

Exploring the Potential of Greater India - Thailand Defence and Security Cooperation

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Abstract

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The aim of the research is to critically examine the rapidly changing geopolitical & security situation in Asia Pacific, review the current status of defence & security cooperation between Thailand & India and suggest a way ahead. The objectives of this research will be to ascertain the strategic significance of India for Thailand & strategic significance of Thailand for India. Also to determine if India - Thailand 'Defence & Security Cooperation', in present context, are adequate to ensure successful manifestation of Indian 'Look East' Policy / Thailand's 'Look West' Policy. Assess the current status of defence & security engagements and the untapped potential of defence & security cooperation.

The proposition being pursued in research is that "in view of the changed contours of the dynamic geo - political and security situation in the Asia Pacific region, India and Thailand need to enhance their defence & security cooperation, to meet the emerging trends and future security needs of the region, with a view to maximise India's & Thailand's strategic options and optimally serve the national interest of India & Thailand in the long run".

The research methodology is by qualitative research method. Data and information available from relevant books in libraries, e - books on the internet, from journals / periodicals, policies of the Government of Thailand & India, personal travel within Thailand as well as visits to various military installations of India & Thailand. The research is multi - directional to cover all facets of India & Thailand present relations in defence and security arena, along with the prevailing dynamic security issues and likely trends in future in the Asia Pacific region. Research will attempt to understand whether the present level of defence and security cooperation is adequate or needs to be further boosted to meet the emerging challenges, with a view to generate options for future defence & security cooperation for Thailand and India.

Preface

India's bilateral relations with Thailand are rooted in history, age old social & cultural interactions and extensive people to people contacts. Diplomatic relations were established in 1947, soon after India gained independence. India - Thailand engagement, however, remained limited till the end of Cold War, despite ancient cultural linkages.

The rapidly changing geo - political and security scenario in Asia Pacific region provides both challenges and opportunities for India and Thailand. Both need to have a long term defence and security strategy, to make use of the opportunities arising. The Asia Pacific is marked by key trends : rise of China, the re - balancing strategy of the USA, a regional architecture underpinned by centrality of ASEAN, the growing importance of the Indian Ocean region and maritime issues, the growing salience of non-traditional security threats. Thus, there is a need for India and Thailand to set out a long term strategic policy and approach, so as to maximise its defence and security opportunities.

India - Thailand defence and security cooperation is beset by many challenges. Overcoming these challenges is an arduous task. But this task is not impossible to perform. Shared values, common historical experiences, geographical proximity and convergent security interests solidify Thailand - India cooperation. Thus, Thailand - India defence and security cooperation is not only a necessity but also a common destiny. India & Thailand have lost much time in rediscovering each other. No further time should be lost in forging a durable partnership, which will reinforce the logic of shared interests. The window of opportunity for India & Thailand is small and short; both countries should take immediate pragmatic steps and make serious efforts to heed the call of our times.

The views expressed are my own, based on the data researched and do not reflect the policy of the Government of India.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

“The ties between the two countries are intertwined and deep rooted in history, with interactions in multidimensional fronts, and extensive people-to-people contacts. In addition to the wide range of cooperation, Thailand and India have compatible strategies of Look West and Act East respectively, now evolved into a comprehensive partnership”

- Joint Statement during Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha's Visit to India in June 2016

Background and Significance of the Problem

1. Thailand and India, located in each other's extended neighbourhood, share a maritime boundary in the Andaman Sea. India's bilateral relations with Thailand are rooted in history, age old social & cultural interactions and extensive people to people contacts. The shared link of Buddhism is reflected in regular pilgrimages to places of Buddhist interest in India, by a large number of Thai people. Hindu elements can be found among those reflected in Thailand architecture, arts, sculpture, dance, drama and literature. The Thai language incorporates Pali and Sanskrit influences. A large Indian Diaspora living and working in Thailand is another important bond.

2. Thailand and India share unique civilisation links, going back several millennia. Diplomatic relations were established in 1947, soon after India gained independence. In Thailand's strategic vision, the place of India has undergone several periods of change. Since its independence in 1947, India has sought to establish warm and cordial relations with all Southeast Asian countries, including Thailand. The two countries have had cordial ties since the 1950's, when India looked for trade opportunities with Thailand, offered assistance in education, technical training and encouraged cultural / educational exchanges. Even after India drew close to the Soviet Union in 1971, India - Thailand relations remained healthy, although barely growing. While Thailand was a key

American ally in Asia, India was seen as being under the USSR's influence¹. When Thailand's foreign policy assumed a more economic focus in 1988, Bangkok began to attach greater importance to New Delhi by virtue of India's geopolitical pre-eminence and economic potential in South Asia.

3. India - Thailand engagement, however, remained limited till the end of the Cold War, despite ancient cultural linkages. The bilateral relationship expanded manifold in the new century, moved rapidly beyond the traditional areas of culture, low level economic interaction to enhanced cooperation, greater people-to-people contact and towards free trade. In recent years, political contacts have intensified as reflected in a series of high level visits by leaders of the two countries. Trade, economic linkages and tourist traffic continue to grow steadily. Now, there is a requirement of greater India - Thailand defence and security cooperation.

4. **Look West / Look East Policy.** In 1989, Prime Minister Chatchai became the first Thailand Prime Minister to visit India. The visit was followed by the establishment of an India - Thailand Joint Commission, a Joint Business Council (JBC) and an MoU on cooperation between India's Oil and Natural Gas Cooperation (ONGC) and the Petroleum Authority of Thailand (PTT). This came after Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Thailand in 1986 and the four decades of several exchanges of high level visits from the two sides, many trade & investment initiatives and cooperation, which had been mostly initiated by India. Till now, India - Thailand bilateral cooperation concentrated on education, culture and technical exchanges. Thailand, which aspires to be a regional hub, given its central location in South East Asia, initiated a **'Look West' Policy in 1997**, which accorded priority to development of relations with South Asia and beyond. The **'Look West' Policy** of Thailand complemented India's **'Look East' Policy**, which is now elevated to **'Act East' Policy** and has provided the basis for a substantive elevation of bilateral relations. Thailand also launched **'Act West' Policy**. After India's **'Look East'** and Thailand's **'Look West'** Policies coincided

¹ Unlike Indonesia, Myanmar and Philippines, Thailand did not accept India's offer to ink a Treaty of Friendship in 1951. But Thailand never had an agreement on cooperation between armed forces with India like Indonesia did in 1956. See the information in the Indian Ministry of External Affairs' (MEA's) Annual Reports from 1950 onwards.

in 1990's, the cooperation between the two countries gained a new momentum. The strategic transformation of Asia Pacific region and the political changes within Myanmar, now provide a new background for India & Thailand to step up their relations in every respect, including defence and security cooperation. With the **increasing strategic significance, India - Thailand defence relations remain a weak link**, which does not correspond to the new strategic context and which requires attention and improvement. Since the 1990s, as a corollary to its self-assumed role as Indochina's regional power, Thailand has started several sub - regional cooperation initiatives in the region. They entail Thailand acting as the main coordinator by bringing in external great powers to partner with it in generating development in mainland Southeast Asia ². At present, this strategic collaboration includes non - ASEAN countries like China, Japan, South Korea, US, India, Germany and France in several development related projects in both trilateral and multilateral settings.

5. Thailand is considered to be India's gateway to the Asia Pacific and India is Thailand's gateway to the West. Both countries are important regional partners, linking South and Southeast Asia. **They cooperate closely in the ASEAN, East Asia Summit (EAS), Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) groupings, as also Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC), Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) and Indian Ocean Rim Association.** The primary aim of Thailand's 'Look West' policy is to engage economically with India and other countries in South Asia. Both BIMSTEC and MGC position India as Thailand's major partner in the development initiatives that involve countries in mainland Southeast Asia ³.

6. India - Thailand bilateral defence and security cooperation is less significant, when compared with India's cooperation with Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam. India's defence ties with these countries involve more training slots offered by India, more high-level visits, exchange of officials and collaboration in defence industry & production. In comparison, India and Thailand exchange fewer high level visits and

² See Pongphisoot Busbarat, "A Review of Thailand's Foreign Policy in Mainland Southeast Asia: Exploring an Ideational Approach", *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 2(2012).

³ Pavin Chatchavalpongpan, "Look East meets Look West: India - Southeast Asia Evolving Relations", *Foreign Policy Research Centre* 8(2011): pp.62.

port calls. Also, there was barely any exchange of concrete defence supplies and few bilateral combined exercises, in which both can develop real operational advantages.

7. When compared with Thailand's collaboration with the USA, Australia & China, Thailand's defence cooperation with India falls far short and below its potential. Path dependency, lack of shared security and military interests are the main reasons behind the underdeveloped India - Thailand defence ties. Without a serious traditional security threat (the conflict with Cambodia is about a minor border issue) and still maintaining a privileged defence alliance with the USA, Thailand's defence sector does not receive much attention from the public and policy makers, be it for an augmentation of military capability or its utility in diplomatic domain. This has put India -Thailand defence and security cooperation under the shadow of economic and development cooperation, which has overall taken the lead in bilateral relations.

8. **Emerging Security Partner.** On the security front, Thailand and India have cooperated mainly in combating transnational terrorism, organised crime, illicit drug & human trafficking, cyber and financial crimes. All this is done through intelligence sharing and an extradition agreement. In 2009, Delhi and Bangkok established a Joint Working Group (JWG) on Security Cooperation and signed a BIMSTEC Convention on cooperation in combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organised Crime (TOC) and Illicit Drug Trafficking. A Treaty of the Transfer of Sentenced Prisoners was signed in 2012. It was followed by an MoU on Cooperation in the exchange of Financial Intelligence related to Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing in 2013. As a global tourist destination, with very relaxed entry and immigration rules, Thailand is known to be a perfect hideout and transit point for many international criminals and terrorists. Collaborating with other countries in tackling transnational crimes has been central to Thailand's national security policies. Thailand also cooperates with other countries so as not to allow organised crime groups to use its soil as a hideout and a base to mobilise, network and acquire financial support and arms supplies ⁴. Apart from India, it has collaborated closely with the US, Australia and Indonesia on these security matters.

⁴ Thailand's National Security Council, "National Security Policies B.E. 2550-2554": pp.42.

9. Cooperating with India on these security concerns is complementary to the existing India - Thailand cordial relations and economic cooperation. India has received Thailand's assistance in dealing with its North Eastern insurgents, who take refuge and receive arms supplies from international actors on Thailand territory. Peace and security in India's North East, in Myanmar and along the borders of the contiguous countries is vital to the success of Indian and Southeast Asian land trade and people - to - people contacts. Close cooperation in security can also invigorate other areas of cooperation and fuel Thailand economic interests in India's North East. But since criminals carrying out illicit trade, including drug trafficking along the Thailand border, hardly go to India as the two countries do not share a land border and Thailand's Southern insurgents usually take refuge and receive training in Islamic countries, the India - Thailand security cooperation has benefited India more than Thailand. However, Thailand's economics determined foreign policy towards India is becoming inadequate. India's rising status as a great power and the changing power and security dynamics within Asia and the world have driven Thailand to gradually readjust its policy towards India and the other emerging powers. In recent years, India is being mentioned more regularly in Thailand's foreign policy and security white papers, contrary to more than a decade ago, when it was overlooked by Thailand foreign policy community.

10. H.E. General Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, paid a State Visit to India from 16-18 June 2016 at the invitation of Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India. The two Prime Ministers acknowledged the close interactions and increasing exchanges between the Armed Forces of India and Thailand. Visits from India to Thailand included that of the Chief of Naval Staff in July 2015 and Chairman COSC & the Chief of Air Staff to Thailand in August 2015. The Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister of Thailand visited India in March 2016. The high - level defence dialogue was held in December 2015. There have been regular coordinated patrols (CORPAT) between the two navies, annual exercises between the two armies and also the first ever table-top air exercise between the two air forces. India has been participating in multilateral Cobra Gold exercise held in Thailand as an 'Observer Plus' country. Both Thailand and India had expressed a keen interest in enhancing cooperation in maritime domain including anti - piracy cooperation, security of sea lanes of communication including coast guard cooperation to maintain peace and ensure safety & security of

navigation in the Indian Ocean. Both sides had agreed to work towards the completion of the negotiation for the signing of the White Shipping Agreement between the two countries. Thailand had expressed an interest in the Indian defence industry and its experience and expertise in the field of defence R&D and production. Both sides agreed to explore key areas of future engagement based on mutually identified areas of cooperation. Both countries had unequivocally condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and agreed to work together in building a new global resolve and strategy for combating terrorism. Both sides acknowledged the increasing threat from non - traditional security arenas and further strengthen cooperation between the two countries in the fields of counter terrorism, cyber security, trafficking in human & narcotics and in transnational economic offenses. Both sides welcomed the initiative for joint combined counter-terrorism exercise between the Counter Terrorist Operations Center (CTOC) and the National Securities Guard (NSG); and the training of Thailand officers by India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in cybercrime investigation and computer forensics ⁵.

11. Indeed India - Thailand defence and security cooperation is beset by many challenges. Overcoming these challenges is an arduous task. But this task is not impossible to perform. Shared values, common historical experiences, geographical proximity and convergent security interests solidify Thailand - India cooperation. Thus, Thailand - India defence and security cooperation is not only a necessity but also a common destiny. India & Thailand have lost much time in rediscovering each other. No further time should be lost in forging a durable partnership, which will reinforce the logic of shared interests. The window of opportunity for India & Thailand is small and short; we must take immediate pragmatic steps and make serious efforts to heed the call of our times.

Statement of the Problem

12. **Challenges and Opportunities.** Several political, defence & security, economic and socio - cultural factors are at play making Asia Pacific a highly dynamic region. India and Thailand need to have a long-

⁵ Joint Statement by India and Thailand on the occasion of the State Visit of Prime Minister of Thailand, General Prayut Chan-o-cha to India, 17 Jun 2016.

term defence and security strategy, to make use of the opportunities arising. The Asia Pacific is marked by the following key trends: rise of China, the re - balancing strategy of the USA, a regional architecture underpinned by centrality of ASEAN, the growing importance of the Indian Ocean region and maritime issues, the growing salience of non-traditional security threats. Thus, there is a need for India and Thailand to set out a long term strategic policy and approach, so as to maximise its defence and security opportunities. **Given their geostrategic positions in the region, the changing power dynamics in Asia and the existing inter-regional economic partnership, there is an urgent need for India & Thailand to further strengthen their defence and security cooperation.**

13. **Current Status of Defence and Security Cooperation.** Presently, defence and security cooperation comprise regular joint exercises / joint maritime patrols near the international maritime boundary to counter terrorism, piracy and smuggling; training of officers at each other's Armed Forces Training institutions and participation as observers in military exercises, staff talks and exchange of trainee visits at various levels. Yet, there is still a long journey awaiting India and Thailand in their collaborative endeavour, as they face numerous complex challenges of defence and security cooperation in the 21st century. India - Thailand defence and security cooperation becomes more crucial in the context of rising maritime issues in the Asia Pacific region along with re - balancing of power equation in the region.

14. **Way Ahead.** A critical examination of the defence and security cooperation of India with other ASEAN countries and of Thailand with other power centres in Asia Pacific region is required to understand the contours of the emerging power equations, challenges, opportunities, weaknesses and areas to enhance defence and security cooperation between India and Thailand. The drivers so identified would assist in identifying future macro defence and security policy strategies.

Objectives of the Research

15. The aim of the research is to critically examine the rapidly changing geopolitical & security situation in Asia Pacific, review the current status of defence & security cooperation between Thailand & India and suggest a way ahead. Research will focus to find answers to

questions listed below. These questions need more systematic and detailed examination in the face of enduring geopolitical complexity in the region.

- (a) What are India's strategic objectives in Thailand / Southeast Asia? And how has India pursued them in the field of defence and security? Equally importantly, how does Thailand view India as a strategic partner and in terms of defence and security cooperation. Do the expectations on the two sides match?
- (b) What are the implications for geopolitics of the Asia Pacific region?
- (c) What are the drawbacks in the present state of 'Defence & Security Cooperation' between India and Thailand.
- (d) What is the trajectory of the India - Thailand relationship? What is the future of 'Defence & Security Cooperation' between India and Thailand? How should policy makers think about the future?

16. The objectives of this research will be to ascertain the strategic significance of India for Thailand & strategic significance of Thailand for India. Also, to determine if India - Thailand 'Defence & Security Cooperation', in present context, are adequate to ensure successful manifestation of Indian 'Look East' Policy / Thailand's 'Look West' Policy. Assess the current status of defence and security engagements and the untapped potential of defence and security cooperation. In addition, Exploring, looking ahead, recommendations for future growth and cooperation with SHARED INTERESTS.

Proposition

17. The proposition being pursued in research is that **“in view of the changed contours of the dynamic geo - political and security situation in the Asia Pacific region, India and Thailand need to enhance their defence and security cooperation, to meet the emerging trends and future security needs of the region, with a view to maximise India's and Thailand's strategic options and optimally serve the national interest of India and Thailand in the long run”**.

Literature Review

18. The literature review involves understanding the historical perspective, rationale and linkages of India with Thailand and

development of India's 'Look East' Policy / Thailand's "Look West" Policy. It also involves the following: -

- (a) Detailed analysis of strategic perspective of India & Thailand towards each other, with other major power centres in Asia Pacific region along with the growing importance of Asia Pacific region in the geopolitics. Existence of traditional and non - traditional threats in the region.
- (b) Initiatives launched by India & Thailand for better integration and detailed evaluation of current defence and security cooperation.
- (c) Comprehensive study of the defence and security cooperation between India & Thailand, to understand whether these are adequate to address the existing and likely future security threats.
- (d) Analysis of the security perspective in the Asia Pacific region to include stakes of key power centres i.e. USA, China, Russia and Japan in the region.
- (e) Understanding security perspective of Asia Pacific region, with a view to give recommendations for consideration, both by India and Thailand to enhance defence and security cooperation.

Scope of the Research

19. The focus of this research has been narrowed down to Thailand & India, to allow in - depth analysis and to put forward certain recommendations, which if implemented will catapult their relations to greater heights. The scope of this research will include the following: -

- (a) Historical perspective of nearly seven decades of India and Thailand engagements and various integration measures undertaken by both countries.
- (b) Recapitulation of the strategic framework for enunciation of India's 'Look East' Policy / Thailand's "Look West" Policy.
- (c) Emergence of geo - strategic importance of Asia Pacific region and interplay of major power centres in the region, with a view to assess the future security scenario.
- (d) Current level of defence & security cooperation of Thailand & India with other power centres and ASEAN countries.
- (e) Current level of defence & security cooperation and engagement between Thailand & India, with a view to understand that if the present level of engagement meets the security requirements and areas which require to be improved.

(f) Detailed study of defence & security cooperation between Thailand & India, with view to provide recommendations to enhance strategic relations by enhanced defence and security cooperation.

(g) Recommendations to align the future contours of the strategic policy of Thailand and India, to meet the dynamic challenges in the Asia Pacific region.

Research Methodology

20. The research methodology is by qualitative research method. Data and information, that would form the basis of this research, would be available from relevant books in libraries, e - books on the internet, from journals / periodicals, policies of the Government of Thailand & India, views of leading think tanks / subject experts, personal travel within Thailand as well as visits to various military installations of India & Thailand. Views of serving retired Indian & Thailand officials will be incorporated in the research project.

21. The research is multi - directional to cover all facets of India & Thailand present relations in defence and security arena, along with the prevailing dynamic security issues and likely trends in future in the Asia Pacific region. Research will attempt to understand whether the present level of defence and security cooperation is adequate or needs to be further boosted to meet the emerging challenges, with a view to generate options for future strategic framework for foreign policy, enhanced economic integration, defence & security cooperation for Thailand and India. The research paper will be covered in five chapters, as given in succeeding paragraphs.

22. **Chapter 1: Introduction.** An introductory brief of the requirement to understand the need for defence and security cooperation between Thailand and India, policy, aim of research, hypothesis, literature review, scope, methodology and benefits of research.

23. **Chapter 2: Background of the India - Thailand Strategic Partnership.** This chapter will cover the historical perspective of India - Thailand relationship, bringing out cultural, religious and trade links and how the two countries have engaged over the years. India's 'Look East' Policy / Thailand's 'Look West' Policy will also be reviewed. What are India's strategic objectives in Southeast Asia and with Thailand? And

how has it pursued them in the field of defence and security cooperation. Equally importantly, how does Thailand view India as a strategic partner and in terms of defence and security cooperation. Do the expectations on the two sides match? Various initiatives taken by both the countries, commonalities and shared values / cultures that can be built upon, will be examined.

24. **Chapter 3: Emerging Geo-Political Realities in Asia Pacific Region.** Geo-strategic importance of Asia Pacific region in the economic and security dimensions. An overview of the geo - political stakes of the global players, their strategic options, security threats both non - traditional and traditional will be reviewed under this chapter. The chapter will also review India's rising strategic profile in Southeast Asia and implications of the changing geopolitics in the present and foreseeable future. Strategic significance of India for Thailand and strategic significance of Thailand for India will also be ascertained in this chapter.

25. **Chapter 4: The Untapped Potential of Defence and Security Cooperation.** This chapter will determine if India - Thailand defence and security engagements, in present context, are adequate to ensure successful manifestation of India's 'Look East' Policy / Thailand's 'Look West' Policy. An attempt will be made to analyse whether the current level of defence and security cooperation between India and Thailand is adequate to meet the emerging security situation in Asia Pacific. Also explore for the untapped potential of defence and security cooperation between the two countries, to enhance the scale of strategic engagement.

26. **Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations.** This chapter will give recommendations for future directions of India - Thailand defence and security cooperation and measures to enhance these will be discussed in detail.

Limitations and / or Delimitation

27. **Limitations.** Study of International relations and dynamics of world politics is very dynamic and countries respond based to suit their respective national interests. Changing geopolitical and security situation may change due to some developments in the region or

elsewhere in the world, which the stake holders are likely to respond based on their national interests and may not be in tune with the recommendations made in the research.

28. **Delimitations.** The research, whilst dealing with an issue of immense strategic importance, would refrain from commenting upon national strategies and policies. Also, data and information used for the analysis would be obtained from known to be authentic sources (government, semi - government & reliable) and available in the open domain. The inferences drawn, analysis of data and the recommendations / answers offered would be entirely that of the author as an individual and would not represent the official policies of the Government of India or the organisation represented by the author.

Research Utilisations

29. The research work in this field is likely to have the following benefits: -

- (a) Provide in depth study of the emerging geo - political complexity of the Asia Pacific region and role played by major power centres.
- (b) Provide an in depth understanding of the India's 'Look East' Policy / Thailand's "Look West' Policy.
- (c) Provide an evaluation of the current India - Thailand defence and security engagements and analysis whether the present defence and security cooperation meets the strategic requirements of both countries.
- (d) Research will also explore and recommend options to address weaknesses in defence and security cooperation, as also evaluate future strategic options for India and Thailand.

Definition

30. The terms used in the research would be drawn from the standard glossary used worldwide. In the event of using unfamiliar terms or likelihood of subjective interpretation of certain terms, detailed / intended definition would be provided at the end of the Chapter.

Chapter 2

Background of the India - Thailand Strategic Partnership

Historical Perspective of India - Thailand Relationship

1. Relations between India and Thailand are not of recent origin. Religious, cultural, linguistic, mythological and trade links have existed for over two millennia. References are found in ancient Indian literature characterising Thailand as “Swarnabhumi” or the Golden Land. Hindu influence reached Thailand over 2,000 years ago, soon after senior monks Sona Thera and Uttara Thera were sent, by Emperor Ashoka, to spread the gospel of Lord Buddha in 3rd Century BCE. Hindu influence is clearly visible in Thailand’s religious practices, customs, traditions, deity worship, architecture of palaces, temples (wats), in the arts, sculpture, dance, drama and literature. Royal coronation ceremonies are conducted with Brahmanical rites and Thailand monarchs of the current Chakri dynasty have adopted the title of “Rama” on ascending the throne (the present King, His Majesty Maha Vajiralongkorn is Rama X). Several other socio - cultural habits and festivals of Thailand and Indian people are similar. The Thai lore of Ramakien, a local version of Ramayana and the wisdom of Lord Buddha bind the peoples together. Loy Krathong and Songkran are inspired by the two major Indian festivals, Deepavali and Holi. The 800-year-old connection between the Thai people and Ahoms of North East India has served as an enduring link. King Chulalongkorn or Rama V paid a royal visit to India in 1872. In 1915, another royal visit of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI) took place.

2. For long, India has influenced the cultural, political and economic evolution of Southeast, including Thailand. It exported Buddhism, facilitated the spread of Islam and provided the platform from which Western imperialism could establish itself in Southeast Asia. After it prevailed over the rival European powers, the British Raj became the principal shaper of regional security in Southeast Asia. When this order was shattered by Japanese imperialism, it

required the full mobilisation of India's resources to reverse Japanese aggression. Nearly 750,000 Indian troops under Lord Mountbatten's Southeast Asia Command delivered a hard-fought victory in what is often called the 'forgotten war' ⁶. Writing at a time when Japan was still in occupation of Southeast Asia, Mr K.M Panikkar reflected on the future security arrangements in the region, after the war and decolonisation. Calling for a collective security system for Southeast Asia involving all powers, including China, Panikkar underlined the importance of India. **"A free and stable government in India conscious of its responsibilities and capable of playing its part in Southeast Asia, is the essential pre-requisite" for the success of such a collective security system.** "In the absence of such a government in India", Panikkar went on, "Southeast Asia will remain the cockpit of colonial ambitions, incapable of defending itself, and a prey to the predatory urge of any power which is strong enough to attack it" ⁷.

3. During Cold War years, Thailand, did not figure prominently on India's strategic map or economic calculus. There are many reasons for India's relative neglect of this region during this period. Because of its colonial links, India's ruling elite had an essentially Western orientation in the post-1947 period. Economically, due to the fact that Southeast Asia was less developed than India until the 1970s, it was not an attractive trading and economic partner. India's own economic policies were insular and protectionist. It did not help that India's overland linkages to Thailand were blocked. Myanmar closed itself to the rest of the world in the early sixties, while East Pakistan / Bangladesh was not amenable to providing transit facilities. Politics too intervened. India and Thailand were on opposing sides of the Cold War divide. The paucity of high level contacts between India and Thailand is visible from the fact that from the period starting in 1947 till 1992, there were only two, extremely short, Prime Ministerial visits from Thailand to India. In 1983, Prime Minister, General Prem Tinsulanonda visited Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal, but not India.

⁶ Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2007).

⁷ K.M Panikkar, *The Future of South-East Asia: An Indian Overview* (New York: Macmillan, 1943), pp. 11-12.

From India, the only Prime Ministerial visit to Thailand during this period was that of Rajiv Gandhi in 1986.

4. The end of the Cold War led India towards a strategic realignment in its foreign relations. India initiated new endeavours in its foreign policy to deal with the changing global and regional environment. ASEAN region, which had not figured prominently in India's foreign policy making, became one of the top priority areas from the early 1990s. In order to share in the advantages of the booming ASEAN economies, **India launched its 'Look East' Policy in 1992**. ASEAN member states also responded to India in a positive manner, owing to the economic reforms that were being undertaken in India. The launching of a **'Look West' Policy by Thailand** is the manifestation of ASEAN members' changing perceptions towards India. This policy was crafted with a vision of developing relations with India. While India has had diplomatic relations with Thailand since Independence, bilateral ties have certainly been revitalised by the complementary nature of their respective **'Look East' and 'Look West' Policies**. Subsequently, leaders and policy makers of both sides have been involved in regular interactions to explore new areas of mutual cooperation.

5. The first remarkable high-level interaction between India and Thailand was started when Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi paid a visit to Thailand in 1986. His visit was reciprocated by the Thailand Prime Minister, General Chatchai Choonhavan's visit to India. Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao also paid an official visit to Thailand in April 1993. This visit further stimulated the process initiated by Rajiv Gandhi. Then, after a gap in time, Thailand Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra paid a state visit to India in November 2001, followed up by another visit to India in 2002. During his visit, the two countries decided to set up a **Joint Working Group (JWG) on security issues**. Thereafter, Indian Deputy Prime Minister, L K Advani's visit to Thailand in 2003, provided a platform to discuss security issues of mutual concern. During the visit, both sides agreed to institutionalise the JWG on security cooperation. Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra again paid a working visit to India in 2005. During Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Thailand visit in 2003, five bilateral agreements were concluded. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh paid a visit to Thailand in 2004 to attend the first BIMSTEC summit in Bangkok from 29-31 July. On the sidelines of this summit, the Prime Ministers discussed a wide range of bilateral, regional and international issues of common concern. In 2007, the Thailand

interim Prime Minister, General Surayud Chulanont paid a visit to India that contributed to breaking the deadlock in India-Thailand FTA negotiations. During the visit, **both countries agreed to accelerate negotiations on pending defence and security-related agreements** and MoUs. Two MoUs on renewable energy and cultural cooperation were also signed during his visit ⁸.

6. High level visits and meetings have taken place on a regular basis from both sides. PM Yingluck Shinawatrapaid went on a State visit to India from 24-26 January 2012, as the Chief Guest for India's Republic Day celebrations. Six agreements / MoUs were signed during the visit - the 2nd Protocol to amend bilateral Framework Agreement for FTA, MoU on Defence, Programme of Cooperation in Science & Technology, Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Persons, Cultural Exchange. Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh accompanied by External Affairs Minister (EAM) Salman Khurshid and senior officials paid an official visit to Thailand, at the invitation of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, on 30-31 May 2013. He presented a sapling of Bodhi Tree in Bodh Gaya, as a special gift to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, as a symbol of the shared cultural heritage. Indian Prime Minister held wide-ranging talks with Thailand Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest. During the visit, six agreements / MoUs were signed and a joint statement was released.

7. During 2014, PM Narendra Modi discussed bilateral issues of mutual interest with Prime Minister, General Prayut Chan-o-cha, on the sidelines of ASEAN Summit in Nay Pyi Taw, on 12 November 2014. **General Thanasak Patimaprakorn, Chief of Defence Forces, Royal Thai Armed Forces led a Thai delegation on an official visit to India from 28 - 30 June 2014.** General Thanasak called on Defence Minister and met General Bikram Singh, Chief of Army Staff in New Delhi. During 2015, Mrs Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs (EAM) visited Thailand to co-chair the 7th Meeting of India - Thailand Joint Commission and to attend the 16th World Sanskrit Conference in Bangkok from 27-29 June 2015. EAM called on HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and General Prem Tinsulanonda, President of the Privy

⁸ Yogendra Singh, "India Thailand Relations: in Search of new Horizons", Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies Special Report No 46, July 2007: pp.01.

Council of Thailand. EAM and the then Deputy Prime Minister, General Tanasak Patimapragorn held delegation level talks.

8. On November 10, 2016, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Bangkok to pay his tributes to the departed King of Thailand, HRH Bhumibol Adulyadej. In 2016, Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Industry Minister and Culture Minister paid a state visit to India on 16 June. He called on Vice President and had a restricted meeting and delegation level talks with the Prime Minister, on 17 June in New Delhi. Thailand Prime Minister met Indian businessmen from the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Confederation of Indian Industry and Associated Chambers of Commerce of India and gave a keynote address on 17 June at a joint business event. He also offered prayers at the Mahabodhi Temple and the Thai Buddhist Temple in Bodhgaya, on 18 June. The Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, General Prawit Wongsuwan visited India from 16 - 18 March 2016. General Prawit met the Vice President, Defence Minister and the National Security Advisor. Vice President, Shri M. Hamid Ansari, accompanied by a high-level delegation, paid an official visit to Thailand from 3 - 5 February 2016. The Vice President had an audience with Her Royal Highness, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and held extensive bilateral discussions with Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha. The Vice President delivered an address at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, interacted with academicians / Indologists and addressed the Indian community in Thailand.

9. **HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn**, is a regular visitor to India (16 visits), a member of the International Advisory Panel of Nalanda University and recipient of Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Development and Disarmament 2004. She paid an official visit to India from 20 - 25 November, 2016. During the visit, she was conferred the First World Sanskrit Award of ICCR in New Delhi, by Vice President of India. She was also conferred with “Padma Bhushan” Award, announced on the occasion of 68th Republic Day (2017), for her contribution in the field of literature and education. Previously, she visited India (Nalanda, Bodh Gaya, Kohima and New Delhi) in February 2104. HRH Princess led an 85-member delegation from Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy to Kolkata on 22 July 2014. HRH Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkom piloted a special Air flight to Bodhgaya in November 2010. Earlier, he paid an official visit to India in December 1998. Vice President had

extended an invitation (dated 01 December 2014) to the HRH Crown Prince to visit India. However, now he became King from 01 December 2016. HRH Princess Chulabhom visited India in February 2016 and earlier in February 2013. The late King HM Bhumibol Adulyadej had never visited India. President VV Giri visited Thailand in 1972, Dr S Radhakrishnan (1958) and Dr Zakir Hussain (1966) visited as Vice Presidents.

10. **Cultural Cooperation.** There has been a long history of cultural exchange between India and Thailand. Buddhism in Thailand was introduced during the period of the great Indian King Ashoka. From ancient times, students from Thailand have gone to India to learn Indian culture, arts and the Sanskrit language. Sustaining this legacy in 20th century, India and Thailand signed a cultural cooperation agreement in 1977. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) has started a 'General Cultural Scholarship Scheme', for 10 Thailand students to pursue their undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD studies in various courses in India. In order to spread awareness about India and promote cultural cooperation, Thailand has also established the India Studies Centre at Thammasat University and a Sanskrit Studies Centre at Silpakorn University. Cultural exchanges take place under the framework of a Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) between the two governments. An Indian Cultural Centre was opened in Bangkok in September 2009. Cultural Agreement Programme for 2016-19 has been signed during the visit of Thailand Prime Minister in June 2016. A number of India Studies Centers are operational in prestigious Thailand Universities. Regular visits of Indian cultural troupes are organised, in addition to Indian film and food festivals etc. Embassy in collaboration with Ministry of Culture and several local partners organised 'Festival of India', in Thailand, in March 2014 and the 2nd edition was organised from February - May 2015. Over 6000 people participated in the 2nd International Yoga Day celebrations at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok on 26 June 2016.

11. **Education.** An MoU on 'Cooperation in the field of Education' was signed in 2005. During 2014-15, Government of India offered 130 scholarships to Thailand students under its ITEC and ICCR sponsored schemes. A large number of Thailand students are also studying on self-financing basis. Ministry of Human Resource Development, India provides for secondment of eight professors, every semester, for the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Bangkok. Government of India contributed Rupees 1.25 crores (Thai Baht 10

million) in 2008, towards construction of a new building for the Sanskrit Studies Centre at Silpakorn University, Bangkok and has deputed a Sanskrit professor. An India Studies Centre is functioning at the Thammasat University of Bangkok since April 1993. In 2008, the Mahidol University of Bangkok started a Masters of Arts course on Indian studies. A Chair in Chulalongkorn University's, India Study Centre was inaugurated by HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn on 06 March, 2012. Ministry of AYUSH and Rangsit University signed an MOU on establishing a Chair, on Ayurveda at Rangsit University, on 29 June 2015.

12. **Economic & Commercial Partnership.** Despite the large size and rapid growth of the two economies, trade and investment between India and Thailand remains modest. It is essential to encourage the private sector to make investments in infrastructure and manufacturing in each other's country. For this, the two governments should provide a supportive environment and a predictable, encouraging and comprehensive legal / taxation framework. The implementation of the 'Goods and Services Tax' by India, in July 2017, will make India's taxation system transparent, introduce efficiency, control corruption and improve ease of doing business. Thailand commercial enterprises should focus on expanding economic partnership with India. The Indian economy is expanding at a rapid pace of 7.5% a year, making it the fastest growing major economy in the world. This has been possible due to proactive and innovative business - friendly policies like Make in India, Skill India, Smart Cities, Digital India and others. The Indian government's effort, in the words of Prime Minister Modi, is to "replace red tape with red carpet." This has paid rich dividends with an over 40% increase in inflow of foreign investments into India in recent years. **New Delhi and Bangkok need to further expand their strategic, security, defence, and economic cooperation given the geostrategic challenges, as well as huge untapped potential.** Both sides should invest the necessary energy, focus and political capital in the relationship, so that it can prosper rapidly to the advantage of people of the two countries as well as security, peace, and prosperity in the region. The good news is that both Thailand and Indian leaders are aware of the threats and impediments ahead and are determined to overcome them. They are also conscious of the huge existing opportunities and strengths and are resolute to harness them to mutual benefit and advantage.

(a) **Bilateral Trade.** The last few years have seen a rapid growth in bilateral trade, which crossed US\$ 9 billion mark in year 2012-13. The Framework Agreement on India - Thailand FTA was signed in Bangkok in October 2003 and the second protocol to amend it was signed, during the visit of Thailand Prime Minister to New Delhi, in January 2012.

(b) **FDI in India and Indian Investments in Thailand.** Indian FDI into Thailand is around US\$ 2 billion since 1970s. Major investments from India to Thailand are in sectors such as agricultural products, minerals & ceramics, metal products & machinery, electrical & electronic products, chemicals and textiles. Actual inflow of FDI from Thailand into India in 2015 was US\$ 23.12 million. Thailand investments are mainly in infrastructure, real estate, food processing, chemicals, hotel and hospitality sector.

(c) **Major Indian Groups** namely Tata group (automobiles, steel, software), Aditya Birla group (chemicals, textiles), Indo Rama group (chemicals), Lupin (pharmaceuticals), Ranbaxy, Dabur, Bharti Airtel, NIIT, Punj - Lloyd, Kirloskar and public-sector enterprises Indian Overseas Bank, Bank of Baroda, Air India, New India Assurance are present in Thailand. Leading Thailand companies in the fields of Agro processing, infrastructure, banking, automotive, engineering, housing & hospitality have active and growing business presence in India.

(d) **Major Thai companies** active in India are - C P Aquaculture (India) Limited, Krung Thai Bank, Ital Thai Development, Charoen Pokphand (India) Private Limited, Stanley Electric Engineering India Private Limited, Thai Summit Neel Auto Private Limited, Thai Airways, Precious Shipping (PSL) of Thailand, Preuksa Real Estate, Dusit and Amari group of hotels. There are, at present, over 40 Indian companies in Thailand and similarly, there are around 30 Thailand companies operating in India. There is potential for an additional US\$ 3 billion investment by Thailand companies in green and brown field projects in India.

13. **Bilateral Institutional Mechanisms.** India - Thailand Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) is at Foreign Ministers level. India's EAM and Thailand Deputy Prime Minister, General Tanasak co-chaired the 7th session of India - Thailand JCM on 29 June 2015. Wide ranging discussions were held in the areas of economic and commercial cooperation, culture, science & technology, education, agriculture, legal and consular matters. The 6th JCM was held in New Delhi in December

2011. Others are:

(a) **Foreign Office Consultations (FOC).** India - Thailand FOC was held in New Delhi on 8 September 2014. Mr Sihasak, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Secretary (East) exchanged views on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest. Earlier FOC was held in Bangkok on 10 August 2012.

(b) **The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi - Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).** In which both India and Thailand are members, is a useful instrument for regional integration. Time is opportune to identify and focus on areas of cooperation, which promote the well-being of citizens of the two countries and security, stability, and prosperity of the region. A large Indian diaspora, living and working in Thailand, is an important bond that cements relations between the two countries.

14. **Connectivity.** Air connectivity between India and Thailand is growing with around 150 flights per week, reflecting rapidly growing passenger traffic between the two countries. Bangkok is connected by air to 9 Indian destinations. India and Thailand are cooperating closely on improving regional connectivity through initiatives such as **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway**, Asian Highway Network (under UNESCAP), BTILS under BIMSTEC framework. Much more can be done to improve connectivity. The India - Myanmar - Thailand Trilateral Highway reaching Mae Sot, in Thailand, will expand land connectivity through Northeast India to Southeast Asia. Plans for development of deep - sea ports and new special economic zones in Dawei in Myanmar and Pak Bara in southern Thailand, will connect the eastern seaboard of India with Thailand and beyond. The development of the East - West and North - South corridors by Thailand and linking of these transport - related projects are expected to further enhance connectivity and expand trade and commerce with India. The 2nd bilateral JWG on Infrastructure and Connectivity and 7th Task Force Meeting on the Trilateral Transport Linkage Project were held in Bangkok on 29 & 30 September 2014. Secretaries of Transport of India, Myanmar and Thailand met in Chennai (April 2015), Bengaluru (June 2015) and Bangkok (July 2015) to finalise the Trilateral Motor Vehicles Agreement.

15. In 2015, over one million Indian tourists visited Thailand and around 120,000 Thai tourists visited India (mainly to Buddhist pilgrimage sites). This number needs to increase. To promote larger tourist inflows, India was earlier issuing single entry e - visas for Thailand citizens. On request, this facility was expanded in early 2017 to double entry e - visas. In addition, India has recently approved multi - entry business and tourist visas for five years, in place of one year at a time. India needs to improve flight and road connectivity as well as infrastructure including hotel accommodation and upkeep of religious sites in general, and Buddhist sites in particular.

16. **Indian Diaspora in Thailand.** It is estimated that there are around 250,000 people of Indian origin in Thailand. Many of them have lived here for several generations over the past century. Majority of them hold Thailand nationality. The Indian community mainly comprises Sikhs, Punjabis, Gorakhpuris, Tamils and Sindhis. Persons of Indian origin from Thailand have been awarded the Pravasi Samman in 2006, 2010, 2017 and 2018.

17. **Embassies / Consulates.** Besides the Embassy in Bangkok, India has a Consulate in the northern Thailand city of Chiang Mai. Thailand has consulates in Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai besides its Embassy in New Delhi.

Defence Dialogue

18. India and Thailand are maritime neighbours and share a maritime boundary in the Andaman Sea. The Indian Ocean is one of the most militarised regions in the world. The Chinese are trying to establish a maritime presence in Southeast Asia, as well as the Indian Ocean. This might not be necessarily directed against India but still it has considerable geopolitical and strategic ramifications. India is already involved in joint patrolling exercises with Thailand and has offered to cooperate with the littoral states in the implementation of the “Eyes in the Sky” programme for patrolling the piracy-infested Straits of Malacca. Thailand has played host to ships of the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard on several occasions in recent years. This cooperation needs to be enhanced through technical, human resource development, capacity building and contributing to the development of Thailand capacities, both physical and human.

19. Raksha Mantri, Mr Manohar Parrikar met Deputy Prime Minister & Defence Minister of Thailand on the sidelines of ADMM+ in Kuala Lumpur on 3 November 2015. Admiral R K Dhowan, Chief of Naval Staff paid an official visit to Thailand from 23-26 July 2015. Air Marshal Arup Raha, Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee visited Thailand on 6-9 Sept 2015. The fourth meeting of India-Thailand Defence Dialogue was held in Bangkok on 21-22 December 2015. A bilateral MOU on Defence Cooperation was signed in January 2012. The current Defence Cooperation comprises regular joint exercises / joint maritime patrols near the international maritime boundary to counter terrorism, piracy and smuggling; training of officers at each other's institutions and participation as observers in military exercises.

India's "Look East" Policy

20. Although 1947 Partition severely weakened India, there was no diminishing of independent India's aspirations to lead Asia. Christophe Jaffrelot has argued, convincingly, that India's post-Cold War "Look East" Policy could be traced back to the Asianist ideals of the national movement.⁹ Poet Rabindranath Tagore, who became one of India's early international interlocutors at the beginning of the 20th century, had a critical role in defining India's perceptions of Asia and making the case for reviving the old bonds with Asia. Tagore talked about India leading Asia's spiritual renaissance and offering an alternative to the material West. The early decades of the 20th century also saw the notion of 'greater India' reinforce resurgent Indian nationalism. It became quite popular for the nationalists to talk of India's 'culture colonies' in the east. It was inevitable then that the idea of Asian unity and solidarity quickly gained ground within the national movement. Jawaharlal Nehru went a step further to talk of the solidarity among the oppressed and colonised people of Asia and the idea of forming an eventual 'eastern federation' among the major Asian nations¹⁰.

⁹ Christophe Jaffrelot, "India's Look East Policy: An Asian Strategy in Perspective", *India Review*, Volume 2, Number 2, April 2003, pp. 35-68.

¹⁰ H Venkatasubbiah, "Prospects for an Asian Union", *India Quarterly*, April-June 1949, Volume 5, pp. 99-112 and July-September 1949, pp. 212-228; G.D Deshingkar, "The Construction of Asia in India", *Asian Studies Review*, Volume 23, Number 2, June 1999, pp. 173-180.

21. India's economic and financial crisis of 1991 coincided with the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was India's valued economic and strategic partner. Both these developments compelled India to take a fresh look at its foreign policy. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's strategic vision grasped the changed economic and strategic paradigms of international relations in the early 1990s. India's 'Look East' Policy was first initiated in 1992, as part of its overall strategy to integrate itself into the global system, in the wake of the Soviet Union's demise. The 'Look East' Policy coincided with India's admission as a sectoral dialogue partner of ASEAN in 1992 and a full dialogue partner of ASEAN in 1996, which led to the expansion of ties with East and Southeast Asian nations. Since then, in 2000 India has become a member of the six-nation Mekong Ganga Cooperation, followed by admission into the Asia Cooperation Dialogue. India was made an ASEAN summit level partner in 2002, a member of the East Asia Summit and gained observer status to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in 2005. In 2010, the ASEAN - India Free Trade Agreement was signed. More recently, India's efforts to engage with ASEAN nations have led to an ongoing dialogue that India hopes will lead to the construction of the Asian Highway Network, that is, the India - Myanmar - Thailand Trilateral Highway and the India - Myanmar - Laos - Vietnam - Cambodia Highway. India's increasing involvement in Southeast Asia can be seen as emerging from obvious self - interest and as an attempt to respond to domestic economic and security needs. The primary aim of the "Look East" Policy announced in 1992 was to tap into the emerging robust Southeast Asian economies. An additional objective was to accommodate the country's reformist agenda which urged India to become more active in looking for economic opportunity elsewhere ¹¹. The "Look East" Policy soon expanded as ASEAN welcomed India in several of its forums and began to cover other areas of engagement like politics and security.

22. After concluding a Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation (CECA) with ASEAN in 2004 and a bilateral FTA with individual countries in Southeast Asia, India has focused on "**connectivity diplomacy**" between South and

¹¹ Jaffrelot, Christophe, "India's Look East Policy: An Asianist Strategy in Perspective," *India Review*, 2, (2) pp.35-68, 2003.

Southeast Asia. Greater connectivity remains crucial to economic integration and needs to be prioritised, as trade agreements have enormously increased the mobility of goods, services and investment between India and ASEAN¹². India has been working on several road, rail, maritime and air link projects including the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport, the India - Myanmar - Thailand Trilateral Highway and the India - Hanoi Rail Link that will connect India, especially its Northeast, with Myanmar and the rest of Southeast Asia. When completed, these projects will speed up goods transport and generate development in the landlocked and backward Northeast. The economic and political opening of Myanmar has opened new possibilities in this regard.

23. Geographical factors also necessitate India to forge closer ties with Southeast Asia in the domain of security cooperation. An added factor is China's growing influence in the region. India shares maritime boundaries with Indonesia, Myanmar & Thailand and perceives any disturbance or external intervention in this area as a potential threat. Misgivings about China are the underlying reason behind the Indian efforts to maintain amicable relations with the Burmese military regime, apart from the Tatmadaw's cooperation in the operation against Indian insurgents based in Myanmar¹³. Highlight of recent years under the Look East Policy was visit by Thailand Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra as chief guest at India's Republic Day celebrations in 2012. She visited India again in December that year to participate in the Commemorative Summit held to mark 20 years of the Dialogue Partnership between India and ASEAN. Dr Manmohan Singh, the then Prime Minister, visited Thailand in May 2013 on a two-day bilateral visit. All these visits and interactions provided a strong fillip to bilateral partnership. Bilateral trade rapidly rose to more than US\$9 billion per annum from 2012-13 to 2014-15.

24. **Act East Policy.** With the arrival of the Narendra Modi government, it was felt that fresh energy and vision needed to be

¹² Anushree Bhattacharya, "Linking Southeast Asia to India: More Connectivity, Better Ties", IPCS Special Report 50 (2008) http://www.ipcs.org/pdf_file/issue/935268060IPCS-Special Report 50.pdf

¹³ Ministry of Defence, Government of India, Annual Report 2006-2007, pp.8.

imparted to ties with the region. Thus was launched the Act East Policy in November, 2014, with the avowed intent to enhance the intensity and expand the scope and domain of regional partnership. Greater emphasis is sought to be provided to strategic cooperation including fight against terrorism, radicalisation & terror financing, defence cooperation, promoting infrastructure and connectivity. Several fresh initiatives have been mooted and earlier projects sought to be put on fast track. Positive green shoots are already visible. **A significant addition in the Act East Policy matrix is the inclusion of security, connectivity, economic development and well-being of people of the Northeastern States of India by assimilating them in the network with Southeast Asia particularly Myanmar and Thailand.**

Thailand's "Look West" Policy

25. In 1988, the Cold War and the political conflict in Cambodia were coming to an end and a new peaceful era dawned upon mainland Southeast Asia. Thailand became one of Japan's main production bases in the region. From an import substituting economy, Thailand became an export oriented one. This change took place in tandem with the Thailand military's declining influence in politics and foreign policy. Thailand no longer just "bended with the wind" by letting the two hegemonic powers, the United States (US) and China, which had once protected it from the Vietnamese threat, determine its foreign policy. In 1988, when Prime Minister Chatchai Chunhawan announced his new policy to "turn the battlefields into marketplaces", Thailand was set to take on a new role as an economic power and generator of economic transformation in Indochina¹⁴. It adopted an economics-driven foreign policy seeking to expand its role in the neighbouring countries while fostering the region's economic development.

26. The **primary aim of Thailand's "Look West" Policy** is to engage economically with India and other countries in South Asia. It has also led to initiatives like the Bay of Bengal Initiative for MultiSectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) in 1997 and the

¹⁴ Leszek Buszinsky, "Thailand's Foreign Policy: Management of Regional Vision", Asian Survey 34 (1994) : pp. 723.

Mekong - Ganga Cooperation (MGC). Both position India as Thailand's major partner in the development initiatives that involve countries in mainland Southeast Asia¹⁵. The frameworks of both BIMSTEC and MGC reveal how India - Thailand relations rest mostly on cooperation in trade and investment, inter - regional transportation development, non - traditional security matters, education and cultural exchange¹⁶. Thailand policy makers see Thailand and India as complementing each other economically. This is natural since Thailand is seeking new markets for export and investment and looks to be a gateway to Southeast Asia and the rest of the Pacific Rim, while India is a technology hub and provides a market of 360 million medium - income customers. However, for the vision to be realised, there is an urgent need for enhanced economic cooperation. Tariff barriers must be reduced and infrastructure and transportation linkages must be improved. For several years, the Thailand government has spent most of its energy and resources boosting trade and investment between Thailand and India. In 2003, Thailand managed to be the first ASEAN country to secure a Framework Agreement for establishing a bilateral **Free Trade Area (FTA)** with India. Thailand sees it as an opportunity to penetrate markets in the seven North Eastern states, whose population share cultural proximity and similar consumption tastes with Thailand.

India's Strategic Objectives in Southeast Asia and Thailand

27. Through the last two decades, India has repeatedly underlined the ASEAN centrality in shaping the future of Southeast Asia. There is more than prudence dictating this policy posture. It is rooted in the recognition that ASEAN's coherence is in India's vital national interest. India is aware that a weaker ASEAN might allow a great power to pry away its member states into special relationships and introduce rivalry with other powers, including India. For India, a strong ASEAN and a strong Thailand, that can insulate from great power rivalry is preferable to a weak regional institution that becomes vulnerable to external

¹⁵ Pavin Chatchavalpongpan, "Look East meets Look West: India-Southeast Asia Evolving Relations", Foreign Policy Research Centre 8(2011): pp.62.

¹⁶ This manifests in all joint press statements between India and Thailand during prime ministerial visits.

intervention. India recognises the significance of Thailand and has every reason to contribute to the strengthening of Thailand. Amidst the rapid rise of China, relative decline of the USA, a reorientation of Japan and the emergence of India, the ASEAN and Thailand is finding new ways to cope with the security challenges arising out of the redistribution of power in Asia ¹⁷.

28. With its growing economy expected to be the third largest in the world by the end of the next decade and its formidable capability as a conventional and nuclear military power, India in the last decade has been recognised by the global community as an emerging power. Its ascending status comes with attached expectations, that India will now play a more significant role on the global and extra-regional stages. The West, for example, expects India to take a more proactive role in supporting Afghanistan's security and development and act overall as a "net security provider" in areas such as the Indian Ocean. The ASEAN too is encouraging greater Indian involvement in its regional economic and security agendas. It is quite clear that India is moving in the direction of assuming the new role of a global player ¹⁸. Indian ambition, for example, is displayed by India joining with other major powers to campaign for a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reform, in its bid for a UNSC permanent seat, and in the growing Indian contribution to UN peacekeeping and international anti-piracy efforts. At the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2006, India's former Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee articulated this new ambition when he remarked that India's emergence, as a global player "will have a far-reaching impact on the international economy, politics and security. In each of these areas, India is poised to play an increasing larger role" ¹⁹.

29. Greater physical connectivity between India and the 10-

¹⁷ Evelyn Goh, "Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analysing Regional Security Strategies", *International Security*, Volume 32, Number 3, Winter 2007 / 08, pp. 113-157.

¹⁸ C. Raja. Mohan, "An Uncertain Trumpet? India's Role in Southeast Asian Security", *India Review* 12(2013): pp.138.

¹⁹ Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, "Furthering Maritime Cooperation with Southeast Asia" in *Changing Security Dynamic in Southeast Asia*, ed. N. S. Sisodia and Sreeradha Datta (New Delhi: Magnum Book, 2008), pp.157.

member grouping (ASEAN) remains New Delhi's "strategic objective"²⁰, said Dr Manmohan Singh, at the ninth ASEAN-India Summit, held at Bali on 19 Nov 2011. Physical connectivity includes **India - Myanmar - Thailand Highway** and its extension to Laos and Cambodia, and the development of a new highway also linking Vietnam. Another strategic objective is the **Mekong - India Economic Corridor**, which proposes to link corridors in the peninsular, and possibly the north-eastern regions of India with the East Asian region. India's cooperation with Thailand in **maritime security, counter-terrorism, training, exercises and disaster management** is another important objective.

Initiatives Taken by both Countries, Commonalities and Shared Values / Cultures that can be Build Upon

30. **Defence Cooperation.** India has been a source of military training for Thailand. All the ASEAN countries including Thailand are partners under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme, which offers defence training among others. India's defence agreements with Thailand have broadened the scope of future defence cooperation. Also, India used its military as an instrument of potential soft power during the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. Its naval forces were deployed for disaster - relief operation in the affected countries, which included Indonesia. India has become part of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against ships in Asia (ReCAAP), with the Indian Coast Guard representing India. The following areas for future defence cooperation between India and Thailand can be built upon: -

- (a) **Doctrinal Exchange.** Talks for doctrinal exchange are underway in the field of military doctrines and concepts. The exchange could include Sub Conventional Doctrine, Force Structuring, Peacekeeping & Challenges in Modernisation, Transformation and Capacity Development to enhance bilateral defence cooperation.
- (b) **Defence Diplomacy.** Regular visits of high level and working level delegations on reciprocal basis will assist in projecting each country's perspective and building rapport for enhancing defence cooperation. Regular Staff Talks at Ministry of Defence level could help in building rapport, besides facilitating defence cooperation.

²⁰ Statement by Dr Manmohan Singh, at the ninth ASEAN-India Summit, held at Bali on 19 Nov 2011.

(c) **Joint Adventure Events.** Explore at least one combined adventure activity per year to be held alternately in India and Thailand.

(d) **Observers in Exercises.** To further enhance mutual trust and learn from their experiences, observers from either side could be exchanged for various exercises. The Thailand Armed Forces could benefit from capsules in Counter-insurgency, jungle warfare and high-altitude exercises.

31. **Enhancing Connectivity.** To promote trade and integration, India has put physical connectivity between India and Thailand as a “strategic objective”. It has taken initiatives both at the national and regional levels which include among others Delhi - Mumbai Industrial Corridor, India - Myanmar - Thailand Trilateral Highway, Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project and Mekong - India Economic Corridor. India’s car rallies and ship expedition to Thailand ‘highlight the importance and the potential for connecting India and Thailand by sea, surface and air links’.

32. **Foreign Policy Initiatives.** India has utilised its foreign policy to endear itself to ASEAN states. India’s formulation of “Look East” Policy itself was a major foreign policy initiative to end its estrangement with ASEAN countries, since the Sino-Indian War of 1962 and this has been increasingly embraced by successive governments. New Delhi’s “Look East” Policy (in 1992) and Bangkok’s “Look West” Policy, launched in 1996, converged to bolster economic and trade links.

33. **Cooperative and Neutral Country.** The changing power dynamics and rivalry between neighbours and close partners make it necessary for Thailand to maintain the image of a cooperative and neutral country. Thailand’s inclination for cooperation and neutrality fits well with New Delhi’s continued adherence to a pragmatic policy of nonalignment, diversification and strategic autonomy, as a part of which it has engaged in a variety of key strategic partnerships with the US, China and Japan. Now, India is another pole in an increasingly multi-polar world and the Indo - Pacific region and, thus, requires special attention. Attaching considerable significance to India is a must for Thailand, situated in between this Indo - Pacific strategic triangle, especially since it will not affect the balance of their relations with the U.S. and China.

34. **Economic and Development Partnerships.** Indo - Thailand

economic and development partnerships are essential to their mutual interests in India - ASEAN economic integration. Thailand, because of its geographical location, is pivotal to India's "Look East" Policy and the prospects of its connectivity plan to the East are brighter after Myanmar's democratisation. The growing significance of the Thailand partnership in Indian perspective can be seen in 2012, when Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra was invited as the chief guest in India's Republic Day Parade and several inter-connectivity and economic cooperation projects, which were conceived in the early 2000s become revitalised.

35. Beyond cooperation in Indochina, and in the BIMSTEC and MGC frameworks, Thailand also supports India's engagement with the ASEAN and other regions. In 1996, while the US and Japan were reluctant to extend ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) membership to India on account of its potential nuclearisation, Thailand was said to have strongly supported India's inclusion. IORA and IONS are other initiatives where in Indian and Thailand interests coincide, as they provide opportunities for both to increase engagement and cooperation with countries in the Middle East and Africa. At the 13th Council of Ministers Meeting in November 2013, Thailand expressed its strong support for these forums and the willingness to play a more active role.

36. **Conclusion.** A careful look at the Joint Declarations and other official documents between India and Thailand indicate the reluctance to ascribe a role for India beyond that of a development partner. This is not to say that India has not engaged with Thailand, on defence and security matters. The present arrangement has worked well to provide the desired needs of economic development and security in the region. Given their geostrategic positions in the region, the changing power dynamics in Asia-Pacific region and the existing inter-regional economic partnership, there is an urgent need for New Delhi and Bangkok to build further on this partnership to higher strategic level, for ensuring a shared security in the region and further strengthen their security and defence cooperation. In the next chapter, will analyse the emerging geo-political realities and developing security environment in the Asia Pacific region, with a view to analyse the effectiveness of the present security mechanism and what more needs to be done to improve the same.

Chapter 3

Emerging Geo - Political Realities in Asia Pacific Region

Introduction

1. The, Asia Pacific region has emerged as a significant strategic centre in international political affairs. The region's dependence on Sea Lines of Communication and the proximity with a rising China, has hoisted its stature in USA policy calculus, whose focus has now shifted to this region. Three key emerging trends in the geo-politics of Asia Pacific deserve special attention i.e. **America's re-engagement with Asia Pacific region, a seeming "containment" of China and propping up of India as potential "counter-weight" to China.** Whether we would be having the beginning of a new Cold War in Asia Pacific, especially on the issue of South China Sea, is too early to reckon but that the geo-political landscape is getting more complex, fraught both with challenges and opportunities ²¹. Asia - Pacific region represent an increasingly critical arena for maritime geopolitics, security, trade and environmental policy action issues, that have transformed the region into a major crossroads of international relations. The vast Indian Ocean and Western Pacific are drawn together by natural resource flows, globalised supply chains and international distribution networks. At the same time, Asia - Pacific littoral states face significant policy and governance challenges from multiple sources, including territorial disputes, prospective rivalries among naval powers, intensifying environmental pressures on marine, coastal infrastructure and resources, piracy / trafficking on the open ocean, and weak / failing states on shore.

2. The emergence of Asia Pacific region as a new strategic centre in international political landscape is now a reality. The region occupies a huge area starting from the Indian subcontinent to the west coast of America. It spans two oceans, the Pacific and the Indian, busy pathways of maritime activity and strategy. The region is home to about half of the world population. It has a number of important centres, of world economy whose goods, tools and services are competing with the West in many ways. Asia

²¹ Muhammad Shafiq, "Emerging Trends in Geo-politics of Asia Pacific Region", IPRI Journal XIV, no 1 (Winter 2014): 81-101.

Pacific thus provides both a competitive edge and an economic challenge to the West. Three of the most important straits - Malacca Strait, Sunda Strait and the Strait of Lombok, are situated in the region. The Malacca Strait is the world's busiest shipping lane equivalent to Suez or Panama. Almost all the shipping passes through these three straits, which further signifies the strategic importance of this region for regional and international actors. Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore are adjacent to these choke points and thus have the potential to exercise control over a significant percentage of the world's maritime trade.

3. Apart from dependence on the Sea Lines of Communications (SLOC), the proximity with China has raised the region's stature in USA policy calculus. Therefore, USA prime aim is to counter the emerging predominance of an Asian power - China, whose rapid progress has the potential to challenge USA supremacy in the world. The USA along with her allies, particularly Japan, South Korea and Australia, wants to encircle China. USA recent growing politico-military as well as economic ties with the ASEAN states are also marked to weakening China's growing ingress in Southeast Asia. The US - India strategic alliance is also a step in this direction, wherein both the countries view China as a potential challenger, for USA at global level and India at regional level. The 19th century was the century of Europe and the 20th century was that of America. With the advent of the 21st century, several analysts have suggested that it was now the turn of Asia to lead the world in international politics. It is viewed that the extraordinary chemistry of demography, the significant function of the state and the recent economic progress will take Asia forward²². It is assumed the next theatre would be Asia Pacific, where the future would be played out, where the world would see the involvement of major powers like USA, China, Russia, Australia, the European Union and India in a state of competition when their interests collide.

Emerging Trends

4. At present, three important emerging trends in the geo-politics of Asia - Pacific deserve special attention i.e. America's re-engagement with Asia-Pacific region, a seeming "containment" of China and propping up of

²² Shahid Javed Burki, "Pakistan Should Go Asian", Singapore Symposium 2012 Papers-1, Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) National University of Singapore (NUS) Insights, no 174 (July 27, 2012).

India as a potential “counter-weight” to China. Regarding the USA “**Re-engagement” with Asia-Pacific Region**, on 10 November 2011, during her address at Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in Honolulu and Hawaii, Hillary Clinton, then US Secretary of State, remarked that the 21st century would be America’s Pacific Century. She noted that with the end of war in Iraq and the commencement of the transition in Afghanistan, the USA had reached a pivot point and could redirect attention to Asia, a region where opportunities flourished. She also recalled that in the 20th century, America had helped shape a trans-Atlantic network of institutions and relationships and played a crucial role in shaping the architecture across the Atlantic. Now, she declared, they were doing the same across the Pacific. She thought that the twenty-first century would be America’s Pacific Century, an age of distinctive outreach and partnership in this vigorous, composite and substantial region. Secretary Clinton identified the following six key lines of action ²³ to advance America’s re-engagement: -

- (a) Strengthening bilateral security alliances (Australia, Japan, South Korea, Philippines and Thailand).
- (b) Deepening working relationships with emerging powers (particularly Indonesia and India).
- (c) Engaging with regional multilateral institutions (East Asia Summit, ASEAN and ARF).
- (d) Expanding trade and investment (bilaterally and through Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)).
- (e) Building a wide centred military presence.
- (f) Progressing human rights and democracy.

5. **Seeming “Containment” of China.** In her “Pacific Century” speech, Secretary Clinton noted that some people in the USA saw China’s growth as a danger to the USA, whereas a number of people in China saw USA moves in the region as aiming to constrain China. Implicitly dismissing such notions, she stressed that the USA was profoundly steadfast to develop a constructive and cooperative relationship with China. Secretary Clinton’s public claims aside, the substance and meaning of many of America’s statements and actions do tend to give credence to the perception that the USA might be seeking to contain China. The most important element in this context is the USA position on South China Sea, home to resource rich Paracel and Sparty Islands. These islands have been the subject of a territorial dispute among regional states, including China, Vietnam, Taiwan,

²³ Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century”.

the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei. In 1974, China annexed these islands and used them for intelligence gathering. China had hitherto enjoyed increasingly cooperative ties with ASEAN nations and worked to keep the territorial disputes with the claimant states within manageable limits. The ASEAN - China partnership on a range of trade, economic and development issues was viewed as mutually-beneficial, stable and flourishing²⁴. The American proposal for use of Thailand Navy's airbase at U-Tapao to do a climate change research study, has evoked an intense debate in the region. The Thailand government seems willing to accept the US proposal; however, is facing resistance from Thailand opposition to doing so. There are fears that by agreeing to the US proposal, Thailand could become a part of a perceived USA strategy to "contain" China. It is professed that USA is going to establish a Control Station at U-Tapao Airbase for controlling ASEAN region in the garb of NASA. The USA Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee, General Dempsey, who visited Thailand on July 8, 2012, endorsed that both sides examined ideas how to use U-Tapao airbase in future. He also assured that the United States would not establish a permanent base at U-Tapao and would not use it for any extra martial resolution²⁵. U-Tapao Air base was built in early 1960s, with USA help and was later intensely used by America as forward base during the Vietnam War. Although the USA had withdrawn her forces in 1976, yet Pentagon never excluded this base from its list of bases to be used for its forward policy. China is responding to these developments in a deliberate and measured fashion. It recognises that an assertive approach could evoke more negative reactions and complicate China's goal of "peaceful rise". On the other hand, Beijing just feels compelled to do whatever is necessary to protect its vital national interests in the region. It would, therefore, be correct to assume some deep reflection taking place in Beijing on how to counter the coming onslaught.

6. India as Potential "Counterweight" to China. With these developments taking place, an effort appears to be underway by the USA to attract India to play a more pro-active role in South East Asia. In July 2011, Secretary Clinton during her major policy speech in Chennai, titled "India and the United States: A Vision for the 21st Century", citing a whole range of common economic and strategic interests, urged "India not to just look east,

²⁴ Sarabjeet Singh Parmar, "The South China Sea Imbroglia", Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), October 14, 2011.

²⁵ Exovera.com, June 16, 2012, <http://exovera.com/contents/us-plans-increase-use-u-tapao-naval-base-rouse-thai-media-suspicion>.

but to engage East and act East”²⁶. Among other things, Secretary Clinton stressed the importance of India and the USA working in concert to shape the regional agenda and the evolving architecture in East Asia. While discussing India’s growing role in the Asia Pacific, South and Central Asia, she noted: “Yes, it is ambitious agenda, but we can afford to be ambitious, because when we in the United States and particularly in the Obama Administration look at India, we see, as President Obama said, a nation that is not simply emerging, but has emerged, and a nation with whom we share so many bonds, and one that will be a leader globally in shaping the future we will all inherit”. In 2010, during his address to Indian Parliament, President Obama said “the United States not only supports India as a rising power; we fervently support it, and we have worked to help make it a reality”²⁷.

7. **Geo Strategic Significance of the South China Sea (SCS).**

The SCS functions as the throat of the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean. Host to important SLOCs, it carries nearly \$1.2 trillion in US trade annually and also represents energy life lines to the energy deficient states in North East Asia and China. Half of Indian trade through the area passes through the region that provides a transit between the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific, ensuring the rapid shipment of goods and deployments of armed forces from one ocean to the other. Endowed with immense living and non - living resources, the region holds significant amounts of energy. It has proven oil reserves to the tune of 1.2 km³ (7.7 billion barrels), with an approximate total of 4.5 km³ (24 billion barrels). Its natural gas reserves of 7,500 km³ (266 trillion cubic feet) make it a virtual fountainhead of hydrocarbon energy. Against this backdrop, the USA, India and others can play a stabilising and an encouraging role by being active participants in some of the confidence building measures among the littoral states. After all, the universal aim of all the maritime parties revolves around maintaining peace and stability, while ensuring the freedom of navigation and unhindered access to the movement of shipping trade across the region.

Security Threats in Asia - Pacific Region - Traditional

²⁶ Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Remarks on India and the United States: A Vision for the 21st Century”, US Department of State, July 20, 2011.

²⁷ William J. Burns “US-India Partnership in an Asia Pacific Century”, December 16, 2011.

8. **Three Major Potential Clashes in the Region.** The unfinished civil wars between North and South Korea, as well as between mainland China and Taiwan, are legacies of the Cold War in the Asia Pacific. "These tense areas of political conflict stand out as the greatest threats to regional stability in East Asia for the foreseeable future."²⁸

(a) **The Korean Peninsula.** The situation on the Korean Peninsula has been described as "perhaps the most urgent security challenge in the world"²⁹. Little progress has been made in peace building since the signing of the Armistice Agreement in 1953. The two sides remain technically at war, divided by the most heavily armed border in the world. The North Korean regime, with its starving population, remains internationally isolated. Predictions as to what will happen on the peninsula range from the imminent collapse of the North Korean regime to a gradual reunification based on incremental economic change.

(b) **China and Taiwan.** Another matter that continues to be a source of concern is the conflict between mainland China and Taiwan. While the confrontational rhetoric has been tempered, tension between China and Taiwan continues. Predictions as to what China will do are hard to make, since, as with the Korean situation, the range of opinions varies widely. While some authors see the build up of the Chinese military as a harbinger of invasion, others doubt that such a direct move will be made and instead predict continued low-level military intimidation over a long period of time.

(c) **The South China Sea.** A third potential source of conflict that has been drawing a considerable amount of attention is the land claim dispute that has arisen in the South China Sea, especially over the Spratly Islands. Six governments - Brunei, Malaysia, China, Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam - have all laid claim to all or some of the region. The islands in question are considered important for strategic security reasons, commercial shipping, fish and hydrocarbons. This last resource is particularly important, as it is

²⁸ SIPRI Yearbook 1996: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 17.

²⁹ R. Manning, "The United States and the Endgame in Korea", Asian Survey, July 1997, pp. 597-608.

often by granting hydrocarbon concessions in disputed zones that claimant states exercise jurisdiction. Competition to assert sovereignty has led to numerous occupations and low-level military confrontations between the several claimants. This dispute is not likely to be resolved soon. Despite their small size these islands are very important, because they lie astride the principal sea lines of communication linking the Indian and Pacific Ocean. Should one country succeed in gaining control of all the Spratly Islands, there would be a significant shift in the balance of power in the region.

9. **Security of Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs).**

Economic globalisation has led to more than 80 percent of world trade being conducted through the seas. Since most of the trade in the Asia - Pacific region is sea - borne, the seas effectively form the lifelines for the littoral states. With SLOCs forming the oceanic highways for the movement of merchant ships, SLOC security has emerged as a primary concern for most nations. According to a World Bank projection, the global sea - borne trade that stood at around 21,480 billion ton - miles in 1999 was expected to rise by linear projection to 41,800 billion ton - miles by 2014 ³⁰. With nearly **100,000 ships transiting the expanse of the Indian Ocean annually**, it is easy to predict that the Indian Ocean is a trade busy ocean. Roughly 40 percent of this sea-borne trade is accounted for by the Straits of Malacca. Every day 15.5 million barrels of oil or 40 percent of the entire global oil trade, pass through the Straits of Hormuz, and 11 million barrels of oil pass through the Malacca and Singapore Straits. In this context, the “energy demand heartland” of Asia, comprised of countries that are heavily dependent on energy imports like India, China and Japan, has led to a realisation that SLOC security and energy security are closely interlinked and that the freedom of SLOCs and the energy lifelines form an important national and regional objective.

10. **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).** It was the first attempt by the United Nations to apply the concept of sovereignty to the maritime domain. The convention follows the Westphalian tradition, which does not allow for historical claims of empires.

³⁰ See P.K Ghosh, “Transnational Maritime Threats and Challenges”, in *Maritime Security in the Indo - Pacific*, Mohan Malik ed., (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), pp. 156.

UNCLOS is important to maritime security, particularly its provision of a legal framework for demarcating territorial sovereignty and adjudication of disputes over resources and waterways. As neither China nor the United States has acceded to UNCLOS, two nations will not be able to resolve maritime claims and disputes. While the United States urges China to adhere to UNCLOS, its own refusal to accede to the convention smacks of hypocrisy. USA stand is that while the USA Congress refuses to ratify UNCLOS, the United States has signed the 1994 Agreement for Implementation and the USA Navy obeys and enforces its provisions. China, by contrast, has its own alternative model for maritime law, under which it claims 200 nautical miles as an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). This claim provides China with sovereignty over the full territory's natural resources and contravenes the UNCLOS provision of twelve nautical miles. China's stance reduces its security and increases the likelihood of conflict escalation, since China is conducting military operations well away from its shoreline. China should clarify the parameters of its maritime model to reduce the chance of miscalculation. Chinese disagree, asserting that USA plans to position military forces far from its own shores in Australia have instead increased tensions in the region and view this move as an attempt to contain a rising China.

Security Threats in Asia - Pacific Region - Non-Traditional

11. **Transnational Crimes.** Terrorism undermines human rights, economic well-being and the rule of law. Terrorism can act as a catalyst for internal war and possibly international conflict; as such, terrorism is a threat to regional security. Terrorism has been growing in the Asia Pacific region, particularly among countries of Southeast Asia such as Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. Much of this terrorist activity is related to separatist campaigns in these countries. However, it is also linked to international terrorism by Islamic extremists. There is some concern that extremists are gaining a foothold in the region, from which to carry out terrorist activities against the West (particularly the United States) and anti-Islamic elements in Asia Pacific.

(a) **Drug Trafficking.** With respect to drug trafficking, Southeast Asia continues to be a major producer of opium, despite government efforts to eradicate illicit opium poppy cultivation. Indeed, reports indicate that people and even governments short on hard currency have turned to this illegal cash cow in the wake of the

economic crisis. Increasingly, other countries in the region are becoming transit points along the drug trade route to Australia, Canada, United States, and Europe. In addition, the illicit manufacture of, traffic in and abuse of amphetamines in many Asian countries is a serious concern.

(b) **Piracy.** This transnational crime has made considerable impact on commercial shipping, especially on those vessels passing through some of the piracy hotspots in the region like the Horn of Africa. Modern piracy emerging from Somalia, though, has captured the attention of the global shipping community and the media. Modern piracy is a complex problem that is often the manifestation of various underlying socio - political problems. Hence piracy emanating from one area is often unique in its approach and distinct from piracy incidents in other regions of the world. The solution to eradicating this scourge does not exclusively lie at sea and requires a multi - faced approach to tackle the root of the problem, rather than focus on an exclusively naval solution to merely suppress the problem.

12. **Small - Arms Trafficking.** Small - arms trafficking is a major threat to the stability of Asia - Pacific countries and is often linked to other transnational challenges such as crime and terrorism. In many cases, the excess supply of arms is the result of wars that have occurred in the past, such as in Afghanistan which has an extensive supply of small arms. Other factors increasing the trafficking of small-arms include unresolved Asian border disputes (which can foster porous borders), economic disparities between states and the existence of two of the world's largest opiate producers in the world, among others. Measures that might ameliorate the problem might include eliminating the current weapons glut (with buy-backs or other measures) and ratifying international conventions and agreements, such as the proposed protocol to the Palermo Convention on Organized Crime.

13. **Environmental Degradation.** The Asia - Pacific region is witnessing an almost catastrophic destruction of its environment. Air, water & land pollution are rife and the trend in most countries is worsening. Key environmental challenges in the region include poor water quality, food insecurity, marine pollution, depletion of fish resources, deforestation, acid rain (transboundary pollution) and global climate change. Environmental issues have traditionally been excluded from the

realm of traditional security issues. As environmental problems worsen, however, that perception is changing. In some cases - such as the 1997 smog crisis in Southeast Asia - environmental degradation has caused major inter - state tensions. Responses to environmental crises must include both a crisis response (to an immediate crisis) and a more long - term preventive defence (including effective early warning systems).

14. **Natural Disasters.** The rising frequency of natural disasters across Asia and the Pacific, poses grave security risks to the countries of the region necessitating more cooperation in the HADR operations. The occurrence of major floods tripled from about 50 per year in the 1980s to 150 in the 2000s. Munich Re, a major insurance group, notes that the annual number of Category 5 storms, the most severe, also tripled between 1980 and 2008. According to the Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT) on international disasters from the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, the occurrence of all-natural disasters has risen about 600% in the last 60 years. This likely reflects fundamental changes under way in global climate and surging populations in low-lying megacities, such as Bangkok, Manila or Jakarta, suggesting a strong underlying human factor. Massive population growth in Asia has forced millions to move to more marginal lands and coastal areas, away from historically economically active areas along rivers and canals. Naturally, this has left people much more vulnerable to droughts or storm surges from typhoons and cyclones, than those in the higher hinterlands. And as the world warms, heat waves, storms, rains and droughts are becoming more extreme; sea levels are rising and landslides, floods, fires and pests are becoming more common. Natural disasters are now 4 times more likely to affect people in Asia - Pacific than those in Africa, and 25 times more likely than those in Europe or North America. According to the Climate Change Vulnerability Index compiled by risk management group Maplecroft, all seven cities classified as an “extreme risk” are in Asia: Dhaka, Manila, Bangkok, Yangon, Jakarta, Ho Chi Minh and Kolkata.

Geo Political Interests of India and Thailand in Asia - Pacific

15. The “**Thailand National Security Policies Paper for 1998-2001**” proposed that for national security and prosperity, Thailand “should maintain and enhance good relations with US, China, Japan and groups of

countries of high national power” in bilateral and multilateral settings. There was no reference to India, as it was not considered significant to Thailand’s strategic vision ³¹. This outlook has changed in the “National Security Policy Paper for 2007-11”, which observed that the global power structure has gradually been shifting from uni - polar to multi - polar. It noted that “While China’s influence is increasing in the way that its economic power may be equivalent to a superpower, India, Australia and Japan also aim to play a leading role in the region [Asia]”. The document further suggested that Thailand should encourage balancing of power among major powers in the Asia-Pacific.

16. As a very close friend of China in Southeast Asia and a non - claimant country in the South China Sea territorial disputes which have sparked new tension in the Asia Pacific since 2010, Thailand had been quite slow to take up these conflicts with greater concern. This dynamic has changed when the USA announced its pivot (or “rebalance”) to Asia in early 2012 and Thailand assumed its new role as the rotating country coordinator for ASEAN - China relations in 2012-15.

17. The Royal Thai Navy was the first to respond to this changing scenario in its “Maritime National Security Strategy for 2012”. Drafted around May 2012, the document emphasises the multipolar global system, in which several great powers including India compete, balance and, at the same time, cooperate with each other. It highlights the USA pivot to Asia, China’s conflict-ridden relations with several neighbours and Japan’s attempt to contain China. Besides, the document dwells at considerable length on India’s military capability, its role and interest in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia as well as its relations with Thailand, China, Japan, the USA and other players in the balance of power in the Asia - Pacific region. In the Royal Thai Navy’s view, Thailand’s location is in the middle between the Indian Ocean, which is regaining its global geostrategic significance due to Indo-China rivalry and other maritime security threats, and the Western Pacific where territorial conflicts and great power manoeuvres are playing an increasingly important role. The document also suggests that **Thailand must emphasise its neutrality** and seek to develop international cooperation in order to generate trust and

³¹ Thailand’s National Security Council, “National Security Policies B.E. 2540-2544”.

mediate conflicts between members ³². The increasing concerns about balancing great powers' competition and contestation in Asia also manifest in Thailand's National Strategic Policy for 2012-2016, featuring a newly added "strategy towards great powers".

18. **Bangkok's Balancing Bet.** Thailand is a USA military treaty ally in Asia and also a close friend of China since the late 1970s, when Bangkok needed Beijing's help to cope with expansionist Vietnam. Thailand - China relations were elevated to a strategic partnership in 2001, and in 2007, the two signed a Joint Action Plan on Strategic Cooperation in 15 sectors. To position itself as a neutral country, open to cooperation with all parties, Thailand signed important agreements and sought to establish strategic partnership with many different countries in 2012-13. This brought balance back to its foreign policy, which had been perceived to be too pro - China. Former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh agreed to work on establishing a strategic partnership, when the former visited India as the chief guest in the 2012 Republic Day celebrations. The same year, Thailand concluded a strategic partnership with Japan in March, with Germany in July and with South Korea in November. The highlights of 2012 were Thailand's MOU on defence cooperation with Vietnam, a claimant of the disputed Spratly Island in the South China Sea, in September, and the signing of a Joint Vision Statement for the Thailand - USA Defence Alliance in November. The latter declares Thailand's support for a USA regional presence, which will allow Asia Pacific to prosper by allowing open access by all to a shared maritime domain ³³. In December 2012, the Thailand Army chief Prayuth Chanocha also visited the Philippines, another active party, along with China, to the South China Sea disputes. Thailand's relations with Vietnam were upgraded to a strategic partnership, with the aim to enhance and deepen cooperation in several areas in June of the following year. While in October 2013, during Prime Minister Li Keqiang's visit to Thailand, China also discussed the plan to further upgrade the existing ties towards Thailand-China Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership. This indicated the Chinese effort to maintain a privileged position in Thailand foreign relations. In this complex environment, as it

³² Royal Thai Navy, "Draft of Maritime National Security Strategy B.E. 2555-58".

³³ U.S. Department of Defense, "News Release", November 15, 2012, <http://www.defense.gov/releases/release>

becomes increasingly involved in regional conflicts and great power competition, Thailand's strategy to conduct its foreign policy and relations with global and regional powers is more significant than ever. Against this background, India's rising profile in Southeast Asia is of crucial importance.

19. **India.** India does not have a clearly articulated strategy for dealing with developments in the Asia Pacific region including the rise of China. Though Indian and USA interests are increasingly aligned against China in many ways, India should not become a formal part of the USA rebalance strategy. India should also make sure that it has the capabilities to deal with any problems with China on its own, without having to depend on other countries. India should continue to actively engage with China in all areas, while continuing to be watchful about Chinese actions and intentions. India needs to be proactive in its approach to the region especially with regard to the maritime domain. It must exploit emerging opportunities to send strong signals to all players, that it will preserve and protect its strategic interests. The pro - active implementation of a 'Look East' strategy is currently hampering such efforts. In spite of the many problems within ASEAN, India should continue to engage actively and constructively with it. Apart from strengthening bilateral ties with countries like Russia, India also needs to look at trilateral agreements with the countries to strengthen its strategic position.

20. **USA and China.** For the last four decades, the USA has maintained its position as a hegemonic power within the Asia - Pacific region. This has created a stable regional order, enabling economic growth, which has transformed the region. But now the regional order is shifting. China's economic and social transformation has empowered its global influence. It is engaging more broadly and has become more assertive, both in its force posture and international relations³⁴. As the US responds by 'pivoting' its strategic focus to the Asia-Pacific, the obvious question is whether the region is heading towards conflict as a prelude to the rise of one great empire and the fall of another. USA policy consists of six lines of effort: strengthening security alliances, deepening relationships with emerging powers, engaging regional multilateral institutions,

³⁴ Rory Medcalf and Raja Mohan, Responding to Indo-Pacific rivalry: Australia, India and the middle power coalitions, Lowy Institute: Sydney, August 2014, pp. 1-3.

expanding trade and investment, expanding military presence, and advancing democracy and human rights³⁵.

21. China and the Asia-Pacific region stand at a crossroads. Asian geopolitics, in particular, will be dominated by the interaction among the United States, China, India, Japan, and Russia. Strategic concerns loom large as China's growing power and reach run up against the interests of other powers. China's meteoric rise has given impetus to new geopolitical alignments. Power asymmetry among major stakeholders means that each will form flexible, adhoc partnerships with the others where their interests converge, mobilise the support of one against the other when their interests collide and checkmate the other two from forming an alignment against it as they compete, coalesce, and collude with each other when their objectives coincide. Peace and stability will prevail if China and other powers work for a multipolar Asia with inclusive multilateral institutions. However, competition, rivalry, and even conflict will result, should bipolarity reemerge or should Beijing seek to reestablish a hierarchical Sino - centric regional order, wherein the Middle Kingdom behaves in a traditional manner, expecting tributary relations with its neighbors.

Conclusion

22. The next decades will witness a contest for primacy between the USA and China. A regional order predicated on the premise of USA primacy will be ill - equipped to manage this contest. What are the likely implications of China's rise for regional order, peace and war? A large bloc of thinkers, represented by realists, argues that Asia is destined for conflict. According to the realist logic, China will expand its interests in accordance with its growing capabilities and will ultimately aspire for regional hegemony. As Washington will not easily give up its position of primacy and India will also try to prevent China from becoming the regional master, Asia will be divided into opposing camps and conflict will be inevitable³⁶.

³⁵ Hillary Clinton, 'America's Pacific Century', *Foreign Policy*, 11 October 2011, pp. 2-6.

³⁶ Aaron Friedberg, "Ripe for Rivalry: Prospects for Peace in a Multipolar Asia".

23. As China and several other Asian countries are growing in power and activism, Asia is heading toward a new regional order. The central task of the emerging regional order is to manage the Sino - USA contest for primacy. The vital strategic choices that are likely to face the region are a “new Cold War” and “inclusive leadership”. Asia will be peaceful and stable only if key players in regional affairs make inclusive leadership effective. One thorny issue in Asian international relations is the territorial disputes between China and its neighbours in the East China Sea, the South China Sea and along the Sino - Indian borders. If mechanisms of inclusive leadership fail to solve these problems, states will likely resort to balance - of power politics, thus strengthening the trend toward a new Cold War. Thus, to ensure the success of inclusive regional order in Asia - Pacific, there is a greater need for enhanced cooperation between Thailand / other ASEAN countries with India, including Defence and Security Cooperation.

Chapter 4

The Untapped Potential of Defence and Security Cooperation

Introduction

1. India regards Thailand as “central pillar” of India's ties with ASEAN countries. Among the top priorities for both Thailand and India is the defence and security cooperation, realising that security problems & terrorism have broadened and have increasingly become challenges to the international community. **Joint Working Group on Security Cooperation**, established in 2003 has provided a useful framework to push forward cooperation in this field for the two countries. The National Security Councils of both sides **have worked closely on mutual areas of concern such as counter-terrorism, military cooperation, maritime security, international economic and cyber - crimes, anti-narcotics and money laundering**. The Thailand - India defence and security cooperation comprises regular staff talks, joint exercises / maritime patrols near the international maritime boundary to counter terrorism, piracy and smuggling, training of officers at each other's institutions, participation as observers in military exercises and exchange of trainee visits at various levels. MoU and Standards Operating Procedures for Coordinated Patrol, signed in 2007, ensure the effective implementation of the Law of the Sea to prevent illegal activities.

2. The strategic transformation of Indo - Pacific region and the political changes within Myanmar now provide a new background for Thailand and India to step up their defence and security cooperation. Changing dynamics of Indo - Pacific region have thrown many areas for strategic convergence between both the countries. Thailand must now accommodate India's rising profile, India's increasing presence in Southeast Asia & the South China Sea into its strategic calculus and consider how best to position itself in Asia's changing great power relations. Thailand's cosy relations with China and initial reluctance to welcome the USA re-balancing act in Asia have frustrated Washington and enfeebled the Thai - USA alliance. Thailand is trying to carefully re-

balance its foreign relations, so as to avoid being branded as China's client. The changing power dynamics make it necessary for Thailand to maintain the image of a cooperative and neutral country. Thailand's inclination for cooperation and neutrality fits well with New Delhi's continued adherence to a pragmatic policy of nonalignment, diversification and strategic autonomy. Thailand, because of its geographical location, is pivotal to India's Look East Policy and the prospects of its connectivity plan to the East are brighter after Myanmar's democratisation. Road construction and improvements inside Myanmar, as part of the Trilateral Highway, is being largely funded by the two countries. To gain a firm footing in Southeast Asia, India will require significant support from Thailand. New Delhi and Bangkok need to further strengthen their defence and security cooperation, given their geo-strategic compulsions in the region. The good news is that both Thai and Indian leaders are aware of the challenges ahead. **Expanding maritime security cooperation, joint defence production, counter-terrorism strategy, cyber security, human trafficking, narcotics, transnational economic offences should be the main focus of Thailand - India defence and security cooperation.** In maritime security, cooperation between the two countries in the Indian Ocean is already "very strong" and ways to further secure the vital sea-lanes of communications which pass through the Indian Ocean, needs be explored. Also, Thailand has shown interest in joint ventures in defence production and procurement of defence platforms from India.

Current Level of Defence and Security Cooperation between India and Thailand

3. The present India - Thailand defence and security cooperation are overall good but not so close when compared to India's active relations with Singapore, Vietnam, Myanmar and Indonesia. Before the start of an Indo - Thai coordinated naval patrol in 2005, Thailand's only substantive military engagement with India was the Thailand Navy's participation in India - hosted multilateral exercise, **MILAN**, launched in 1995 and attended initially by three other littoral ASEAN countries. Unlike Singapore, whose substantive defence ties with India started in 1993 with a joint naval exercise and were followed by the conclusion of Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement 2005, Thailand has not managed to even secure an FTA with India.

4. **Maritime Cooperation.** Defence and security cooperation in the naval domain has been good, due to the contiguousness of the two countries maritime borders and the proximity of India's Andaman and Nicobar archipelago to Thailand and the Malacca Strait. Thailand has 894 kms of Andaman coastline, which rests within India's area of strategic influence. At present, the Royal Thai Navy and the Indian Navy have been conducting an annual Indo - Thai Joint Working Group (JWG) Meeting since 2003. In 2008, they started a bilateral Navy Staff Talk to cooperate in maritime security. The two navies also engage in joint patrolling or Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT) in the Andaman Sea, since 2005. India and Thailand have also been sharing data in coordination with Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia on patrolling and other movements in the Strait of Malacca and the Andaman Sea. The Indian Navy gave hydrography training to the Thai naval personnel in 2003. There are also frequent exchanges of port calls.

5. **Army and Air Force Cooperation.** Cooperation between Army and Air Force of two countries is still limited. The Royal Thai Army and Indian Army started an annual combined exercise in counter insurgency - "Maitree", in 2007, alternately hosted by India and Thailand. Air Force staff talk was initiated in 2010. Thailand and Indian military officers have also started attending the National Defence College in each other country. In 2011, both countries agreed to establish a regular 'High - Level Dialogue on Defence Cooperation'. Thailand and India exchanged defence ministerial visits in 2012 and 2013. This was followed by agreements to increase anti - piracy cooperation, promote security of sea - lanes, cooperation between their Coast Guards and promote defence industry collaboration³⁷. The 2012 MOU exhibits an effort to push Thailand - India defence and security cooperation into a new era of more substantive cooperation. There is barely any exchange of concrete defence supplies and only one bilateral combined exercise in which both can develop real operational advantages.

6. For a country that shares a maritime border with India and is located in the Indo - Pacific, Thailand - India bilateral defence collaboration is less significant when compared with India's collaboration

³⁷ Ajaya Kumar Das, "India's Defence - Related Agreements with ASEAN States: A Timeline", *India Review* 12 (2013), pp.133

with Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam. When compared with its collaboration with the USA, Australia and China, Thailand's defence cooperation with India falls far short and below its potential. It even lags behind Thailand's defence relations with South Korea. Path dependency and a lack of shared security & military interests are the main reasons behind the underdeveloped India - Thailand defence ties. Seven decades of healthy India - Thailand relations fundamentally focused on a low-key politics of economic, cultural and educational exchanges. They continue to govern India - Thailand relations today. Because of sporadic domestic political turmoil and instability, Thailand has been quite slow in pushing for greater defence and security cooperation with India. In 2007, when Thai Prime Minister Surayud Chulanond visited India, the joint statement stated that both countries agreed to "expedite negotiations on pending defence and security related agreements and MoU with a view to achieving their early conclusion and implementation"³⁸. Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva reiterated these intentions during his state visit to India in 2011³⁹. Nevertheless, the MoU on Defence Cooperation was actually signed only in 2012, during Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra's visit. The fact that it took more than five years to sign a simple defence agreement speaks volumes of the lethargy on both sides.

7. Defence Attaches Abroad. When looking at where Thailand posts its defence attachés abroad, and the twelve countries that host Thailand attaches from all the three services, it can be seen that apart from its important ASEAN partners and Asian great powers like China and Japan, Thailand still gives more significance to old major and great Western powers over India (only two attaches) and Russia. This reflects the gap in its defence diplomacy policy and practice. The same can be said India's posting of its defence attaches and advisers abroad, which still reflects its close ties with traditional friends and focus on the great powers of the Cold War days⁴⁰.

³⁸ Sandeep Dikshit, "India to Step up Defence Ties with Thailand", The Hindu, June 26, 2007 <http://www.hindu.com/2007/06/27/01hdline.htm>

³⁹ "Joint Statement on the State Visit of Prime Minister of Thailand", Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India, April 5, 2011

⁴⁰ Sasiwan Chingchit, "From Looks to Action: Thailand-India Strategic Convergence and Defence Cooperation", IDSA Occasional Paper No. 40, pp. 34.

Table 7.1 : Thailand's Defence Attaches Abroad (2013)

Country	Army	Navy	Air Force
Australia	X	X	X
Brazil	X		
Cambodia	X	X	X
China	X	X	X
France	X	X	
Germany	X	X	X
India		X	X
Indonesia	X	X	X
Italy		X	
Japan	X	X	X
South Korea	X		X
Laos	X		X
Malaysia	X	X	X
Myanmar	X	X	X
Pakistan	X		
Philippines		X	X
Russia	X	X	
Singapore	X	X	X
South Africa	X		

Spain		X	X
Sweden			X
United Kingdom	X	X	X
United States	X	X	X
Vietnam	X	X	X

Table 7.2 : India's Defence Attaches in ASEAN & Asia Pacific Countries (2013)

Country	Army	Navy	Air Force
Australia		X	
Cambodia			
China	X(2)		
Indonesia		X	
Japan	X		
Laos			
Malaysia		X	
Myanmar	X	X	
Philippines			
Russia	X	X	X
Singapore		X	
South Korea	X		
Thailand			X
United States	X	X	X
United Kingdom	X	X	X

8. When it comes to defence cooperation with foreign countries,

Thailand still looks at practical aspects such as sourcing arms and military education / training from the militarily advanced countries. The existing ties with the Western block can meet most of Thailand's defence demands. However, it recently started to focus on building its own defence industry to substitute large arms import and become militarily self-reliant. The Thai Defence Technology Institute (DTI) was established in 2009 to take the main responsibility of research, industry support and coordination between different production units and companies. Thereafter, DTI in collaboration with the Faculty of Engineering, King Mongkut's University of Technology (KMUTT), launched a Master Degree in Defence Industry. In addition to the recent agreements made with countries like South Korea, France, Israel, Italy and India, Thailand is also in discussion with many arms exporting countries such as Russia, Ukraine and Sweden for defence cooperation agreements. They are also meant to further collaboration in the area of defence industry. On the other hand, for India, security interest seems to be the main criterion in building defence and strategic ties. Countries like Myanmar, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia have relatively better defence ties with India because of their strategic significance. Vietnam can be used to counter China in its own backyard, while cooperation with Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore is vital for patrolling the Strait of Malacca which India deems strategically significant. In contrast, India has been less proactive in expanding its defence relations with Thailand, Laos and Cambodia with which it promotes robust ties only for future cooperation outside the strategic domain.

9. H.E. General Prayut Chan-o-cha, **Prime Minister of Thailand, paid a State Visit to India from 16-18 June 2016** at the invitation of Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India. In addition to the wide range of cooperation, Thailand and India have compatible strategies of Look West and Act East respectively, now evolved into a comprehensive partnership. The two Prime Ministers acknowledged the close interactions and increasing exchanges between the Armed Forces of India and Thailand. Visits from India to Thailand included that of the Chief of Naval Staff in July 2015 and Chairman COSC / Chief of Air Staff to Thailand in August 2015. The Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister of Thailand visited India in March 2016. The high - level defence dialogue was held in December 2015. There have been regular coordinated patrols (CORPAT) between the two Navies and annual exercises between the two armies and also the first ever table-top air exercise between the two air forces. India has been participating in multilateral Cobra Gold exercise held in Thailand as an 'Observer Plus' country. The other important

defence and security issues that was discussed between the countries were:

(a) Both sides expressed a keen interest in **enhancing cooperation in maritime domain** including anti-piracy cooperation, security of sea lanes of communication including coast guard cooperation to maintain peace, ensure safety and security of navigation in the Indian Ocean. In this connection, both sides agreed to work towards the completion of the negotiation for the signing of the White Shipping Agreement between the two countries.

(b) Thailand expressed an interest in the Indian defence industry and its experience & expertise in the field of defence R&D and production. Both sides agreed to explore key areas of future engagement based on mutually identified areas of cooperation.

(c) The new security cooperation mechanism under the 'Joint Working Group on Security Cooperation' held on 18 January 2016 in New Delhi, as well as Joint Task Force on Maritime Security held on 25 - 26 October 2015 in New Delhi, were also acknowledged for their positive contributions. Both sides agreed to take expeditious action on the recommendations of these mechanisms and to further strengthen their bilateral security cooperation.

(d) The two leaders unequivocally **condemned terrorism** in all its forms & manifestations and agreed to work together in building a new global resolve and strategy for combating terrorism. Both sides acknowledged the **increasing threat from non-traditional security arenas** and agreed to enhance substantive cooperation for action in this regard. The 10th meeting of the Joint Working Group on Security Cooperation held in New Delhi on 18 January 2016 further strengthened cooperation between the two countries in the fields of counter terrorism, cyber security, trafficking in human and narcotics and in transnational economic offenses. The two countries pledged to cooperate in tackling terrorism.

(e) The two leaders welcomed the progress made in the agreements on Cooperation in controlling Narcotics, Drugs Psychotropic Substances, their precursors and Chemicals and Drug Abuse. Both sides agreed that close cooperation and more agreements between India and ASEAN and Mekong Sub-region are very significant for the fight against illicit drugs and precursor chemicals trafficking in this region. The Prime Ministers noted the ongoing negotiation of the MoU for cooperation between Thailand Computer Emergency Expert Team (Thai CERT) and Electronics

Transaction Development Agency (ETDA) and Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DEITY) of India.

(f) Both sides welcomed the initiative for joint combined counter-terrorism exercise between the Counter Terrorist Operations Center (CTOC) and the National Securities Guard (NSG); and the training of Thailand officers by India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in cybercrime investigation and computer forensics.

(g) Both sides also agreed to pursue negotiations on the following MoUs / Agreements :

(i) Memorandum of Understanding to Prevent / Counter Smuggling and Circulation of Fake Indian Currency Notes.

(ii) Memorandum of Understanding on Combating Human Trafficking.

(iii) Memorandum of Understanding between India and Thailand on Cooperation in the fields of Information and Communications Technology and Electronics.

(iv) Memorandum of Understanding on White Shipping Information.

(v) Memorandum of Understanding between Central Drug Standards Control Organization (CDSO) of India and Thailand Food and Drug Administration.

(vi) Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation in Controlling Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances, their Precursors and Chemicals and Drugs Abuse.

10. Ahead of the India - ASEAN summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held bilateral talks with his counterpart from Thailand Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha on 25 Jan 2018, strengthening cooperation in strategic areas of trade, defence and security. External affairs ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar tweeted, "Our 'Act East' complementing Thailand's Act West policy! Prime Minister Modi met with PM of Thailand... Constructive dialogue on economic and commercial exchange, connectivity, defence & security, cultural cooperation and people-to-people exchanges."

11. In a major boost to bilateral security cooperation, India and Thailand on 30 May 2013, signed **Extradition Treaty**. The treaty provides the legal framework for seeking extradition of fugitive offenders, including those involved in terrorism, transnational crimes and economic offences among others. This will help both the countries in expediting

extradition of fugitives and would further strengthen the relationship between two law enforcement agencies by providing a firm legal basis for their bilateral cooperation. An MoU between Financial Intelligence Unit, India and Anti Money Laundering Organisation, Thailand on cooperation in the exchange of intelligence related to money Laundering and terrorism financing was also signed. The MoU will facilitate cooperation in the investigation of persons suspected of money laundering and criminal activity related to money laundering and terrorism financing. The MoU seeks to assemble, develop, analyse and exchange information on such issues. Signing the extradition treaty and Memorandum on Cooperation in anti-money laundering sends a major signal of the shared commitment of the two countries to combat terrorism, organised crime, drug trafficking and counterfeiting.

Untapped Potential of Defence and Security Cooperation

12. This mutual neglect and untapped / underdeveloped defence and security relations between India and Thailand is anchored in a history of diverging strategic priorities and alliances during the Cold War. India remaining formally non-aligned and closer to the Soviet bloc, while Thailand joined the American alliance system in Asia. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the unipolar dominance of the US and the rise of China have led a slow redefinition of strategic priorities in New Delhi and Bangkok. With a changing security scenario in Southeast Asia and, more broadly, in the larger Indo - Pacific region, both countries have begun to diversify their security partnerships, while seeking to preserve a sustainable balance and avoid becoming entangled in a zero - sum position between the USA and China. For India, Thailand presents itself as a reliable security partner in the naval domain, a crucial hub to increase its influence in Myanmar and across Indochina, an indirect way to communicate and cooperate with the USA and other treaty allies across Asia. For Thailand, beyond the immediate importance as a maritime neighbour, India is of great importance if Bangkok wishes to decrease reliance on the USA, even without falling into the orbit of Chinese influence and dependence. For both countries, the central strategy is therefore one of diversification of the traditional set of security partners in response to a rapidly changing security context, in particular the rise of China and the persistent but relatively declining influence of the US.

13. **Indian Armed Forces Capability.** Given the absence of any conflicts, the geographical proximity and overlapping security interests

in the naval domain, the defence and security cooperation between India and Thailand remains surprisingly untapped. Thailand has regular military cooperation with the US, Australia, China, South Korea and Japan, particularly in the area of educational exchanges, it has invested little in reaching out to India to develop a similar relationship. The Indian Armed Forces, one of the largest in the world, are a true reflection of India's diversity and multi-cultural and democratic values. India's professional, apolitical and highly trained Armed Forces have seen the entire spectrum of operations from conventional wars to low intensity conflicts, from counterinsurgency operations to UN peacekeeping missions. Its experience in Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief missions is also noteworthy. The Indian Armed Forces also boast of some of the best training institutions in the world. This coupled with the size of the armed forces and India's benign and non-interventionist policies make other nations relatively open and comfortable in dealing with India. Greater military contact and educational exchanges between both armed forces would have allowed Thailand and India to understand each other's strategic thinking and increase necessary inter-operability for a future strategic partnership. Thailand needs to increase the number of officers studying in Indian military academies as it did with China. Since English is the main medium in Indian military education, Thailand officers do not have to face the language barrier they often face in China.

14. There is much untapped potential in India - Thailand relationship and much to rediscover and learn from each other's. With its unique geographic location, Thailand can be a bridge linking South East Asia to East Asia, while India can act as Thailand's springboard to West and Central Asia and to Europe. As the global power dynamics see further shift towards Asia, it is important to understand the dynamics within the Indian Ocean and the Pacific. There is an inescapable requirement for Thailand and India to **work towards a security construct** that leverages the civilisational linkages to expand cooperation and build partnership across the Indo-Pacific. Thailand and India are and will remain natural partners in defining their perspectives and addressing their common requirements of economic growth and prosperity. India and Thailand share a vision of a peaceful, prosperous and resurgent Asia, which contributes to global peace and security. As maritime nations, India and ASEAN nations should intensify their engagement for maritime security and safety, for freedom of navigation and for peaceful settlement of maritime disputes in accordance with international law. Considering the vast area involved and the enormous resources required, while the Indian Navy is in the process of

acquiring the requisite capabilities, a cooperative and supportive approach is required. There is a need to promote regional security, in concert with other stake holders.

15. **Defence Production.** One untapped area, where both countries enhance cooperation exponentially is in the field of defence production. As countries in the region look at diversifying their military procurement, India stands out as a potential source of defence technology and manufacturing capacity. In addition, India's close geographical proximity, which would be further enhanced by the tri - lateral highway, offers obvious advantages in terms of after sales support and servicing. While India is one of the largest importers of weapons and military equipment in the world, it has embarked on an ambitious programme of indigenising and manufacturing defence equipment in India. India already has a robust ship building industry. The launch of the indigenously built aircraft carrier and the commissioning of the nuclear submarine are pointers that underline India's growing capability in this field. Light Combat Aircraft and the successful Dhruv helicopter are important projects in the aviation sector. The small arms production capability of India's ordnance factories is steadily improving in quality and in its cost effectiveness. In the near future, India would be a cost-effective source of high end, high tech military hardware. Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Laos and Singapore have requested India's assistance in training pilots and repair and spare part support for their Russian made aircrafts. The Russian link had been missing in India-Thailand defence cooperation but as Thailand increasingly looks to Russia for defence supplies while India procures more defence items from the USA and other Western countries, new opportunities will arise for both to exchange spare parts and repair services in the future. Finally, India can share its experience in building up its defence industry, especially in shipbuilding, as Thailand seeks to access low-cost technology and skills in order to develop its own capabilities.

16. **Space Programme.** India has embraced technology to develop a comprehensive space programme resolutely dedicated to development and security. India today has the world's largest network of remote sensing satellites in the world and India's satellite launch vehicle, having done more than hundred successful space launches, has placed as many as 10 satellites in the orbit at one go. India launched first of navigation satellites in a seven-satellite network that will provide a regional "GPS" of own usage. The Mission to Mars aims at sending the 'Mangalyaan' satellite into Martian orbit for scientific exploration. The

benefits of India's space programme that accrue from its low cost are available to Thailand and should be tapped.

17. **Innovative Solutions.** International terrorism, transnational organised crime, money laundering, drug-trafficking, information and cyber security issues are today demanding greater collaboration of effort between two countries. With repercussions for global and regional security, these issues require new, innovative solutions that can remain ahead of the growing complexity in these issues. Brainstorming and finding synergy of interest and effort in these areas is required between India and Thailand.

18. **Disaster Management.** Post the tsunami of December 2005, there is a great emphasis in the region towards enhancing cooperation and building capabilities to handle large scale environmental disasters. There is also an understanding of the fact that the armed forces need to be integrated in the overall disaster management plans, as in most cases they are the first responders and invariably have the resources in terms of manpower and equipment to deal with such disasters. The destruction caused in Philippines by super Cyclone Haiyan and the subsequent rescue and relief efforts mounted by the armed forces of various countries, including that of India, is a good example. Disasters like these are bound to occur in future. India, due to its proximity to the region and the Indian military and disaster relief agencies, with their vast resources, capabilities and experience are ideally positioned to provide such assistance.

19. And yet, there is still tremendous untapped potential in the Thailand - India defence and security cooperation. There are also areas such as the new non-traditional threats to our socio - economic and political systems that need effective redressal. Both countries should look for ways to combat the fast-evolving threat from terrorism and to counter drug trafficking, both of which incrementally threaten the future of our younger generations. Both countries need to add form and substance on the ground to existing geographic and civilisational connectivity, and to extend it simultaneously towards an integrated and sustainable economic prosperity.

20. **Connectivity.** Common concerns and aspirations as well as similar threats and challenges confront Thailand and India, at a time when not only Asia but the whole world is in the throes of an uncertain and unpredictable phase. Developments over the next few months and

years could determine the final contours of relations in Asia and the world. Connectivity between India and Thailand, has emerged as a significant element in cementing defence and security cooperation bonds between the two countries. Better infrastructure connecting Northeast India and Thailand has become the sine qua non for stronger economic, trade partnership and defence and security cooperation. Two major connectivity projects, the **Trilateral Highway** between Northeast India and Myanmar and onwards to Thailand (and Laos and Vietnam) as well as the **Kaladan multi-modal transit and transport project**, have been under implementation for several years. Both governments have taken it up seriously but more focus and efforts are required in improving connectivity.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

1. During the Cold War, Thailand considered India as being a close ally of Soviet Union's and thus maintained a limited engagement. The shift in Thailand's foreign policy orientation in 1988 allowed India to become Thailand's '**natural partner**' by virtue of its geographic location, economic potential and geopolitical pre - eminence in South Asia. The first meeting of Thailand - India Defence Dialogue was held in New Delhi in December 2011 and finally, in January 2012, Thailand and India signed a **Memorandum of Understanding on Defence Cooperation**, after 67 years of diplomatic relations and two decades of collaboration to expand the defence and military ties between the two countries. Prior to 2012, Indo - Thailand defence relation had been largely unaddressed and underdeveloped. Until now, despite having military engagements in the areas of military exercise, joint patrol and defence dialogue under bilateral and multilateral frameworks, the existing defence and security cooperation between India and Thailand has never been noteworthy. This does not correspond with the increasing significance of Thailand - India partnership and the changing power and security dynamics in Asia. As a part of defence diplomacy, both sides need to strengthen their military ties to complement their growing engagement in other spheres. Considering the volatile and dynamic security situation in Asia Pacific, the changing balance of power in the Indo - Pacific and particularly the emergence of both China and India as major powers - is forcing India and Thailand to engage on defence and security issues much more than ever before. Given the remarkable engagement of Thailand & India across a wide range of areas, there are certainly more opportunities to forge an even closer, strategic defence and security partnership for mutual benefit. The present Indian Government has demonstrated a much greater confidence than the previous Indian government in operationalising India's new defence and security relationships throughout the Indo - Pacific region.

2. Thailand and India share many common threats and challenges especially in the areas of non-conventional security. Thailand and India reflect quite different ideological orientations and strategic perspectives - for several reasons, neither country saw the other as a key

strategic partner. It is only in the last two decades that India has been prepared to engage on a more substantive level. There looks like a “natural partnership” between the two countries and efforts should be made to intensify the Thailand - India defence and security engagement and take it into some important new areas. Developments in the Thailand - India strategic relationship is part of a multidecade evolution of India’s relations with several Asia - Pacific powers. Since the 1990s, as part of its “Look East” Policy (now re-badged its “Act East” Policy), India has given considerable economic, political and strategic focus to East Asia. Both countries should pay considerable attention to improving the defence and security relationship, with a focus on creating opportunities for engagement among political leaders, and civil and military officials. Regular security or defence engagements should now include **annual meetings of Foreign Ministers, regular meetings of Defence Ministers, annual Defence Policy Talks, a Thailand - India Maritime Security Operations Working Group**, regular staff talks between senior officers of each of the armed services and several 1.5 track round tables. The Delhi declaration, which was made on the sidelines of the ASEAN - India Commemorative Summit in New Delhi, in January 2018, reaffirmed the importance given by India in maintaining and promoting peace, stability, maritime safety and security, freedom of navigation and overflight in the region, other lawful uses of the seas, unimpeded lawful maritime commerce and peaceful resolutions of disputes, in accordance with universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and the relevant standards and recommended practices by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). India also mentioned that they would strengthen maritime cooperation through existing relevant mechanisms including the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF) to address common challenges on maritime issues.

3. Thailand and India have been on an upward economic trajectory and as they grow, the defence, security and strategic environment has also been becoming complex. Thailand and India defence and security cooperation should aim at addressing its own strategic concerns both in Indian Ocean littoral as well as in South China Sea. Both Ministry of Defence and Ministry of External Affairs, of Thailand and India, need to coordinate their efforts in order to add meaningful substance to the evolving defence and security relationship, as part of a composite endeavour to achieve success in the strategic objectives of “Look East

Policy” and now “Act East Policy”. The Ministry of Defence, India also needs to allot more vacancies to the defence officers of Thailand for training at various defence establishments. Frequency of joint military exercises also needs to be increased to improve levels of interoperability. There is also a case for reviewing India’s restrictive policies on export of defence hardware to Thailand and India should remain committed to the modernisation of Thailand’s defence and security forces.

4. The evolving security and strategic dynamics in the Asia region, which has been impacted by the rise of China and its muscular and assertive policies, has created a degree of instability in the region. The affected Asian countries are finding innovative ways to respond to China’s rise. The so called ‘core interests’ of China have been expanding in consonance with its economic and military might. China’s unreasonable maritime claims in South China Sea (SCS) and its territorial claims against India have resulted, at times, into clashes. Thus, it is but natural for both Thailand and India to have a shared strategic perspective that entails forging stronger strategic bonds between the two. There is no reason why there should not be a trilateral between say India, Thailand and US or for that matter one between **Japan, India and Thailand**, on the same format and basis as the existing trilateral between India, US and Japan. India’s multifaceted ties with Thailand are poised to acquire greater strategic and economic weight. The current cooperation on the projects of oil and gas exploration, investment, capacity building and development, especially in defence and security need to be diversified.

5. India and Thailand need to explore opportunities to further strengthen the partnership. Both sides should increase consulting each other on global, regional and bilateral issues to have common or coordinated approaches. India should do more to help Thailand in enhancing maritime security by up - gradation of naval facilities and building air defence. Thailand and India can take timely and appropriate steps to cooperate in joint defence research, design, development and production of military equipments, including transfer of technology on weapon and defence equipments. Governments of India and Thailand should be facilitator in promoting foreign investments though the task forces to study and push these projects within plan period.

6. Regionally, freedom of navigation in the South China Sea and economic security in South China Sea can be institutionalised as Code of Conduct by both Thailand and India, with the help of US, Japan and other

powers in the region. Globally, India and Thailand can cooperate in non-traditional security issues like climate changes, terrorism, humanitarian and disaster relief (HARD) etc. **Civil nuclear cooperation, enhancing regional security, counter terrorism cooperation, including meeting the challenges of transnational crimes and drug trafficking, defence and security cooperation specifically defence industry, military technology, intelligence, personnel training, cybercrimes and cyber security should form part of the strategic partnership.** India should provide maximum support to Thailand for collaborative regional mechanisms such as Asian Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus) for maintaining regional peace and security, freedom of navigation, keeping open sea lines of communication (SLOCs) and cooperation in areas such as anti-piracy, disaster relief and rescue. Considering the developments and security issues taking shape in Asia Pacific region, there is an urgent need to attend to enhancing defence and security cooperation, between Thailand and India, which will have a more stabilising effect in the region.

Recommendations - Moving Forward Towards India - Thailand Strategic Partnership

7. Both Thailand and India have to be convinced that defence and security cooperation is an important and effective pillar of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and further progress is required to be made in this domain. Both Thailand and India have to enhance the ongoing exchange of senior level delegations, meetings of consultation mechanisms, stronger cooperation between their armed forces and enhanced cooperation in areas of **cyber security, combating terrorism and violent extremism in all their forms and manifestations, transnational crimes, human and drug trafficking, maritime security, climate change and food security.** Both countries have to reaffirm their commitment to an open, free, secure, stable, peaceful and accessible cyber space under the auspices of the United Nations and strive for greater cooperation and effective implementation of the agreements between the two sides on **cyber security.** Both countries should strive to operationalise the "Memorandum of Understandings" signed between the National Security Council Secretariat of India and the Ministry of Interior (Thailand) and initiate the Deputy Ministerial level dialogue to enhance cooperation in traditional and non - traditional security matters and undertake training and capacity building programmes. Both countries feel

the necessity to take effective cyber security counter measures, Thailand can learn from India's experience, as India is establishing a separate armed forces Cyber Command, probably led by the Indian Navy. Thailand and India should enhance their cooperation to promote international security and stability in cyberspace through a framework that recognises the applicability of international law to State behaviour in a free, open, peaceful and secure cyberspace. Summary of the defence and security cooperation that already exist between the two countries and measures required to be taken are tabulated below:

Table 7.1: Defence and Security Cooperation that already Exist between India and Thailand and Measures Required to be Taken

Ser No	Defence & Security Cooperation	Already Existing	To Start Now	Need to be Enhanced
1.	Maritime Cooperation	✓		✓
2.	Joint Maritime Patrols to counter Terrorism, Piracy & Smuggling	✓		✓
3.	Regular Joint Exercises (Army & Navy), EXERCISES MILAN, CORPAT, MAITREE	✓		✓
4.	Training of Officers at other's Armed Forces Training Institutes	✓		✓

Ser No	Defence & Security Cooperation	Already Existing	To Start Now	Need to be Enhanced
5.	Training of Thailand Cadets at Armed Forces Training Institutes		✓	
6.	Observers in Military Exercises	✓		✓
7.	Staff Talks	✓		
8.	'High Level Dialogue on Defence Cooperation'	✓		✓
9.	Defence Attaches – Thailand has two and India has one	✓		
10.	Training 'Persons below Officers Rank' at Training Institutes		✓	
11.	Defence Production – Light Combat Aircraft, Dhruv, Small Arms, high tech military hardware			✓
12.	Space Programme		✓	
13.	Disaster Management		✓	
14.	Connectivity			✓
15.	Counter Terrorism Cooperation			✓

	Defence & Security Cooperation	Already Existing	To Start Now	Need to be Enhanced
16.	Peacekeeping Training		✓	
17.	Search and Rescue		✓	
18.	Defence Industry & Technology		✓	
19.	Border Protection Cooperation		✓	
20.	Cooperation in Export Control Regimes		✓	
21.	Regional Cooperation	✓		✓
22.	Multi – Lateral Cooperation			✓
23.	Joint Working Group (JWG)	✓		✓
24.	Cyber Security Cooperation		✓	
25.	Counter Non-Traditional Threats		✓	
26.	Connectivity	✓		✓
27.	Doctrinal Exchange		✓	
28.	Defence Diplomacy	✓		✓
29.	Joint Adventure Events		✓	
30.	Civil Nuclear Cooperation		✓	

	Defence & Security Cooperation	Already Existing	To Start Now	Need to be Enhanced
16.	Peacekeeping Training		✓	
17.	Search and Rescue		✓	
18.	Defence Industry & Technology		✓	
19.	Border Protection Cooperation		✓	
20.	Cooperation in Export Control Regimes		✓	
21.	Regional Cooperation	✓		✓
22.	Multi – Lateral Cooperation			✓
23.	Joint Working Group (JWG)	✓		✓
24.	Cyber Security Cooperation		✓	
25.	Counter Non-Traditional Threats		✓	
26.	Connectivity	✓		✓
27.	Doctrinal Exchange		✓	
28.	Defence Diplomacy	✓		✓
29.	Joint Adventure Events		✓	
30.	Civil Nuclear Cooperation		✓	

8. **Counter - Terrorism and Internal Security.** Both Thailand and India unequivocally condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including cross-border terrorism. Thailand shares India's concern that terrorism is the most serious threat to global peace, security and stability. Both agree that there is no justification, whatsoever, for act of terrorism and recognised that terrorism cannot be and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilisation or ethnic groups. Both countries should adopt a comprehensive approach in combating terrorism, which should include countering radicalisation, recruitment, training and movement of terrorists including Foreign Terrorist Fighters, blocking sources of financing terrorism including through organised crimes, money - laundering, smuggling of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), drug trafficking and other criminal activities, dismantling terrorist bases, safe havens and countering misuse of the internet, cyberspace, including social media and other communication techniques by terrorist entities groups and their affiliates. India should assist Thailand in training for countering **“urban terrorism”** and assist in **intelligence sharing and capacity-building**. The two countries should cooperate in building a strong consensus for early adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT). Cooperation in counter-terrorism should be considerably increased with intelligence sharing, information exchange, operational cooperation, counter-terrorism technology and equipment.

9. A greater public focus on counter-terrorism may in part reflect the rise of ISIS and concerns about Asian nationals participating in the Syria / Iraq civil wars. Ways of responding to Islamic radicalisation could be an area that Thailand could learn from India. The following engagements or areas of cooperation should be intensified between India and Thailand :-

- (a) Annual Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism and other Transnational Crimes.
- (b) Cooperation in counter - terrorism training and exchanges between experts on countering improvised explosive devices, bomb incidents and technologies.
- (c) Exchanges on counter - radicalisation.
- (d) Cooperation between police on investigation of transnational crime.
- (e) Cooperation on extradition and mutual legal assistance requests.
- (g) Cooperation between Thailand & Financial Intelligence Unit -

India.

- (h) Exchanges on cyber policy and cooperation between CERT India and Thailand.
- (i) Cooperation on combating illegal migration.

10. **Cooperation in Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR) and Peacekeeping.** Thailand and India are having common problems in disaster relief areas as region is beset with large number of natural disasters, which will continue to rise in future due to global warming and host of other factors. As disasters become more devastating and also increase in frequency, it is of utmost importance to **devise joint strategies and operational procedures** to tackle this problem. There is need for greater cooperation in HADR, collaboration in the East Asia Summit on disaster management; and cooperation and exchanges on peacekeeping issues, including between peacekeeping institutions. Disaster management and peacekeeping are low hanging fruit—while they sit at the “soft” end of the spectrum of security cooperation, they can be very useful ways to develop personal relationships and inter - operability and provide an opportunity to generate significant goodwill. India’s work with Australia, United States and Japan in the multilateral naval response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami is often seen as a turning point in Delhi’s understanding of the benefits of cooperation with other maritime countries in the Asia Pacific. The response contributed directly to much improved relationships between the Indian Navy and the navies of Japan, Australia and the United States. The episode was an important lesson in the potentially broader strategic consequences of **cooperation in HADR**. There is much room for India, Thailand and other Indian Ocean states to work together in HADR. For example, India and Thailand could work together to develop a system for responding to natural disasters in the Indian Ocean region similar to the FRANZ trilateral cooperation arrangement in the South Pacific which helps Australia, France, New Zealand and others to coordinate their relief operations after cyclones and other natural disasters. Thailand is increasingly focusing on cooperation with Indian Ocean partners such as Indonesia in disaster relief and India could well become another partner in that cooperation. Close cooperation between the civil administration and militaries of Thailand and India will go a long way in providing timely and required relief to effected population by these natural disasters.

11. **Peacekeeping operations** can also provide a useful locus for cooperation, particularly between the respective armies. In addition to

building institutional relationships, cooperation in peacekeeping training would demonstrate India's and Thailand's shared commitment to the UN and international stability. Both countries have long been contributors to peacekeeping: since the end of World War II, India has contributed more than 100,000 personnel to some 40 UN peacekeeping operations with more than 100,000 personnel, while Thailand made a formal policy commitment to help meet the UN's peacekeeping needs, especially after its participation in UN operations in Kuwait, Iraq and Cambodia. International peacekeeping became formally part of Bangkok's foreign policy after that. India operates the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping in New Delhi, which also provides the Secretariat of the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres. More focused cooperation in peacekeeping training is possible and the potential for bilateral peacekeeping exercises can also be explored.

12. **Search and Rescue.** There should be greater cooperation between Thailand and Indian agencies with responsibilities for international search and rescue (SAR), including through information exchange and regional dialogue. The strategic significance of international search and rescue operations came to public attention in early 2014, when Australia took a leading role in the search for the missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 in the Indian Ocean. Australia's commitment of significant resources to the search effort was a powerful statement of its role in the region. Delhi (for apparently obscure bureaucratic reasons) chose not to participate in the multilateral search being conducted out of Perth, unlike China, which contributed considerable air and maritime assets. Indian commentators such as Raja Mohan saw this as a mistake⁴¹. A decade ago, Delhi recognised the geopolitical significance of HADR operations in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. The inclusion of SAR in the enhanced defence and security cooperation between India and Thailand will indicate that both countries now better understands the political significance of SAR.

13. **Cooperation in Defence Technology / Production.** Completely new area for enhancement in defence and security cooperation is in **defence research and development**, including through visits by Thailand and Indian defence material delegations and efforts to foster joint

⁴¹ C. Raja Mohan, 'Chinese Takeaway: PLA Goes Out', Indian Express, 26 March 2014.

industry links. Although this has previously been given a low profile in the relationship, many foresee defence technology as a potential important area of cooperation. Defence technology certainly has been an important plank in India's relationships with the Soviet Union / Russia, France, Israel and the United States. India has embarked on an ambitious programme of indigenising and manufacturing defence equipment in India. India has strengths in several areas that are of interest to Thailand. These include robust ship building industry, indigenously built aircraft carrier, Light Combat Aircraft and the successful Dhruv helicopter, India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). India should affirm its continued willingness to partner with Thailand in defence cooperation and in building capabilities and capacities.

14. **Cooperation in Border Protection.** There is a requirement for enhancing cooperation in border protection, coast guard, and customs. This is likely to be an increasingly important area of interaction. While both India and Thailand are able to avoid incidents, creating irritations in the broader relationship, there is a need for enhanced cooperation between Thailand and Indian authorities in responding to unregulated population movements. In coming years, we are also likely to see much greater use of coast guard authorities to enforce maritime security and maritime claims throughout the Indo - Pacific region. China, for example, regularly uses coast guard or quasi - civilian vessels in demonstrations of its territorial claims in the South China Sea.

15. **Cooperation in Export Control Regimes.** Another area for enhancement in defence and security cooperation is on **disarmament and non-proliferation**. Both India and Thailand should hold a bilateral dialogue on Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and International Security and, importantly, Thailand to support Indian membership of various international export control regimes. The most well-known of these regimes is the Nuclear Suppliers Group (a grouping of some 47 states that supply nuclear materials and technology). Other export control groupings include the Australia Group (a grouping of some 41 states and international organisations that collaborate to prevent the abuse of dual-use technology and materials for chemical and biological weapons programs), the Missile Technology Control Regime (a grouping of 34 states to prevent the proliferation of missile technologies with a range above 400 kilometres) and the Wassenaar Arrangement (an arrangement among 41 states aimed at non proliferation of conventional arms and dual use goods). These regimes had their genesis in Cold War era attempts to

restrict Soviet access to weapons related technology. Although the former Cold War foes, Russia and China, are full members of several of these groupings, India is a member of none of them. This reflects India's stance against the "unfairness" of the international nuclear non-proliferation treaty, which prohibited any states other than Permanent 5 from owning nuclear weapons, and Delhi's traditional deep suspicions of international regimes that restrict the transfer of technology. Thailand can play an important role in helping to negotiate India's membership, which would require a consensus among existing members. Given India's massive chemical industry and the growing biotechnology sector, the absence of India from the export control regime is unsustainable.

16. **Enhance Defence Cooperation.** Thailand and India need to enhance defence cooperation in all fields to enhance mutual trust and understanding each other better. Starting from training at various training institutes in each other countries to holding bilateral and multilateral exercises, assistance in imparting technical help for repair and maintaining equipment, as also working on defence production are some of the areas where both India and Thailand need to focus to enhance defence cooperation. **Army and Air Forces of Thailand and India need to focus much more as cooperation in these two services is very less and needs to be upgraded.** Thailand sailors can be trained in submarine warfare or 'underwater combat training' at the Navy's Submarine School, INS Satavahana, in Visakhapatnam. Indian Air Force should plan to provide training for Thailand Air Force pilots for flying Sukhoi fighters. Capacity building of Thailand Armed Forces for improving the security environment is one of the major goals that should be aimed to be achieved. Training of Thailand officials in the investigation of combating terrorism, drug trafficking, transnational crimes, money laundering, economic criminals, organised crimes, hi-tech and other criminal activities are other areas of joint endeavours. Thailand and India should pledge a new **Defence and International Security Partnership (DISP)** to make security and defence a cornerstone of their relationship, as both countries face similar nature of threats. So, both countries need to be innovative and agile in their responses. Both should design, create and manufacture technologies that will address these threats; and security and military forces should share technologies, capabilities and equipment. India should extend the use of training and exercise facilities available in India, so that it can be utilised by the Thailand Army, Air Force and Navy. Both the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of External Affairs, of Thailand and India, need to coordinate their efforts in order to add

meaningful substance to the evolving defence and security relationship to achieve success in the strategic objectives of its Look East / Look West Policy.

17. **Enhance Maritime Cooperation.** Both Thailand and India are convinced that it is essential to strengthen cooperation in maritime domain, including anti-piracy, security of sea lanes, exchange of white shipping information etc. In the spirit of the proposal for an ASEAN - India Strategic Dialogue on Maritime Cooperation, made at the Commemorative Summit held in New Delhi in January 2018, the two sides agreed to further promote Thailand - India bilateral consultation on maritime issues. There is a need to advance the agenda for maritime cooperation, to counter the common **“traditional” and “non-traditional” challenges** they face, including combating piracy, dealing with maritime emergencies, establishing a collaborative early warning system and providing prompt and effective disaster relief. Given that Thailand and India are maritime nations and have been linked throughout history to sea - faring and seaborne trade, it seemed natural that such cooperation should have started much earlier. Given that India is a naval power, it is to the mutual interest of Thailand and India to work together to ensure maritime security and freedom of navigation to all littoral and user countries, in accordance with international law and on the basis of open, inclusive, transparent and balanced multilateral arrangements in the region. During the meeting with 10 ASEAN Heads of State, on Jan 2018 in New Delhi, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid emphasis on Freedom of Navigation as key element of the Indo - ASEAN maritime partnership and noted that maritime security cooperation was the major focus of his discussions with the 10 ASEAN leaders amid hard negotiations between the two sides to conclude Maritime Transportation Agreement to expand connectivity links. Addressing the ASEAN India Commemorative Summit in New Delhi, Indian Prime Minister Modi without any direct reference to China’s aggression in the South China Sea said, “India shares the ASEAN vision for rule - based societies and values of peace. We are committed to working with ASEAN nations to enhance collaboration in the maritime domain. It highlights the importance of our strategic partnership placing ASEAN at the centre of India's Act East Policy. Our friendship has been nurtured by our shared culture & civilisation linkages". It is not without any reason that the theme of the retreat for India - ASEAN leaders was **‘Maritime Security and Cooperation’**.

18. Malacca Straits is the pivotal transiting point through which

most of the oil and gas transportation of India, South East and East Asian countries take place. Increasing incidence of piracy for ransom and smuggling in the high seas, which threatens uninterrupted transportation of oil and gas, has prompted these states to secure the sea lanes. Here cooperation with Thailand to secure Malacca Straits and the neighbouring areas, remains strategically important for India. Now, both India and Thailand should focus on creating a mechanism for maritime cooperation, which would focus on greater maritime cooperation in both traditional and non-traditional domain. A **Thailand - India Women Navy team** should also undertake a exercise, circumventing the globe through seas. The proposed Indo - ASEAN maritime transportation agreement is yet another move by India to expand its maritime connectivity with the ASEAN nations in response to China's hegemonic aspirations in the region furthered by Belt - and - Road Initiative (BRI). Maritime connectivity, which was the mainstay of India's ancient trade links with the South - East Asian nations, required "urgent modernisation in the context of current geopolitical realities". There is a requirement of having an Agreement, which would help eliminate barriers hindering maritime transport and establish regional maritime transport framework with the objective of maritime transport facilitation between India and Thailand and beyond, as India establishes itself as a power in the Indo - Pacific region. India views that the Agreement will be an instrument to respond to the BRI of China. India has been opposed to the BRI, as it believes China has embarked on the cross - continental connectivity initiative to pursue its hegemonic aspirations.

19. **Improve Connectivity.** India and Thailand are making efforts to put infrastructure projects (**Asian Trilateral Highway**) - connecting India to Thailand through Myanmar on the fast track. There are other factors, such as government's commitment and approach that shape the implementation of connectivity policies. Cooperation between all actors in various aspects, including technical assistance and financial support, would be beneficial for supporting the implementation of the regional connectivity. Key challenges in connectivity are: -

- (a) No direct physical connectivity between CLV and India, causing high cost of transportation.
- (b) Shortage of financial resources and human resources delay connectivity projects.
- (c) Myanmar is the only ASEAN country to share land border with India. Therefore, timely completion of connectivity projects in Myanmar is vital for stronger Thailand - India connectivity.

20. **Recommendations to Improve Connectivity.** India should attach high priority to a quick implementation of the India - Myanmar - Thailand Trilateral Highway and its extension to Lao PDR, Cambodia and Vietnam. Other initiatives required are:

- (a) Thailand and India should exert more efforts and cooperation to effectively implement the ASEAN - India Plan of Action 2010 - 2015.
- (b) Thailand should work closely with the Indian Inter - Ministerial Group on ASEAN Connectivity to enhance air, sea, land and digital connectivity between the two countries. This can be achieved by supporting the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, as well as the ASEAN ICT Master Plan 2015.
- (c) Both Thailand and India should provide continued support for the implementation of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan II, in particular the setting up of the Entrepreneurship Development Centers (EDC) and the Centre for English Language Training (CELT) in the ASEAN countries. This will, in turn, help narrow the development gaps within ASEAN as well as continue to implement initiatives for highway development to connect India to Myanmar, Thailand and further to Lao PDR, Vietnam and Cambodia.
- (d) Both countries should stress for early signing of a Thailand - India Maritime Transport Cooperation Agreement and acceleration of the establishment of direct shipping routes between the sea ports of India and Thailand.

21. **Regional Cooperation.** Both Thailand and India should take measures for achieving a **peaceful and prosperous Indo - Pacific region**, where sovereignty and international law, freedom of navigation and overflight, sustainable development and a free, fair and open trade and investment system are respected.

- (a) Thailand and India should play important roles in safe guarding and strengthening such an open, transparent, inclusive and rules based regional architecture and in further strengthening of cooperation within ASEAN. Both countries should undertake necessary steps to implement the proposals made in the Delhi Declaration (ASEAN - India Commemorative Summit held in January 2018) to further enhance the ASEAN / Thailand - India Strategic Partnership.
- (b) Underscoring the significance of sub - regional frameworks in

strengthening bilateral cooperation and complementing regional cooperation through ASEAN frameworks, Thailand and India should optimally develop and utilise existing sub - regional frameworks, especially the Mekong - Ganga Economic Corridor.

22. **Multi-National Cooperation.** Thailand and India have been coordinating their foreign and security policy approaches in various multilateral forums and especially so in ASEAN, ARF and EAS. With the nomination of Thailand as a Chairman in ASEAN from 2018, India should provide all assistance to Thailand in all spheres. As mentioned earlier, Thailand occupies a key role in India's Look and now Act East Policy.

(a) Both Thailand and India require more coordination at regional and international fora and should reaffirm their mutual support for each other's candidatures as non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. Thailand should reiterate its consistent support for permanent membership of India in a reformed Security Council.

(b) Thailand and India should re-affirm their determination and efforts to further cooperate in maintaining peace, stability and development in the Indo - Pacific region, as well as in the world at large. They should reiterate the importance of, and the need for complete compliance with international law, notably the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 (UNCLOS), including the implementation of international legal obligations in good faith, the maintenance of freedom of navigation and over-flight in the South China Sea, full respect for diplomatic and legal processes, peaceful settlement of disputes without resorting to the threat or use of force, and in accordance with international law. In this regard, both countries should support the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and look forward to an early conclusion of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.

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