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Look East Policy and Act East Policy: A Synthesis to Focus on Comparative Study for Paradigm Shift of Ideas

Dr. Samar Deb[1] and Mr. Ranabijoy Das[2]

[1]Associate Professor, Department of Commerce, Gurucharan College, Silchar – 788004, District: Cachar, Assam, India

[2]Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Gurucharan College, Silchar – 788004, District: Cachar, Assam, India

ABSTRACT

Creation of the Earth is first divided into two parts at the dawn of human civilization. One is the Eastern Hemisphere and the other is the Western Hemisphere. 'Akhand Bharat' is the catchword, famous for relationships in the Asia-Pacific regions with the countries of East Asia, Southeast Asia and other nations in the Indian Peninsula. Thus, the dynamics mutual relationship of India in the sub-continent has always been encrypted with historical evidences from perspectives concerning trade and commerce, military cooperation and maritime relations, bilateral treaties, multilateral agreements, diplomatic ties, cultural connect and other areas of socio-economic activities for peace, progress and prosperity of all the sovereign nations in terms of 'Look East Policy' (LEP), which has been shaped by means of 'Act East Policy' (AEP) with the changing scenarios in time and space as per need of forward looking tendencies. This research paper is an endeavor towards a synthesis to focus on various segments of study in relation to different relationships, conglomerating the pattern of comparative analysis, for the purpose of assessing numerous activities guiding India's policy framework and principles of continuous journey towards reaching at the goal of integral humanity with means of cultural connect, diplomatic ties, commercial treaties and so on. Accordingly, the LEP and AEP paradigm shifts are coagulated in terms of policy issues and findings are made for systematic growth and progress of Indian economy. Important suggestions are put forth and

recommendations provided in appropriate places in holistic approach. The paper appraises on relevant theoretical postulates in scientific temper of thought for concluding on dynamics of growth initiatives.

KEYWORDS: Cultural Dimensions, Defence Cooperation, Foreign Policy, Global Transformation, Indian Diaspora, Multilateral Negotiations, Strategic Engagement.

Historical Background

Bharat Barsha, also called as India, was once known as the 'Akhand Bharat', which has its multi-facets connection concerning the eastern provinces in Asia Pacific regions and the south eastern provinces of the Indian Peninsula. There is a deep-rooted strong cultural connect of India with the neighboring countries of East Asia and South East Asia which is evident from historical facts and figures. Since the dawn of human civilization-via-the colonial periods, and till date India's dynamic trade relationships, cultural connectivity, diplomatic ties, military cooperation, bilateral commercial agreements, multilateral treaties and other extensive activities have been found to be healthy for mutual engagements, collaborative progress and systematic socio-economic performance at different intervals; besides being human peaceful co-existence as well as integrated approach of developmental notions. In the pre-colonial period, there is historical evidence of India's dynamic and extensive relations with its eastern neighbors since the first century. This phase lasted until the 12th century and can be described as the first wave of look east in cultural and commercial engagement. During this period, the first Hindu Empire (later became the Indo-China region) flourished based entirely on cultural and philosophical contacts with India. No military missions were launched and no wars took place, except the South Indian emperor Rajendra Chola's periodic encroachments into the Srivijaya Empire in Malaya and Indonesia in the 10th and 11th century[1]. India's 'Look East Policy' (LEP) did not begin in the 1990s, though the then Prime Minister Narasimha Rao is said to be the architect of the LEP. It has evolved in four different waves over centuries. The first wave of cultural and commercial engagement between India and its extended eastern neighbors lasted until the $12^{th}/13^{th}$ century. The British Empire in India has further added a strong strategic dimension to it, which is considered to be the second wave, and the leaders of India after the independence took another lead which is said to be the third wave focusing on East Asia as an important part of India's policy of Asian resurgence. Nevertheless, the Cold War, intra-Asian conflict and rivalries, and India's weaknesses on economic and military fronts did not let its Asia policy blossom. So, India's LEP since the early 1990s constitutes the fourth wave of its eastward (re)engagement. Thus, under the strategic thrust, India has not only reinforced its economic and cultural relations with the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and East Asia, but also framed up strategic relations with them through extensive consultations on regional and global security issues and consistent cooperation in defence sectors involving military supplies and naval exercises. As such, India's strategic vision for the East extends to the whole of Asia-Pacific region, which has manifested both its willingness and capability to play a

critical role in the emerging strategic dynamics and architecture for this region. All these backdrop specific factors contribute and led to the birth and development of LEP in 1990 under the leadership of the then Prime Minister of India, P. V. Narasimha Rao. As a whole, India's extensive exchanges and linkages with the eastern countries should be viewed as 'four waves' – pre-colonial, colonial, post-independence and since 1990.

Objectives of the Study

This research paper has two objectives, viz., primary and secondary. The primary objectives are related to long-term radical change elements, like – security issues, cultural connect and regional, maritime and military cooperation, among others; whereas, the secondary objectives are concerned with short-term diplomatic governance principles, such as trade, business, employment generation, skill building programs, people's empowerment and so on. Both the objectives are illuminated in sparkling manner under this study.

Scope of the Study

There is ample scope of national development, regional cooperation and global transformation in terms of this study. The resource materials of this empirical research finding can help future decision-making to the planners, administrators, social thinkers, business architect, researchers and others. Thus, the whole paper will provide both intensive as well as extensive fillip to research gaps in developmental areas in relativity manner.

Methodology

The study attempts to analyze policy issues with reference to historical interpretations for social transformation purposes. Accordingly, secondary sources, like – government policy framework, administrative orders, international treaties and contract agreements, resolutions of regional summit programs, books, journals, periodicals, newspapers, magazines, internet services and other relevant materials are utilized. Field surveys and interviews are conducted on local, regional, national and international issues and noted carefully, arranged chronologically, analyzed systematically in scientific temper; and thereby important findings, suggestions and recommendations are given with relativity approach to conclude the overall study in synthetic manner.

Development Dynamics of LEP

The post-independence India adopted the socialist state-steered development model for development of trade and increasing economic output. It was criticized by economists and social scientists like Atul Kohli on grounds of susceptibility of the Indian state about the powerful lobbies and interest groups. Neoliberal theorists looked at lobbies as a threat to democracy and governance. They put arguments that procedural layers in India were providing opportunities to a bloated bureaucracy for indulging in corruption and rent-seeking behavior, and socialistic state development ambitions were unable to offer substantive spaces of growth opportunities sought by sectors of the economy[2]. Consequently, in road construction and connectivity development there was small amount investment from private sector; despite heavy public demand for better infrastructure and faster communication facilities needed under the LEP regime. . Reasons behind these were substantiated by the need for public sector investments in core industrial infrastructure and agricultural growth, pertaining to policy measures of the LEP. The inability of the socialist development model to fulfill growth aspirations created an ideological vacuum in which the socialist command economic model was losing credibility among the larger sections of the political class while on offer, for adoption, was a neoliberal development model. Toward the 1980s, by appearing as policy solution and development strategies, neoliberal theories of trade openness and trade freedom were reorienting global southern economies. The neoliberal reforms in India in the 1990s brought about macro-economic changes to the systems of control on the economy[3]. The reforms were perceived as implementation of solutions and failure of the developmental state in implementing social and economic developmental goals. Reforms accompanied adjunct changes in state and governance structures, which facilitated widening of economic growth opportunities (Joseph, 2007). Gradually, regulations for operation of the free market were liberalized with a view to liberalization of economic activities as the political agenda and private participation in sectors of Indian economy availed the opening up to expand operations and diversities in outputs. As such, adoption of the LEP in 1991 was an external reflection of the progressive domestic economic transformation. It was thus, realized that India's becoming of a great power was rooted in the development of the economy and leveraging geo-economic foreign policy instruments, such as trade, investments, international migrations, economic sanctions, and financial lending. With gradual improvements in relations with Southeast Asian nations and domestic economic growth in the 1980s, India became less fearful of Chinese interference in insurgencies occurring in North East India (NEI) and more confident of exerting influence in the region by way of the road constructions and infrastructural developments[4], and the later 1980s was a period of political turbulence in India. Successive governments came to power without majority in the Parliament. However, in 1991, there was a relatively stable government formed at the centre by Congress party. Subsequently, it resulted for decrease in remittances to India due to the Gulf crisis and disruption of trade with East European countries that had just broken out of communist rule depleted India's financial reserves. To these were added the domestic

financial burdens of populist policies and rising non-productive expenditure in defense and subsidies. The economic reforms program in India were taking place in the background of the LEP followed a balance-of-payments crisis arising out of the financial distress. The reforms period, therefore, was a period of discovery of the importance of foreign capital in national economic development and the importance of improving competitiveness of Indian goods in international trade[5]. The reforms became a progression toward integrating the Indian economy with the world economy as foreign investments were invited and targets were made for increasing the Indian export trade. In this scenario of needing to secure the Indian external economic environment, the 'Asian miracle' and emergence of the 'Asian Tigers' provided impetus to Indian foreign policy to look to Southeast Asia as a space of economic opportunity.

In the period since the economic liberalization, economic objectives for increase of trade output and economic productivity have been tied to development of roads and other connectivity infrastructures. Enlarging of transport and communication infrastructure networks due to its role in improving trade transits has constituted part of the post-liberalization development model. External policies for enhancement of trade and especially in the context of the LEP/AEP have factored the significance of connectivity infrastructures for trade growth. Expansion of roads is seen as markers of economic development. Successive states' and central governments in India have taken construction of roads as an indicator of performance of governments. Correlating of connectivity development and economic growth was found to be a success story for the ruling party, which was alleged by oppositions as corruptions in name of road construction programs. For example, in 2015, in the state-level election of Bihar, the incumbent Janata Dal (United) government and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was found to cover posters on corruption campaigns against road construction programs of the ruling party[6]. However, the pace of road construction increased after the economic liberalization. The National Highways Act, 1956, was amended in 1995, allowing 100 per cent foreign direct investment in the road construction sector. With the making of this amendment, private investments started making up for lack of adequate state funds in highway construction and maintenance such that the private participation in road construction, transport, and connectivity sectors expanded. Private infrastructural firms increased and found an atmosphere conducive to growth of the sector. By 2008, private participation in public-private joint road constructions was estimated to have grown up to US$150 billion[7].

Genesis of Act East Policy

India's Act East Policy (AEP) is a diplomatic initiative to promote economic, strategic and cultural relations with the vast Asia-Pacific region at different levels. The country's eastward drive since 1992 has underscored the importance of this region in its contemporary international relations. AEP and its early avatar, LEP are not different; rather, they are two sides of the same coin, representing two different, but continuing phases in the evolution of India's policy towards the Asia-Pacific region.

When India launched the LEP in 1991, its own economic strength, its global status and the external environment were not what they are at present. At the time of its launch, India was struggling to transition from a state-controlled economic regime to a more liberalized one. It took many years for the country to get adjusted to the newly emerging economic environment. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government has reason perhaps to be satisfied with the progress of the AEP announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, mentioning the necessity of transformation of LEP into AEP at the India-ASEAN Summit in Naypyitaw, Mayanmar in November 2014[8]. When the AEP was launched by Narendra Modi in 2014, India's economy was relatively robust and its global profile was higher than it was in the decades prior. Modi gave a new thrust to intensify economic, strategic and diplomatic relations with countries that share common concerns with India on China's growing economic and military strength and its implications for the evolving regional order[9]. Again, before him, the phrase AEP was used by the then External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj.

Critical Assessment on LEP

India was not looking toward the east with due attention before Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao took the reins of India's foreign policy[10]. There are many reasons for India's relative neglect of this region, like:

(a) India's Colonial Links: India's ruling elite had an essentially Western orientation and was thinking in the post-1947 period.

(b) Southeast Asia Not Attractive for Trading: Economically, due to the fact that this region was less developed than India until the 1970s, so India was reluctant to enter into any agreement as an attractive trading and partnership with the Southeast Asian countries.

(c) Protectionism: India's own economic policies were insular and protectionist. It did not help that our overland linkages to Southeast Asia 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.

(d) Cold War Divide: India and the Southeast Asian countries were on opposing sides of the Cold War divide.

(e) Flawed Perceptions: Our perceptions about Southeast Asian region were flawed due to political interventions. So, we missed a great opportunity to foster ties within our Asian neighbors to the east during a crucial period when the foundation stones of India's foreign policy architecture were being laid.

(f) Lack of Leverage: We could not leverage our shared colonial experience, cultural affinities and a remarkable lack of historical baggage to build our relations with Southeast Asia.

Thus, India has failed to utilize its Diasporas in Southeast Asia when China has been very successful on this front. Indian Diaspora is different. Historically, the first Indian immigrants were from the lower strata of society, who were taken from British India to work mostly as plantation workers and agricultural laborers. Similarly, the Indian Diaspora in Myanmar is also disadvantaged due to their historical collaboration with the British colonial rulers to rule over Burma. Therefore, India has benefited less than China has from their respective Diasporas in Southeast Asia. Moreover, India-Pakistan relations are a haunting tale since their incentive years more ostensibly in the realm of mutual antagonism and the character of animosity in which they are embedded. The construct of the relations and mutual suspicion which take over the discourse, these bilateral relations can be exhaustively interpreted in the framework of contained instrumentalism which kept the communitarian differentiation intact based on the character of identity[11]. The interconnectedness in the mutual relations of India and Pakistan has made these polities largely proportional to one another. The eventuality in respect of one brings profound implications for the other. India's threat spectrum and its immediate neighbors are contradictory to one another. As a result, India envisages cross border terrorism and external maneuvering as a major threat[12] as far as the frame of internal security is concerned. To the contrary, Pakistan largely identifies internal security threat as the existential one and more fundamentally suspects India's involvement in it.

Necessity of AEP

An examination of India's relations with ASEAN, Japan, South Korea, and now Australia would show how a vast network of institutional structures has lent support to expanding bilateral engagements. India joined the ASEAN in 1992 as a negotiating partner and became a full-fledged member in 1994. It is now an active member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asian Summit (EAS) and the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting. Moreover, at present there are more than thirty dialogue mechanisms and seven Ministerial-level interactions in addition to annual summit-level meetings[13]. The same characteristic feature is seen in the case of both Japan and South Korea – two major pillars in India's AEP. A vast array of institutional mechanisms binds their partnership in such forums like annual summit, strategic dialogue, defence dialogue, and numerous forums on energy cooperation, counter-terrorism, U.N. reforms, cyber security, and maritime cooperation. Further, India and Japan have institutionalized 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue[14]. PM Modi gave considerable importance to the need for extending the dialogue beyond the bilateral ambit, upgrading the trilateral US-Japan-India dialogue to ministerial level. Equally important is India's participation in the quadrilateral meetings with the US, Japan and Australia, particularly since 2017 which has underlined New Delhi's interest to exchange views on the strategic environment of the Indo-Pacific region. India's economic relations with the countries of ASEAN have witnessed dramatic growth in recent years. India and the ASEAN have signed two trade agreements in goods and services, creating one of the biggest trade areas with a market of 1.8 billion people and a combined GDP of about US$3 trillion. India-ASEAN annual trade

today accounts for more than US$80 billion for the first time in history, although the figure is still far below the target of US$200 billion set for 2020[15]. A good deal of ASEAN private investment has also flowed into India in many sectors including construction of ports, highways, food processing, shipping, and auto components. Similarly, India's investments in ASEAN have grown considerably in recent years, with Singapore becoming its investment and trading hub. Though India and Japan entered into a comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA) in 2011, the volume of bilateral trade has been decreasing. But, in 2017-18, it recovered to a record US$15.71 billion[16].

In the past, the interests of the North Eastern Region (NER) did not receive as much attention as required from both the central and state governments and it hampered the development of the region which remained backward without infrastructure facilities. India's AEP is closely connected with its long-term vision of developing its NER, which is considered as a gateway to Southeast Asia. It will not be wrong to comment here that Prime Minister Modi has shown a strong commitment to developing the infrastructure of the region in transport, highways, communication, power and waterways. Since Japan's interests in the NER are deeply rooted in history, there is a broad bilateral consensus to cooperate for the development of the region. In this way, local insurgencies, social disorders and regional imbalances are harnessed with external interference which seems to beneficial for the progress of the region.

Comparative Performance of LEP and AEP

India adopts export-promotion led growth strategy since 1991 onwards observing the adverse growth effect after the Gulf War (1990-91) and intends to expand its trade to East and Southeast Asia from its concentration to the Western and Soviet bloc economies which were its main trading partners during the post-independence period[17]. However, since the beginning of the second phase in the LEP, the question of strategic engagement and defence cooperation has been stepped up. The parameters of the policy, as noted earlier, have been taken beyond ASEAN and beyond economic interests. There is also renewed and wider (other than ASEAN countries) interest in the region for defence cooperation with India. A typical example of this was evident in the year 2002 when India responded to the US call of escorting its ships in the Straits of Malacca to protect them from sea piracy[18]. India's policy of strategic engagement with the eastern neighbors has developed various aspects. There are high-level political and military exchanges of visits where broader regional and global security issues are discussed. At the level of Ministries of External Affairs and Defence, bilateral dialogues and consultations on regular basis have been institutionalized. Then there were Naval and other services (Air Force, Army) visits and exercises. Indian ships have visited and conducted exercises with almost all the countries of the region, going as far as the South China Sea. There are of course differences in the quality and reach of these visits and exercises. India is also supplying defence equipments and servicing and upgrading them in many

Southeast Asian countries and setting up training facilities and military academies there. In August 2008, India offered to setup an Air Force Academy in Laos. India is also slowly moving into the area of defence technology exchanges and joint production. With Singapore, India has the closest special security partnership in the region[19]. The emphasis in the first phase of the LEP was primarily on economic engagement. But the area of cooperation in defence and strategic matters was not completely overlooked[20]. India not only supplied defence equipment to the ASEAN countries but also agreed to help upgrade and repair their major weapon systems like MiG (Mikoyan-Gurevich) fighter aircrafts and offer training to their defence personnel. Important agreements in this respect were signed with Vietnam, Malaysia, Laos and Singapore. Some of those agreements, particularly with Malaysia and Laos could not be fully implemented, partly due to the regional economic crisis and payment difficulties and partly due to inept handling by the concerned Indian defence organizations. Security cooperation was also an important item in the growing India-Myanmar relations. The two countries carried out a joint operation in 1995, code named "Operation Golden Eagle", to deal with ethnic insurgency on their common border. Myanmar has also started appreciating India's security concerns in relation to the growing presence of China and Pakistan in Myanmar. Beyond ASEAN, India has also developed close strategic understanding and cooperation with Japan, Australia, Korea and even China. Strategic partnerships, in different forms have been established with these countries. India, Japan and Australia had joined hands with the US in coordinating rescue and relief operations to deal with the 2004 tsunami in the region. There is a persisting speculation among strategic analysts that these countries may forge some sort of a united front, a kind of "Asian NATO" to keep China contained in the region[21].

AEP is the central pillar of ASEAN, in so far as it relates to India's cooperation with neighboring countries, strategic alliances, and our domestic agenda on trade, infrastructure, and manufacturing, skill development, urban renewal, smart cities, Make-in-India, border haat and other initiatives. It is therefore true to mention here that connectivity projects, cooperation in space, science and technology (S&T) and people-to-people exchanges could become a springboard for regional integration and prosperity. Thus, the policy which was originally conceived as an economic initiative, has gained political, strategic and cultural dimensions including establishment of institutional mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation. In consequence of such incidences, India has upgraded its relations to strategic partnership with Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Japan, Republic of Korea (ROK), Australia, Singapore and ASEAN and forged close ties with all countries in the Asia-Pacific region[22]. The AEP is therefore India's new governance agenda of progress with: "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikash and Sabka Vishwas", which is considered to be one step forward to the previous LEP launched in 1990s. The India-ASEAN Plan of Action (POA) for the period 2016-2020 has been adopted in August 2015 which identifies concrete initiatives of the Government of India in areas of cooperation, along with the three pillars: political-security, socio-cultural relations and economic activities. India continues with stepped up efforts to forge closer partnership with concerned

regional and multilateral organizations such as ASEAN, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sector Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). Again, the India-ASEAN agreements on trade in service and investments have entered into force for India and seven ASEAN countries from July 1, 2015. The India-ASEAN Trade Negotiating Committee has been tasked to undertake a review of the India-ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement. India has also invited ASEAN member states to participate in the International Solar Alliance[23] (ISA) which it has co-launched with France on November 30, 2015.

On the civilization front, the NDA government has energized Buddhist and Hindu links to develop new contacts and connectivity between people as a mark of 'Sabka Saath'. Again, on connectivity sphere, special efforts are being made by the government to develop a coherent strategy, particularly for linking ASEAN with the NEI as the agenda of 'Sabka Vikas' and 'Sabka Vishwas'. Consequent on such program, measures for building transport infrastructure, encouraging air lines to enhance connectivity in the region, contacts between academic and cultural institutions are underway. Thus, economic engagement with ASEAN has been stepped up and priorities are given by the Government of India's AEP for regional integration and implementation of projects[24]. Further, the Government of India has taken initiatives for increasing convergence on security interests with key partners both in bilateral and multilateral format. This is a very good example for milestone progress of the NDA government's AEP on strategic issues, which is further extended by means of closer cooperation in combating terrorism, collaborating for peace and stability in the region and promoting of maritime security based on international norms and laws that are being pursued timely, rightly and decisively. As an initiative of AEP, Modi Government has entered into an agreement with the Government of Vietnam, and accordingly, the then Defense Minister of India, Manohar Parrikar and his Vietnamese counterpart, General Ngo Xuan Lich signed a pact on September 5, 2016 in Hanoi to train the pilots of Russian-made Sukhoi Su-30 multirole combat fighter starting next year[25]. Other than the past few years, significant collaboration between India and Vietnam such as New Delhi's training for Vietnamese submarines; Prime Minister Narendra Modi has further taken steps to boost relations with greater momentum from the Indian sides since his inauguration in May 2014 under the AEP. Accordingly, India-Japan relation in maritime cooperation has reflected a new height of journey with prospects security measures, counter-surveillances and challenge of threats from time-to-time in the Eastern provinces, Southeast Asia zones and the Indo-Pacific regions[26].

Paradigm Shift of Policies: From Look East to Act East

Transformational ideas[27] are necessary ingredients require accommodation, adjustments and matching behavior with reformative foundations, to initiate change in proactive manner, to underline issues of changing elements and to grow in time and space. Therefore, 'Look East' to 'Act East' has been rejuvenated in terms of new radical initiatives, profound diplomatic assumptions and realistic security measures. Thus, there have been policy dynamics paradigm shift in nature of working agenda, both in terms of LEP and AEP. But, the major difference between the two is that LEP was founded upon economic integration[28] with the Southeast Asian countries, while India experienced an economic crisis at the fall of Soviet Union which was previously one of the most valued economic and strategic partners. On the other hand, AEP focuses for both economic and security integration in the South, Southeast and Indo-Pacific regions for good governance paradigm shift in new areas of search with objective, progressive and realistic goals at a time the United States has engaged in a pivot to Asia[29]. Again, LEP is a major thrust area of trade regime decided in an era of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG) for opening door of business with a view to secure more investment outlays; but the AEP is a resurgent measure adopted for promoting vibrant economic cooperation, cultural ties, strategic relationships with countries in the Asia-Pacific regions along with the States of NEI for continuous engagement at regional, bilateral and multilateral levels. Thus, dynamics in areas of policy shift is observed for alternatives from the Southeast Asian countries to the Asia-Pacific regions.

Transitional Change and Cementing Relationships

LEP is limited to the Southeast region only and lagging much behind with respect to operational responsibility for cementing better relationships in 3 C's: culture, connectivity and commerce[30]. But, transitional policy shift has been made possible through AEP for not only strengthening vistas of culture, connectivity and commerce; but also in security issues, border disputes, land settlements, regional cooperation and so on in holistic approach to the South, Southeast and Asia-Pacific regions. Thus, AEP acts as game changing agenda[31] and has strengthened fillip to the States of NER by way of bridging gaps in all such areas. AEP has solved problems of policy paralyses[32] of LEP with new road map, reform practices, performing goals in relation to regional cooperation, national prosperity and global transformation in developmental paradigms. Steady efforts have been made by the new government to develop and strengthen connectivity of the States of NER with the ASEAN region through people-to-people contacts, trade, culture and physical infrastructure, like: airport, road, power, telecommunication, etc. Thus, AEP stimulates strong Centre-States relatiohships[33], streamlines regional economies with varied new packages and tries to transform trade, industry and commerce steadily with neighboring countries in terms of regional cooperation, bilateral contacts, and multilateral negotiations.

New Dimensions of Partnerships

Since the ASEAN-India engagement have become deeper and vibrant under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, policy paralyses of previous governments have been solved with new road map of work. Thus, there have been added new dimensions of relationships with neighboring countries. Hence, down the line, ASEAN partnership has scaled new heights[34]. Accordingly, India has not only developed strong bilateral relations with countries such as Bangladesh, Mauritius, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Vietnam, etc.; but also steering a number of sub-regional programs and projects such as the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) project, the Trilateral Highway (TH), etc., and is actively contributing to the success of several regional initiatives. As a matter of fact, India's visions in the Indo-Pacific regions have begun with a new era of economic development, industrialization and trade. At this point of time, the 2nd POA[35] to implement the ASEAN-India partnership for peace, progress and shared prosperity started surging for newer search of opportunities with multilateral negotiations, providing thereby dynamic shift to act more positively towards the east with strategic relationships, for capability building and reinforcing economic, political, security, cooperation and other types of relationships in terms of trade, culture, connectivity, border haats, cyber security, military, maritime and many other issues. As a whole, until now already 54 activities out of 130 have been implemented in areas of political, security, economic, and socio-cultural co-operations with partnerships. The States of NEI have been taken in confidence building measures in different partnership projects under AEP to connect with the South, Southeast and Indo-Pacific regions[36]. The main tenets of AEP have thus been a consensus driven approach, supportive for an open and inclusive regional security architecture, besides the economic elements of relationships. In nutshell, the new dimensions of partnerships have articulated scientifically capacity as well as confidence building measures to cement better relationships, innovate things for socio-economic development and re-engineering all potentials of growth paradigms[37] with strategic, competitive and alternative solutions by way of strengthening information and communication system in whole spectrum of operational activities in holistic approach.

Findings

Some important findings of this research are outlined below:

1. LEP is limited in terms of growth and potential development initiatives. Strategies of this policy are concerned with only narrow grounds of security elements.
2. AEP as new road map for multi-dynamics nature of socio-economic activities with regional partnerships to the South, Southeast and Indo-Pacific regions needs to overcome challenges of NEI with new surges.

3. Policy shift paradigms bring in regional cooperative environment of business in matters concerning skill building programs, employment generation activities and empowerment issues, but all the stakeholders of NEI are yet to be involved more for inclusive development.
4. Transitional change requires not only long-term radical measures. In short-term, it requires strong administrative mind set to implement policies for taking people in confidence building which is yet to be realized with ground realities.
5. Reinforcing the pattern Centre-States relationships should be founded up on solid ground of change parameters for realizing reform practices with surge of policy initiatives.
6. The States of NEI have been lagging behind in areas of trade, business, industry, agriculture, connectivity, tourism, security, education, health and similar other elements of socio-economic parameters.
7. AEP should adopt business process re-engineering (BPR) techniques in areas of horticulture, sericulture, yoga, ayurveda, homeopathy, sports, film industry, etc. to rejuvenate the foundation of developmental goals.
8. Ethnic foods, value chain, communication system, information networking, market rationalization are needed special attention to develop economies of NEI.
9. Insurgency, cyber security, border haats, regional connectivity, bilateral contacts, multilateral negotiations require NEI-friendly measures to streamline growth process.
10. Dumping, hoarding, black marketing, money laundering, smuggling, human trafficking are required new policy reforms and vibrant agenda for peace, progress and prosperity of all.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Following suggestions and recommendations are provided for illuminating balanced development approach and bringing transformational change:

- Keeping in mind new reform practices, NEI needs E-visa policy for attracting foreign tourists.
- Airports of NEI should be modernized with efficient order of rail-road connectivity and effective coordination. So, the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MCA) should walk extra miles.
- People's participation should be increased for holistic development. Hence, all stakeholders are required more empowerment to transform socio-economies.
- Transparent customs clearance, transformative role of DoNER are necessary ingredients of vibrant industrial policy which require resurgent schemes, strong vision, right mission and appropriate strategies for development.
- Skill develop programs, eco-tourism, local artisan products should be given due importance for solving problems of employment generation, job creation and entrepreneurial activities.

- Number of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Indian Institute Management (IIM), All Indian Institute Medical Science (AIIMS), State Aurveda Hospitals (SAHs), State Homeopathy Colleges (SHCs), State Agricultural Colleges (SACs), etc. should be increased in the States of NEI.
- Naturopathy Institute, Yoga Institute, Homeopathy Medicine Research Institute (HMRI), Railway Traffic Management Institute (RTMI), Regional Consulate Office (RCO), India's Mission to Regional Cooperation (IMRC) are needed to be established in NEI for future growth of economy, maintaining public health, and yield employment opportunities.
- There should be paradigm shift in policies in areas local herbal products, bio-fertilizer, ethnic food chains, vegetables, animal husbandry, jhum cultivation research programs for strengthening regional economies.
- Non Government Organizations (NGOs), Local Entrepreneurs, Business Experts, Government Agencies, etc. should work together for promoting micro, small and medium industries in NEI.
- Government should empower IITs, IIMs and SACs in acting together to adopt BPR techniques reinvent marketing strategies and increase regional productivity.

Conclusion

Plans, programs and packages are ingredients of resurgent, resilient and reform policy dynamics issue on which depend development strategies to achieve goals in sustainable manner. As such, there is the need for paradigm policy shift in changing business environment[38]. Keeping all such notions in mind, we have analyzed LEP and AEP to cope up with challenge of change in transitional aspects as the demand of time. Visions of development dynamics should reinforce things with reinventing new issues for adequate checks in bringing matching balance to socio-economic parameters in scientific temper of thought. Government policies are therefore required realistic goals for increasing human capacity building, initiating social growth and generating income through employment as well as entrepreneurship activities. LEP is the charter and AEP is the road map[39] for forward looking tendencies in objective manner. Hence, mechanisms in policy issues are searched with surging visions to set compass on developmental goals with a view to eradicate local problems, initiate national growth and provide for global dynamism in terms of reform, perform and transform agenda of the Centre-States relationships as well as external initiatives. Thus, there have been appropriate policy initiatives for regional partnerships[40] to cement healthy and better relationships incorporating the strategic idea of human emancipation, national development and global level transformation of mankind for peace, progress and prosperity.

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