foreign policy towards Southeast Asia or more commonly known as ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations). The closeness of the relationship was portrayed through the enthusiasm of India to accept ASEAN's invitation to become a member of ASEAN in 1991. In the 1990s, there was an improvement in the interaction between the two parties, and firm steps were taken to integrate and cooperate in economy as well as politics and security. In fact, India also managed to provide a huge potential in developing and giving economic cooperation to ASEAN.

KEY WORD: India; Foreign Policy; Bilateral; Power Balance; Good Relationship.

IKHTISAR: "Bagaimana India Melihat Asia Tenggara?". India, sebuah negara daripada Asia Selatan, mencapai kemerdekaan pada tahun 1947 setelah mendapat persetujuan pihak British. Persetujuan British ini juga telah menandakan terpisahnya India kepada dua wilayah besar, iaitu India dan Pakistan. Kemunculan India sebagai kuasa baru telah menyebabkan kebimbangan ke atas keselamatan rantau Asia Tenggara. Ini kerana dari sudut geografi, India adalah sebuah kuasa yang memiliki kekuatan dan kemampuan sepertimana kuasa China pada hari ini. India merupakan negara kedua selepas China yang mempunyai penduduk paling ramai di dunia dan mempunyai potensi menjadi kuasa besar dunia. India dapat menyediakan keseimbangan kuasa di Asia dalam menghadapi China dan Pakistan dengan berberapa evolusi di dalam dasar luarnya. Dalam pada itu, India juga inginkan hubungan yang baik dengan Asia Tenggara dan dapat dilihat melalui dasar luar India terhadap Asia Tenggara atau lebih dikenali sebagai ASEAN. Keakraban hubungan digambarkan melalui semangat India menerima jemputan ASEAN untuk menjadi ahli ASEAN pada tahun 1991. Pada tahun 1990-an, terdapat peningkatan dalam interaksi antara kedua-dua pihak, dan langkah-langkah tegas telah diambil untuk mengintegrasikan dan bekerjasama dalam ekonomi serta politik dan keselamatan. Malah, India juga berjaya memberikan potensi besar dalam membangunkan dan memberikan kerjasama ekonomi dengan ASEAN.

KATA KUNCI: India; Dasar Luar; Hubungan Dua Hala; Keseimbangan Kuasa; Hubungan Baik.

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INTRODUCTION

India's foreign policy has its own objective and strategy for its country. India's foreign policy can be viewed through its actions taken in the international relations, which consists of a few elements, that coincidentally is the existence of bipolar world after the World War II (1939-1945); and the existence of India as a free character in this current world arena. Besides that, India is seen as making foreign policy in cases which economic profit interaction is needed with all the world trade relationships, assistance, and investment, where it is assumed as important for the development of India (Sindharan, 1996).

As we know, India's foreign policy towards Southeast Asia is based on regional purpose. India's policy maker actually declined to receive the main argument of legitimacy in the international system, which has the right to decide upon the world's public military issues for the military, industry, and technology policies (Manor, 1994). In this context, Mohamad Faisol Keling (2010) states as follows:

In the history of policy and relations with the South East Asian countries, that is in the early era of the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) incorporation, India had difference in opinions and non-coherent thinking with South East Asian countries. India looked at the establishment of ASEAN as a political alliance and defense, such as the formation of SEATO (Southeast Asian Treaty Organization) which consisted of a few South East Asian countries that were under the influence of the USA or United States of America (Keling, 2010).

It is very important to know that India has a very strong dimension for the benefits of their foreign policy. India's policy can be seen from its anti-colonial and anti-hegemony which means India's policy maker refused to accept or listen to the main argument or debate on legitimacy in the international system, which has the power to decide

the world's public military issues for the military policy. During the Non-Alignment period, the concept gave a deep influence in India's foreign policy, such as reactions towards the implication in the international system which was introduced via strategies in post-war periods, which was more related to the non-alignment concept.

During the formation of Malaysia in 1963, the relationship between Malaysia and Indonesia (1963-1965) became tensed, which caused India to have a different view in the South East Asian policy. Even then, Malaysia repaid its support to India on behalf of the federation by giving strong support to New Delhi regarding the China border. Tunku Abdul Rahman launched a fund raiser for India to show his support on behalf of Asia for India (Cohen & Park, 1978:9-16).

With that, it was interesting to find out that India's attitude towards anti-British rebels and then later followed by World War II, which was also connected to the British control in Malaya, was obviously different from other revolutions; and at that time, Malaya was also facing Communist rebels. All these factors that have caused revolution in Malaya made it look as though the Indian leader's perspective of Malaya between the years 1948 to 1957 was basically a negative one, due to those incidents (Smith, 1994).

In the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) establishment history, India's intention was to only have or maintain a healthy relationship with a few countries alone, such as Vietnam; but after a few years since the establishment of ASEAN, the attitude towards ASEAN was not consistent anymore. In this context, G.V.C. Naidu (2004) said as follows:

The February 1979 Chinese attack on Vietnam, ostensibly to "teach a lesson" for the latter's military intervention in Cambodia and overthrowing the pro-Beijing Pol Pot regime, brought India and

Vietnam closer. India was the only non-Communist country that recognised the Hanoi-installed Heng Samrin government resulting in the establishment of close security understanding with Vietnam (Naidu, 2004:194).

This was due to two factors. Firstly, India felt uncomfortable with the Western countries, because they were abandoned by them once; and as a result, has caused them to be interested in joining a regional body. Secondly, it was because New Delhi felt that Pakistan could damage ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) in a way that could influence India via its ally, SEATO (South East Asian Treaty Organization), in the organization (Keling, Shuib & Ajis, 2009:22-32).

CHRONOLOGY OF RELATIONSHIP

Before the end of the Cold War, India's perception towards the Southeast Asian countries was "the followers of the West". In fact, India was one of British's colonies in the past, and ever since then and the beginning of the era of colonization, the hatred and despair sentiments towards British started. The background of India and a few Southeast Asian countries have similarities with regards to the fact that they were colonized by the same Western power (Smith, 1994).

For example, Malaya achieved independence on 31 August 1957, which was 10 years after India gained independence from British, which was in the year 1947. That relationship was going on since 1947, although it took India quite a while to trust the Southeast Asian governments. When ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) was established in 1967, India rises and developed its economy and moved towards having a good relationship with ASEAN. But then, the close relationship between Vietnam and Cambodia with China caused the separation of India from the Southeast

Asian region (Kurlantzick, 2012).

The Janata government even entrusted the approach to have an open option for both parties to continue the relationship. But then, with the victory of the Congress in the Public Election in March 1980, there was a change in the foreign policy, which gave more focus on how to make the Indian – ASEAN relationship closer.

At the international level, India's policy was more towards "neutral" and practiced "non-alignment" policy (Mukherjee, 2014). In the beginning, since 1962 itself, India had a closer relationship with Vietnam by giving its support, so that it can protect its territory as well as reduce threat from China (Sridharan, 2005).

Unfortunately, the situation changed in the year 1985, when Rajiv Ghandi took over as the next Prime Minister of India after the murder of Indira Gandhi, giving way for the ASEAN government to solve the Cambodian crisis. Since that year, the relationship has changed to a more serious, political-economic relationship that shows a dissimilar India – ASEAN relationship even up to now.

India – Southeast Asia Relationship. In understanding how far the relationship is between India and Southeast Asia, it needs to be viewed from India's foreign policy itself, such as culture, strategic geographic location, economy, and ethnic needs. Indian cultural relationship with foreign countries evolved before the Christian era and took a form before the 5th century. This can be seen from the Indian influence in Southeast Asia via the dissemination of Hindu, culture, and ethnic living in various Southeast Asian countries in Indo-China, Jawa, and Malaysia (Roche, 2015).

Eventhough the Indian influence to Southeast Asia was threatened after the era of spreading Christianity, but then the Indian traditional influence still remains the same in the Southeast Asian countries up to now. In the

beginning of this century, India looked at Southeast Asia as having close relationship between the people and the country with the mainland of India. That means that the Indian influence on Southeast Asia is an element formed since before independence itself, which in the end has continuity in the relationship between countries or region after gaining independence (Satish, 1985).

India certainly acknowledged the uniqueness and importance of Southeast Asia, which is rich in economic source and important in the security strategy. As a result, India also took the initiative to hold a conference, the Asian Region Conference in 1947, and invited Southeast Asian countries to join the conference in order to stand up against the Western powers (Sindharan, 1996).

In the end, this effort brought towards the focus in having a more effective relationship and collaboration between India and Southeast Asia. This factor has influenced India to move in a direction, where it can have a better relationship with Southeast Asia. This situation made India and Southeast Asia have a good opportunity for a potential symbiotic relationship, where they could depend on each other in the future.

Eventhough trading is only seen as an aspect of support in ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations)'s confidence, the military collaboration with individual countries and the agreement in January 2001 with ASEAN only strengthened the perceived image with regards to India's threat towards Southeast Asia. The reality is that India is highly developed in education and technology, which could give a positive effect to both parties to improve the cooperation in sectors, such as tourism, culture, transportation, and communication.

India's foreign policy, which lies more towards the "Look East" concept, is not only seen as the readiness for not only ASEAN, but also to get involved in ARF

(ASEAN Regional Forum). India wanted to enjoy minimal status, such a China, Japan, and South Korea under ASEAN + 3. According to Tuli Sinha (2009) is as follows:

An analysis of the history of India – ASEAN relations reveals a rather checkered past. A time-intensive process, it took nearly a decade to establish stronger dialogue partnership and strengthen cooperation and cordial relations among the ASEAN countries and India; their relations grew from a sectoral to a full dialogue partnership.

Since then the collaboration has transcended beyond the realm of functional cooperation to cover political and security dimensions. India has been actively participating in a series of consultative meetings with ASEAN that include the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Post Ministerial Conferences (PMCs), 10 + 1, 10 + 10, and Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia (Sinha, 2009:3).

Free from rhetorical ideology and the Cold War, India moved closer towards the direction of Southeast Asian countries to look for a balanced power. The collapse of Soviet Union in early 1990s and India's economical despair, which was caused by central leadership planning, forced them to think differently (Muni, 2011). This was an economic liberalization and they decided to maintain and be in the same wavelength as the globalization process.

India adapted a two-way strategy to obtain acquaintances that are closer to Southeast Asia. That caused for a diplomatic step to be taken in order to have a closer interaction with ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations)'s multilateral as well as effort to have a closer two-way relationship with Southeast Asia. India's perception was its prosperous trade with the Southeast Asian region. That was a manifestation from the "Look East" policy. Then, G.V.C. Naidu (2004) stated as follows:

This (ASEAN – India Partnership for Peace, Progress, and Shared Prosperity) along

with a clutch of other agreements that have been entered into in the last few years on to combat terrorism, on accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), on a variety of other activities has resulted in further consolidation of what is known as India's Look East policy that was initiated in the early 1990s. It has since remained a major priority of India's foreign policy. On the defence and strategic front too the progress has been impressive through a number of agreements and embarking on a variety of other activities with member-states of ASEAN (Naidu, 2004:190).

India attended ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) Post Ministerial Conference in Jakarta, Indonesia, in July 1996. All parties agreed to work together for a brighter future between India and the Southeast Asian region. India also became a tool to communicate with the ASEAN security issues, ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum).

INFLUENCE OF INDIA ON ASEAN POLICY

Southeast Asian countries, or ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), has influenced many of the Indian policies. The policies that were implemented by India takes into account the importance of the neighbouring countries, especially countries that are members of ASEAN. This situation is vital to maintain the relationship between India and ASEAN, because each party needs one another. There are various angles that can be looked at in the India – ASEAN influence. Among these are as mentioned below.

First, Economic Matter. ASEAN is an organization which is responsible for developing the economy and to get membership or the capacity to monitor the development in member countries; and India has planned strategies to organize the bilateral approach with specific countries (Sen, 2006:553-596). Bilateral approach with certain countries is needed as ASEAN has a structural economy and developing stage, as well as political philosophy

which orientates around the prosperity of its neighbouring countries (*prosper thy-neighbour*).

According to Md Shukri Shuib (2004), ASEAN actually moves towards implementing a concept that focuses on the prosperity of its neighbouring countries. He, then, stated as follows:

In the 1930s, beggar thy neighbor policies ran rampant. During the Cold War, prosper thy friend and beggar thy foe policies held sway. It is time for us all to adopt prosper thy neighbor policies. This is what we in ASEAN are trying to do with the wider Southeast Asia. We are working very hard at it (Shuib, 2004:21).

Even then, the prosperity of South East Asia was under threat, when ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) faced the Asian Economic Crisis in the year 1997. The 1997 economic crisis caused a deeply negative impact to the ASEAN countries, for example decreasing the Indonesian capacity and need to provide a strong political leadership when President Soeharto was taken over; Singaporean's high income was jeopardized; Thailand's economy almost collapsed and was forced to ask the help of International Monetary Fund; and so on (*cf* Kaufman, Krueger & Hunter, 1999; Pempel, 1999; and Muchhala ed., 2007).

Therefore, in this case, ASEAN was in great need for "stabilizing power" via the support of the world's economic tycoons, such as Japan, China, and India. It is capable of benefiting ASEAN to mutually improve the economy for both parties. For example, if India were to face economic crisis, India could seek the help of other ASEAN member countries. In fact, India could also work together in exchanging technology and expertise between the two regions (Kawai, 2005).

In the 1990s, the enforcement of ASEAN's policies to bring gigantic regional economic powers, such as Japan, China, and India, managed to successfully establish ASEAN +

India. In the year 1992, India became ASEAN's dialogue partner in fields such as trading, investment, tourism as well as education and technology. During the ASEAN's 5th Summit Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, on December 1995, India was invited to be a full dialogue partner. This was followed by India becoming a member of ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum), where regional security issues were debated, although it was strengthened through economically constructive relation as well as cooperation (Sindharan, 1996).

As a result of this constructive relationship in the economy, a positive effect with the readiness of India to join ARF indirectly shows that India wants to collaborate with the Southeast Asian countries to work together in political and security aspects. The participation of India in the ASEAN group could help increase the understanding between officers and members from the government and private sectors from both parties.

India and the ASEAN countries also have the opportunity to operate and discuss in other for a such as G-15 (Group 15 which consists of 15 developing countries, including India, Indonesia, and Malaysia); IOR-ARC (Indian Ocean Rim – Association for Regional Collaboration), which consists of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand as members; MGC (Mekong-Gangga Cooperation), which consists of Cambodia, India, Laos, and Vietnam; and BIMSTEC (Bangladesh – India – Myanmar – Sri Lanka – Thailand Economic Cooperation), which includes countries in South Asia and Southeast Asia, including Nepal and Buthan (Sinha & Mohta eds., 2007; and Wapmuk, 2012).

Besides that, India was very active in improving the two-way relationship with certain particular ASEAN countries, especially Indonesia, Myanmar, Singapore, and Vietnam. This was seen from the recent event where the Indian

President, Prime Minister, and Foreign Affairs Minister, together with the business delegates made a visit to those countries. The frequency of the bilateral visits to India by the leaders of ASEAN and their business delegates have also increased in that last few months. The website of ASEAN Secretary in Jakarta, Indonesia, stated as follows:

ASEAN – India relations grew from strength to strength. The signing of the ASEAN – India Partnership for Peace, Progress, and Shared Prosperity at the 3rd ASEAN – India Summit in November 2004, signified the maturity of relations and the commitment of both sides to work towards a long-term shared vision for common good. A Plan of Action was also adopted at the Summit to Implement the Partnership. ASEAN and India are now identifying priority areas and activities for implementation.¹

India's private sector also turned to be active in business opportunities via ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) institutions. This was shown by the establishment of Southeast Asian regional office in Singapore from the collaboration of Indian Industry CID (Center for International Development). Even then, the relationship between India and Southeast Asia also had its negative consequences (Sridharam, 1991:117).

If looked at it in general, the collaboration of India with ASEAN countries does not play a major role in expanding economical relationship with India, including investment. This is because the collaboration of India mostly focuses on Malaysia, Vietnam, and Singapore, which happens to be two of the most significant economies in Southeast Asian region; whereas India's collaboration with the remaining 7 countries was not focused upon.

The advantage of India to Southeast Asia was through the availability of labour source either with or without

¹As cited in <http://www.aseansec.org/archive/AR05/PR-partnership.pdf> [accessed in Seremban, Malaysia: January 11, 2015].

expertise to Southeast Asia, for example in sectors such as plantation, agriculture, construction as well as professionals such as fields like ICT (Information and Communication Technology) to Southeast Asia. India is a country that is developed in sectors like ICT and also provides labour force to a competitive stage, expert in the English language, and able to operate in a multi-cultural environment. It is also capable of equally elevating the existence of Multinational Western companies in both ASEAN and India (Snow, 1998:23).

Second, Social Matter. India has been actively participating in series of discussion meetings with ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), including ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum); PMCs (Post-Ministerial Conferences); ASEAN + 1; EAS (East Asia Summit); MGC (Mekong-Gangga Cooperation); BIMSTEC (Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economical Cooperation); and TAC (Treaty of Amity and Cooperation) in Southeast Asia. A strong commitment was shown by the Indian government provided by making Biren Nanda, the Ambassador for ASEAN in 2010.

The Prime Minister of India visited a few countries in Southeast Asia, such as Malaysia, where the Indian ethnic lives and the visit did not damage the sovereignty of the visited countries. For example, what happened was during his visit to Malaysia on 20th October 2010, Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister of India at the time, named a little Indian ethnic area as “Little India”.² This clearly shows that foreign policies in the social aspect of the Indian ethnic is very good and does not damage any country’s sovereignty (Roche, 2015).

Third, Political Aspect. The first Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal

Nehru, defined a unique foreign policy for India in the early stages of its independence. India manages to bring about its presence through a free and non-aligned policy and unite in the Third World since the 1990s (Tripathi, 2012). In the 1990’s, India portrayed itself a powerful country in South Asia. In fact, when India worked hard to determine a new approach to its smaller neighbouring countries, the territorial border between the Indian part of the continent insisted on declaring the law once again regarding the matters of the Indian Ocean and its borders.

The 1990’s looked at India as a country that was determined to reconnect with its surrounding countries, especially Southeast Asia. India fostered a good relationship with countries and territories around it, because that was part of its latest work structure which stresses on economic relationship and diplomatic energy from the traditional ideas of the Third World Country’s unity plan.

In the local political aspect, India realized that the political stability was the key to the country’s prosperity. Since 1996 to 1997, India’s relationship with countries in Southeast Asian region continued to be good. As an example, the adaptation of “Look East” policy in 1992 was seen when India became the Full Dialogue Partner in the ASEAN and joined ASEAN’s PMC (Post-Ministerial Conferences) for the first time in Jakarta, Indonesia, on July 1996. G.V.C. Naidu (2004), then, stated as follows:

Though the Look East policy was started as an attempt to assuage negative reaction to the navy, the post-Cold War political atmosphere offered an opportunity to convert that into a policy initiative by expanding the scope considerably to include aspects political as well as economic. It soon became a multi-faceted and multi-pronged approach to establish strategic links with as many individual countries as possible, evolve closer political links with ASEAN, and develop strong economic bonds with the region.

²See, for example, news on “PM India Diberi Sambutan Rasmi” in newspaper of *Berita Harian*. Kuala Lumpur: 27 October 2010. Available online also at: <http://www2.bharian.com.my/articles/PMIndiadiberisambutanrasmi/Article/> [accessed in Seremban, Malaysia: February 11, 2015].

Second, it was an attempt to carve a place for India in the larger Asia Pacific. Third, the Look East policy was also meant to showcase India's economic potential for investments and trade. Fourth, this policy also resulted in a total volte-face with regard to its attitude toward Myanmar. Last but not least, the feeling of getting left out of the action in the Asia Pacific, whether it was the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) or the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conferences (ASEAN-PMC) with the Dialogue Partners of ASEAN, which had emerged as the only forum to discuss regional issues, also weighed heavily in New Delhi's thinking (Naidu, 2004:196-197).

India also participated in the ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum) for the first time to discuss security and political issues in the Asia Pacific region. India also strengthened its bilateral relationship with Thailand. The youngest princess of the Thailand King, Princess Dr. Chulabhorn Mahidol, visited India from 19 November to December 1996, regarding the UNEP (United Nations Environmental Program) award ceremony. The Thailand Festival in Thailand synchronized well with India's 50th independence day and was officiated by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn during the time, when Deputy Prime Minister, Shri K.R. Narayan, was transitting in Bangkok on his way to Mongolia (Keling, 2010).

Malaysian Prime Minister at the time, Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, returned India's visit by visiting India officially from 19 to 22 December 1996. Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad also conveyed a speech during the 1st India – ASEAN Summit Proceeding under the Full Dialogue Partner with ASEAN. This really close relationship is seen from official visits by the Foreign Minister to Malaysia on 18 and 19 August 1996, which successfully sealed the agreement to deepen the support in fields such as harbour, electric, and roads which Malaysia was requested to provide expertise for India (Keling, 2010).

Besides that, a good relationship between India and Phillipines was also

seen from the official visit of the Prime Minister of Phillipines, Fidel V. Ramos, to India from 3-5 March 1997. It was participated by business community leaders in the Phillipines, which directly promotes the cooperation between the two countries which also clearly shows the keenness of India to have an economic development together in the trading industries.³

India continued to have friendly relationships and be close to Indonesia. The Foreign Affairs Minister made a visit to Indonesia in July 1996, to attend the ARF and ASEAN-PMC meeting in Jakarta, where India was officially accepted as a member of ARF as well as the Full Dialogue Partner for ASEAN. The Chief of Navy Troop attended the Indonesian Air Show in Jakarta on the 20th June 1996, for the officiating ceremony. At the Food Summit in Rome, the Prime Minister had a meeting with the Indonesian President on 16th November 1996 to discuss about an agreement to work together in the fields of education, which was at the final stage of negotiation (*ibidem* with footnote 3).

In December 1996, India and Indonesia finally signed the Cultural Exchange Program from 1997-1999, under the support of India and Indonesia with the ultimate reason to promote a more detailed understanding and a better cooperation in the education system and cultural fields. The Maintenance of an exclusive Indian Trading exhibition in March 1996 in Jakarta was suitable with the Joint Trading Council Meeting.

India looks after its relationship with Vietnam, making sure they always maintained a close relationship. This can be seen when the Prime Minister of Vietnam made an official visit to India in March 1997. This visit formed a meeting known as the Third India – Vietnam

³Cited in http://finmin.nic.in/the_ministry/dept_eco_affairs/icsection/Annexure_5.html [accessed in Seremban, Malaysia: February 11, 2015].

JWG (Joint Working Group) held in New Delhi on 16 and 17 January 1997 (Goel, 2004:103-109). This visit was to explore together the development in various joint bilateral programs, which involved both the sovereign countries and they signed an Agricultural Collaboration Work Plan in the JWG Meeting.⁴

Other than that, in order to strengthen their relationship in security aspects, it was also followed by a visit by the Indian Chief Staff of the Navy Troop to Vietnam in May 1996. Vietnam is a huge market for India in the Indo-China region. India automatically had a great relationship with Laos. This good relationship was seen through the eagerness of India to organize MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) together in the agricultural field with Laos.⁵

India's good relationship with the Southeast Asian countries also involves Cambodia, where in reality India also wanted to have diplomatic relationship and a very good relationship with Cambodia.⁶ The good relationship is viewed from the agreement to establish the India – Cambodia Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, and Technological Cooperation. The first Prime Minister of Cambodia, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, made an official visit to Bodh Gaya, Patna, India, on 16 December 1996, for the sole purpose of strengthening the ties between the two countries (Jha, 2011).

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, the India – ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) relationship was born even before the year 1945 itself. It was first pioneered strongly during the

Cold War era (1945-1991), which was portrayed by the bilateral political manoeuvre and large power. Diplomatic collaboration, conflict, crisis, and dispute are channels that bring about a better and closer relationship with both parties. Eventhough during Cold War the relationship between the two parties were mainly leaning towards the importance of their respective nation's interest, but it was also the channel that brought the two even closer since the 1990s.

The closeness of the relationship was portrayed through the enthusiasm of India to accept ASEAN's invitation to become a member of ASEAN in 1991. In the 1990's, there was an improvement in the interaction between the two parties, and firm steps were taken to integrate and cooperate in economy as well as politics and security. The cooperation between the two parties evolved from one sharing dialogue in a few officers' and Ministry's level, and up until the meeting between the leaders or chief for both sides since 1997, which brought to the opening of a wider tract in the aspect of trading economic development in general.

This method was successfully used by ASEAN to include the participation of Japan, China, and East Asia, other than the ASEAN member countries. In fact, even ASEAN prepared a seat for member countries to sit together at the discussion table in solving conflicts and disputes, which directly promotes experiences in solving peacefully through ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum). According to Tuli Sinha (2009), acknowledging the economic potential of closer linkages, both sides recognized opportunities for deepening trade and investment ties and agreed to sign a framework agreement to pave the way for establishing an India – ASEAN Free Trade Area (Sinha, 2009).

The initiation of the ASEAN (+1), India process, which was implemented in November 2002, was a turning point in India – ASEAN ties. This furthered

⁴It is able to see at: <http://www.aseansec.org/AR05/PR-partnership.pdf> [accessed in Seremban, Malaysia: January 12, 2015].

⁵See "Linkages Outside the Region". Available online at: <http://www.aseansec.org/11849.htm> [accessed in Seremban, Malaysia: January 11, 2015].

⁶See also "Linkages Outside the Region". Available online at: <http://www.asean.org/asean/about-asean/history/item/linkages-outside-the-region> [accessed in Seremban, Malaysia: January 11, 2015].

the signing of the landmark India – ASEAN Framework Agreement for Comprehensive Economic Cooperation in 2003, that formed the basis of the FTA (Free Trade Area) which included goods, services, and investments; and has to be fully functional by 2016. The India – ASEAN FTA is significant because it is the first multilateral FTA that India has negotiated till date.

ASEAN looks at India as a new power, which emerged in South Asia, which gives benefit to the ASEAN countries. ASEAN realized that India has a large and strategic potential and could be an influence in neutralizing the big powers in Southeast Asia. Economically, India moved as the world's latest economic power and it already prepared the economic opportunity and became a significant market for ASEAN. India also understands that ASEAN consists of countries, which achieved significant development since the 1990's. This is because ASEAN gave focus to build a relationship that benefited the countries involved. In fact, India also managed to provide a huge potential in developing and actively growing and giving economic cooperation to ASEAN.

This means that India is seen as a "jewel" to ASEAN in economic and political stability, not forgetting security, which India can be used as a support to balance the economic and security needs. The ASEAN and India relationship definitely has a positive potential to succeed in the future. In reality, both parties, India and ASEAN, could open more opportunities to build stronger relationships with the stress actually being put on a long term cooperation that is bigger and integrated, forming strengthened economic, and strategic relationship.⁷

⁷**Statement:** I, hereby, declare that this paper is my original work and not product of plagiarism in any books or journal that have being published. The citation is stated and shown in the References. This paper is never also being submitted and published by other scholarly journal.

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The Leaders of India and ASEAN Countries

(Source: <http://modiwahini.in/global-recognition.aspx>, 2/3/2015)

The ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) and India relationship definitely has a positive potential to succeed in the future. In reality, both parties, India and ASEAN, could open more opportunities to build stronger relationships with the stress actually being put on a long term cooperation that is bigger and integrated, forming strengthened economic, and strategic relationship.