

FROM LOOK EAST TO ACT EAST: INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY SHIFT

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LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

I certify that this dissertation entitled "**From Look East to Act East: India's Foreign Policy Shift**" has been prepared by **Shiva Ram Rijal** under my supervision. I hereby recommend this dissertation for final examination by the Research Committee Master's in International Relations and Diplomacy, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master in International Relations and Diplomacy.

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Deepak Prasad Bhatta, PhD

Supervisor

July, 2019

APPROVAL LETTER

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work and it contains no materials previously published. I have not used its materials for the award of any kind and any other degree. Where other authors' sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

Foreign Policy plays a vital role in international relations. And diplomacy is a tool to carry out the established foreign policy of a country. India, as an emerging country in the global sphere, has shifted its foreign policy from Look East to Act East towards its eastern region. It is simply targeted towards its friendly countries in South East Asia especially ASEAN which earlier was intended to have economic engagement.

The rising role of India in regional as well as in global sphere has its value when it shifted its foreign policy. India is particularly interested to be more engaged with South East Asian countries and other countries in the Indian Ocean Region and in Asia-Pacific region. This study is based upon trying to find the areas of engagements from the Indian side in terms of Act East Policy in economic, cultural, diplomatic and strategic front. The crux of increased Indian engagement with ASEAN as a whole and member states in particular and with countries in IOR and Asia-Pacific is in the intent to maintain cordial relations with the stakeholders of maritime trade through IOR which India finds its in own backyard. India, further, cautious about Chinese assertive nature and subsequent influences in India's neighbours by which India feels threatened and the need for deeper engagement and alliances is felt by the Indian establishment.

As going through various literature available, India has made several attempts under AEP so as to project itself in greater posture in regional as well as the global sphere. Despite the increased engagement in economic, cultural, diplomatic and strategic front, Chinese presence in the ASEAN region is not in the level to be balanced soon. Indian trade with ASEAN as well as with China comes under huge deficit. On the contrary, China has a favourable position in trade with both ASEAN and India. Chinese diplomatic dealings with ASEAN have placed to deal with Indian intent of aligning with countries that have some sort of tussle with China. The fragmented

ASEAN mentality has made less probable regarding Indian intent of maneuvering in issues like the South China Sea by advocating peaceful settlement of issues is by and large common understanding between ASEAN and China. This reveals Indian efforts are remarkable and visible on the one hand and on the other it needs to make some more efforts by engaging more with its like-minded countries like Vietnam, Singapore in strategic as well as the economic front. In short, India has been in the track of progress in connectivity with ASEAN countries, engaging cultural and commerce as the heart of AEP. But no approach and engagement are ultimate. Therefore, continuous efforts of engagements, covering its promises in time with quality and friendly relation with other major stakeholders of the region particularly Japan, Korea, the US and with China as well is important to maintain peace and security in the region.

The result shows that Indian efforts are counted as a positive step under AEP vis-à-vis its earlier version of LEP. And the analysis and thereby conclusion is made that Indian presence in ASEAN and the region is increased and this has made India a major player in the regional architecture by which peace and stability can be maintained. ASEAN also wants India to take a greater role so that there is proper balance and stability.

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ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

ADMM	:	ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting
AEP	:	Act East policy
ANI	:	Andaman and Nicobar Island
ARF	:	ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)
ASEAN	:	Association of South East Asian Nations
ASI	:	Archaeological Survey of India
BBIN	:	Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal
BCIM	:	Bangladesh China India Myanmar
BIMSTEC	:	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral and Technical Economic Cooperation
BRI	:	Belt and Road Initiative
CLMV	:	Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam
EAS	:	East Asia Summit
GDP	:	Gross Domestic Product
IDA	:	Island Development Authority
IGNCA	:	Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts
IOR	:	Indian Ocean Region
JICA	:	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JNPT	:	Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust
LEP	:	Look East Policy
MGC	:	Mekong-Ganga Cooperation

MOU	:	Memorandum of Understanding
MSME	:	Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises
NDA	:	National Democratic Alliance
NHIDCL	:	National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation
ONGC	:	Oil and Natural Gas Corporations
PM	:	Prime Minister
POA	:	Plan of Action
PTI	:	Press Trust of India
QIP	:	Quick Impact Projects
RAP	:	Restricted Area Permit
RCEP	:	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
S&T	:	Science and Technology
SAARC	:	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SME	:	Small and Medium Sized Enterprise
SOM	:	Senior Officials Meeting
UNCLOS	:	United Nations Conventions for the Law of Sea
USA/US	:	United States of America
USD	:	United States Dollar