

Comparative Study of the Concept of Look East in the Foreign Policy of Iran and India

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Received: 22/03/2023

Accepted: 13/09/2023

<https://doi.org/10.22034/igq.2024.179391>

Abstract

During the post-Cold War era, while western countries continued to exert their influence on the world stage, Indian and Iranian officials turned their focus to the East. They introduced the Look East Policy and Look to the East Policy respectively, with the aim of leveraging the political, economic, cultural, geographical, and security opportunities available in that region. By adopting these policies, both India and Iran sought to deepen their engagement with countries in East and Southeast Asia, diversify their trade and investment portfolios, and reduce their dependence on western nations. The objective of this article is to analyze India and Iran's Look East Policy and Look to the East Policy, with a focus on their outcomes for national well-being, security, and the potential in the economic, political, and security domains with respect to Eastern countries. To do so, researchers primarily discuss the importance of the Look East Policy in the foreign policy of both India and Iran and discuss why this region comes to the center with full-fledged attention. Furthermore, they scrutinize the accomplishments of India and Iran as well as the structural barriers they encounter in the region, along with their approaches to pursuing their objectives and interests in the area. This article presents an analysis of the constraints, difficulties, and successes of the Look East policy.

Keywords: Look East Policy, India, Iran, Geo-Economy, Geopolitics.

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1. Introduction

The eastern region from the past decade gained great political, economic, and security importance. Countries like Russia, China, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, and ASEAN countries got more attention in Indian and Iranian foreign policy. ASEAN encompasses 10 countries: Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia. These countries have a total population of nearly 640 million people. It's been said that if ASEAN were a single country, it would be the world's fifth-largest economy (Bajpae,2007:1). Japan and China emerged as Superpowers, and "Asian Tigers" (South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong) are the largest economic and financial powers of the region. However, India and Iran have different interests in the Eastern region. Various factors have caused a shift in their focus from Western nations to Eastern countries. India has a very fragile economy when the Look East policy was launched due to the 1991's economic crisis. While Iran has been collaborating with European nations that signed the nuclear agreement to bypass unilateral sanctions, the inability to reach an agreement and the opposition to Iran's ballistic missile program have prompted the country's Leader to endorse the Look to the East policy as being more aligned with Iran's revolutionary identity and its long-term strategic and economic interests. This paper endeavors to provide an overview of the key aspects of the Look East policy adopted by both countries .

This paper examines the contours and content of Iran's relations with three important pillars of its Look to the East policy, namely Russia, China, and India. This also includes India's relations with ASEAN countries, Japan, and South Korea, and then in addition expansion of more countries like Singapore, Vietnam, and The United States of America. It discusses potential challenges and opportunities for bilateral, regional, and international relations. Iran's policy mostly focused on Oil surrounded limited to countries like China for economical needs, India for Food products, and limited military cooperation with Russia. India's policy had a micro strategy towards its goals and focused on forging close economical and commercial ties, then after with new policy, it includes the strategic and military corporation with nations concerned by China's influence.

2 .Methodology

The methodology of this article is a comparative study method, according to which we will explain the concept of looking to the east in the foreign

policy of India and the Islamic Republic of Iran, Using the comparative method, we analyze the geopolitical and geoeconomics dimensions, goals and scope and results of the look-to-the-east policy of the two countries.

3 .Geoeconomic and Geopolitical Approach

In early 1990, the term geoeconomics emerged when the Soviet Union was about to collapse and some scholars believe that was a geo-economic process (Luttwak,1990:19). The rivalry between the states would remain in international relations after the cold war. But their goal would be to change the economic rather than militarily. By economically motivated investment and trades geopolitics, take advantages on territorial control. Geo economical plays a dominant role in countering the hegemony of western powers it gives opportunity to non-western powers like Brazil, China, and India. Countries take advantage through economic appearance. They also undermine each other's effectiveness, with the use of power games to take control of politics through economics. Countries make their influence on targeted countries to impact their presence. Through economic developments, states broaden their economic base of national power and are likely to gain advantages in technology and thus become stronger in military terms. Geoeconomics is a “parallel account of how a state builds and exercises power by reference to economic factors (Nye,2011:61-66). Today's world is interdependent and interconnected, all states depend on the secure and steady flows of capital, data, and goods, which interconnect the globe. The increasing interdependence of national economies through globalization creates varying degrees of dependency and vulnerability and, according to Joseph Nye, “Manipulating the asymmetries of interdependence is an important dimension of economic power” (Bajpae,2007:2).

The purpose of Geoeconomics is to use economic instruments to promote and defend national interests, and to produce beneficial geopolitical results; and to the effects of the other nation's economic actions on a country's geopolitical goals. Beyond the benefits to the domestic economy of the country, external economic initiatives also process geoeconomics significantly. Thus, it can be assumed that the planned investment will intensify country pull and firmly establish the economic center of gravity and it promotes a spatial economic structuration centered on the county. The outlined external economic initiatives effectively support the country's autonomy-driven currency and finance policies. For example, China pursues

an intensive policy of securing raw materials for its economy and assists companies by offering subsidies and cheaper bank loans for strategic takeovers of foreign companies. binds other countries through raw material agreements and major infrastructure projects, thereby creating economic dependency in a first move, which can then be politically instrumentalized in further steps. Today, sanctions can be implemented in a more targeted way and can cause far greater damage than ever before. At the same time, there are stronger incentives for economic cooperation (Gray and Sloan, 1999:11). The planned infrastructure investments directly promote the use of the country's national currency, dependency on the national currency can dominate the other country's economic policies. The state remains a security provider but they increasingly have to provide security by controlling commerce and technology. In short geoeconomics, is the order based on economic dominance instead of political alliance, territorial engagements, and the protecting national border.

Geopolitics can be defined as a discipline that studies the relations and interactions between spaces (territories), states, civilizations, people, and economics. The centrality of geopolitics is Space. Geopolitics mostly focused on Land power and sea power. Mackinder believes that Land Power represents force, conservatism, hierarchy, order, origin, religion, ethics, and stability. Sea Power means trade liberalism, democracy, progress, technical innovation, science, and capitalism. Geo-politician has proposed three theories depicting how to control the world from a geographical perspective: the "Sea Power" theory raised by Alfred Thayer Mahan from the U.S. believed those who controlled the sea would control the world; the "Heartland" theory raised by Halford John Mackinder from Britain believed those who controlled Eurasia would control the world; while the "Rim Land" theory raised by Nicholas John Spykman from the U.S. believed those who controlled the rimland would control the world (Owens,2015:7).

Through geopolitics, our goal is to analyze and predict the behavior and choices of political entities such as nations, taking into account their geographical features and global positioning. In a broader sense, geopolitics studies the general relations between countries on a global scale. Geopolitics assumes that adversarial relationships among states will remain a massive fact of the human condition. A geopolitical thinker attempts to discern the geographical patterns underpinning the politics of the international arena. Geopolitics is not geographic determinism, but it is based on the assumption

that geography defines limits and opportunities in international politics: states can realize their geopolitical opportunities or become the victims of their geopolitical situation. Geopolitics clarifies the range of strategic choices, providing a guide for achieving strategic efficiency.

The way a country deals with its strategic geography is very important in how strong it is in the world. By having the plan to control important things like resources and ways of communication, a country can become stronger and stay strong. It combines an appreciation of the conditioning influences of geography with how certain locations will, over time, become more or less significant due to changes in transport and weapons. While it places particular stress on geographic space as a critically important strategic factor and source of power, it recognizes that geography is only a part of the totality of global phenomena (Owens,2015:1). States are seen as separate political, as well as geographical, they monitor each other extremely carefully, by way of trading and navigation routes. In this case, geopolitics can showcase how power represents itself over territory. In the following, the Economic and political approaches of India and Iran toward East Asia will be discussed.

4 .Look East Policy and Act East Policy of India

Look East policy was developed and enacted during the government of Prime Minister P. V. Narsimha Rao (1991-1996) and pursued by the successive Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1998-2004) and Manmohan Singh (2004-2014). Soviet Russia was its main trading and security partner of India, the fall of the Soviet Bloc propelled India to look at alternative regions India looking for new trading partners. Sino- Indian war of 1962 China and India were strategic competitors in South Asia and East Asia. According to “India’s Act East Policy” when China made close relations with India’s neighbors Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh by commercially and militarily. Along with economical liberalization in 1991 India’s strategy focused on forging close economic and security cooperation and the emphasis on historic cultural and ideological links. Also, it is connected to border-related concerns, including addressing India's energy security and developmental requirements.

The fall of the Soviet Union propelled India to look east to find alternate regions to sustain its economy. India realized there was immense scope for growth in the region, as Japan and China had already become major economic players in the region. The focus was more on boosting trade and

investment relations with Southeast Asian countries. India has emerged as Asia's third-largest economy after Japan and China. It has numerous free trade agreements with East Asian economies. Liberalization opens new doors for investing in India for infrastructure. Nearly US\$ 500 billion investment Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan expressed their interest in India mainly focused on infrastructure.

After the economic liberalization of India, Japan made numerous investments in India. Japan is the 5th largest investor in the Indian economy with cumulative FDI inflows of \$ 38.3 bn from April 2000 to December 2022. Currently, over 1455 Japanese companies are operating in India. These two countries have several institutional dialogue mechanisms including a 2+2 dialogue at the foreign and defense secretaries' level, which is held regularly to exchange views on bilateral issues as well as regional and international cooperation. Also, the Indian IT sector has enabled many Japanese corporations to adopt digital capabilities and innovative business models. Japanese policymakers view India as a reliable partner for accelerating Japan's digital transformation and started investing heavily in Indian tech start-ups in 2016 ("Japanese investment in Indian IT and start-up ecosystem grows four times since 2016", 2021:2).

India's focus is more on doubling Japanese investments in sectors like Transportation (Bullet Train an example), smart cities, skill development, etc. Japanese Investments have flowed into vital sectors like chemical, automobile, pharmaceuticals, and telecommunications. Key imports from Japan include nuclear reactors, electrical machinery, iron, steel, and organic chemicals that are most important for basic infrastructures. India is expanding its security perimeter to include the wider Asia-Pacific region, hence, the importance of political and strategic interaction between India and Japan becomes closer. The Indian and Japanese navies have jointly participated in several multilateral exercises and once in a bilateral setting – the JIMEX12 exercise. This development is likely to be provocative to observers in the PRC (People's Republic of China). The Reborn of QUAD shows the importance of India's and Japanese bilateral cooperation with the U.S. and Australia to counter China in the South China region.

During the Korean war, India played a major role in the signed cease-fire agreement between both warring sides (North Korea and South Korea) and the ceasefire was declared on 27th July 1953. In May 2015, the bilateral relationship was upgraded to a 'special strategic partnership'. Both agreed to

establish a 2+2 consultation mechanism with the Secretary/Vice Minister of the Foreign Office and Defence Ministry (India – the Republic of Korea Bilateral Relations. 2017). India has a major role in South Korean South Asia policy. South Korea considers India a strategic partner and has been developing close ties with S. Korea in various areas such as trade, investment, defense, and cultural exchanges. Similarly, South Korea is a major player in India's Look East policy which aims to promote cultural, and economic ties and develop a strategic relationship in the Asia-Pacific region. According to Statistics Korea, Indian exports to Korea accounted for USD 2.91 billion, and imports account for USD 8.707 billion during January-July 2017, marking a growth of 26% and 30.1% respectively. Major items of India's exports to Korea are mineral fuels/oil distillates (mainly naphtha), cereals, iron, and steel. Korea's main export items are automobile parts, telecommunication equipment, hot rolled iron products, petroleum refined products, base lubricating oils, nuclear reactors, mechanical appliances, electrical machinery & parts, and iron and steel products (India – the Republic of Korea Bilateral Relations,2017:1).

The current bilateral trade between India and South Korea is at USD 21 billion and the target that has been set is USD 50 billion by the year 2030 (Embassy of India,2022:3-4). India has launched a "Korea Plus" facilitation cell to attract Korean investment under Invest India program. South Korea is India's ninth-largest source of foreign investment with foreign companies such as Daewoo, Hyundai, Samsung, and LG having significant influence in India. These two nations mostly focused on maritime cooperation as part of the Indo-Pacific strategy and also cooperation in the defense industry and future technologies. The two countries have a logistics agreement helping the Indian navy while operating in the Indo-Pacific region. There is massive scope between these two countries with will and new imaginations.

India was among the countries that set up diplomatic relations after the independence of Singapore. The close relationship shared by India and Singapore is based on the convergence of economic and political interests. Economic reforms in India create a strong basis of cooperation with Singapore has played important role in India's Look East policy to reconnect South East Asian countries. They made high-level interactions, including the visit of PM Vajpayee in 2002, which culminated with the signing of the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) in June 2005 during the visit of PM Lee Hsien Loong to India (India – Singapore

Relations,2015:2). Economic cooperation is a major pillar of their relationship. Singapore is India's 10th largest trade partner globally and 2nd largest in ASEAN accounting for 25.9% of India's overall trade with ASEAN (2013-14). India was Singapore's 12th largest trade partner globally (India – Singapore Relations,2015:1). Singaporean companies have been active in India's equity market as FIIs (Foreign Institutional Investors), have emerged as the 2nd largest source of FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) amounting to US\$ 31.9 billion (April 2000 - Feb 2015), which is 13% of total FDI inflow.

In 2014, the new Prime Minister Narendra Modi led by the Bhartiya Janta Party government take charge of the Look East policy and introduced new agendas focusing on a large part of East Asian countries and also toward the ASEAN countries. ASEAN- Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which promoted intergovernmental corporation, economic, security, political and military integration between members. India is, therefore, one of those few States in the world that has the necessary military capacity, and economic potentialities, to decide the destiny of global geopolitics (Adhikari and et al,2008:5). India's focus is on a strengthened and multi-faceted relationship with ASEAN. India- ASEAN trade and investment relations growing steadily, ASEAN is the fourth largest trading partner of India. India's trade with ASEAN stands at US\$ 81.33 billion, which is approx 10.6% of India's overall trade. India's export to ASEAN stands at 11.28% of total exports. Indian and the ASEAN Leaders jointly adopted the Delhi Declaration and decided to identify Cooperation in the Maritime Domain as the key area of cooperation under the ASEAN-India strategic partnership (India- ASEAN Relations,2018). India has been attending annual meetings of the ASEAN Region Forum since 1996 and has actively participated in its various activities. ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is ASEAN's main forum for security dialogue. India provides financial assistance with ASEAN's funds like ASEAN-India Cooperation Fund, ASEAN-India S&T Development Fund (AISTDF), ASEAN-India Green Fund, and ASEAN-India Projects. India provides these funds for capacity-building programs in the political, economic, and socio-cultural spheres for deepening and intensifying ASEAN-India cooperation (India- ASEAN Relations,2018:4).

India's new ties with Australia, Japan, and America through the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) were prompted by China's aggression in the South China Sea and the Pacific region. The QUAD also

includes New Zealand, South Korea, and Vietnam as members. In response to tensions with China, India has joined the QUAD and begun expressing its interests. Additionally, India has conducted joint military exercises with Japan and America in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

5 .Look to East Policy / Look to the East Policy 2.0 of Iran

Since the Islamic revolution, Iran make an independent step in its foreign policy as ‘neither East nor West’. Iran's "Look to the East" policy arose when negotiations with European and Western countries regarding their nuclear program failed to serve Iran's national interests. President Ahmadinejad's administration initiated the "Look to the East" policy between 2005 and 2013. This policy aimed to strengthen Iran's ties with emerging powers like Russia, China, and India, to counter Western pressure concerning Iran's controversial nuclear program. Additionally, the policy was intended to advance Iran's development goals as laid out in its 20-Year National Vision. Iran's policymakers aimed their policy at countries including Japan, South Korea, China, Malaysia, Russia, India, and Pakistan. However, American sanctions have had a significant impact on this policy. Countries like Japan and South Korea, with strong economic and cultural ties to the Western world, have withdrawn their interests from Iran and no longer hold a significant place in the policy. In contrast, China has taken the top spot in Iran's "Look to the East" policy.

Iran is located in a very complex regional environment, that's why he got dominance in the Persian Gulf region and South Caucasus region. Iran's position on the issue of power and control, and close proximity to Iran and other Persian Gulf oil transport routes for Caspian energy routes has caused the shifting geopolitical energy transfer to Iran, provided the geostrategic power production (Mehrabi and et al,2013:37-39).

These complex region locations brought Iran strategically close to China, Russia, and India. Iran harshly suffering from the sanctions that's why Iran has gradually deepened its relationship with China, which has stepped in to become a critical strategic partner for Iran. These two countries have military ties and strengthen cooperation in high-level military exchanges, and exercises. Iran sees China as an important ally against America. Iran's economy was surrounded by oil and petroleum products and China was seeking a new trading partner in the middle east and also to extend its dream project 'One Belt, One Road ' (OBOR). Before 2015, Iran's "Look to the East" policy existed only on paper, without any tangible progress. However,

after Donald Trump withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on May 8, 2018, Iran became more committed to this policy. China is the center of Iran's effort to maintain its oil exports, one-third of Iranian oil exports are sold to China. Fearing US sanctions China also emerged as a Prime source of energy exporters as well as infrastructure investment. In September 2017 Iran welcomes Chinese investments in infrastructure. Iran and China sign the biggest economical and security deal and also provide a credit line of \$ 10 billion to Iranian banks to fund energy, natural environment, transportation, and management of water resources projects (Press TV,2017). In 2019, state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) exited the \$5 billion South Pars natural gas development project, which would have been the largest Chinese investment project in Iran to date, due to U.S. sanctions (Shahla and Ratcliffe,2019). In exchange for investment, China would receive a regular and discounted supply of Iranian oil for 25 years. Iran and China also come along for military cooperation. People's Liberation Army Navy participated in military exercises three times. Development-oriented approach to national security approach to the interactive global system, can effectively the geopolitics of energy to ensure national security (Mehrabani and et al,2013: 39-41).

In December 2019, China, Russia, and Iran had a joint naval exercise in the Gulf of Oman. China has been a key player in Iran's efforts to diversify its trade relationships beyond Western countries. China has also been a strong supporter of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which helped ease sanctions against Iran and open up opportunities for greater economic cooperation.

The Caspian Sea region and South Caucasus pose security threats to both Russia and Iran, and the two countries have formed a close alliance, including support for Bashar al-Assad in Syria. Russia, like Iran, does not agree with the US-defined order and balance system in the Middle East and believes that this system does not provide long-term benefits (Noori and Masoudi,2022:161-164). For economic cooperation, these two countries come close, especially in the oil sector. In March 2018, Russia entered into the energy sector financing the project of developing the oilfields with an investment of \$742 million. Trade volume between these two countries rose from \$400 million in 1991 to about \$3 billion between 2000 and 2007 (Sanaei and Karami,2021:35). The free trade zone among the members of

the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has been approved by both Russia and Iran, which is expected to facilitate international market access to Iranian oil. Russia has supported Iran on vital issues and it shows Iran as an important ally. Russia has vetoed several times in the UN Security Council and supported Iran's request to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). As Russia shows its mutual interest in Iran it is not enough to strengthen Iran economically and also both countries do not take any courage to improve their interests in security aspects they come together in Syria and the Taliban issue in Afghanistan but they have shady plans for the future. In recent years, the two countries have signed several agreements aimed at increasing cooperation in areas such as oil and gas exploration, power generation, and transportation infrastructure. However, American sanctions have made it more difficult for Russia to invest in Iran, and the two countries have faced challenges in implementing some of their joint projects.

One of the most important pillars of Iran's Look to East policy is India. Iran and India have been positive and appropriate all the years since the independence. While the United States and India have recently enjoyed close relations, Iran and India have managed to maintain a low-tension bilateral relationship. India has participated in Chabahar port developments, as this port India directly gets access to Central Asia, Europe, and Afghanistan. Iran was the Third largest crude supplier of India. As the two countries seek to expand their energy relations beyond the buyer and seller relation, India's ONGC Videsh, the foreign arm of Oil and Natural Gas Corp sought development rights over the Farzad B gas field, it had earlier discovered (Reuters,2018). India has heavily invested in connecting Zaranj-Deleram, and the Chabahar-Zahedan railway link, extended to Mashhad in eastern Iran and Central Asia (Aliyeva,2018:2). Since India become a member of SCO, Iran get more attention from Indian policymakers. Iran becomes the center of India's Center Asia policy. In February 2018, India joined the Ashgabat Agreement with the diversifying India's connectivity options with Center Asia, which seeks to create a transit and transport corridor between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in Central Asia and Iran, and In Persian Gulf Region (Aliyeva,2018). These two countries looking to strengthen their relations, and governments are preparing to replace the dollar with the Rupee trade for bypassing sanctions. India considers Chabahar as crucial to its extra-regional activities and also India's

development role in Afghanistan, it approaches America to take a liberal stance on it. Despite American sanctions on Iran, India has continued to engage in trade with Iran through mechanisms such as the Chabahar port project, which provides India with a key gateway to Central Asia and Afghanistan. Overall, India's economic ties with Iran are likely to continue to grow, as the two countries seek closer cooperation in various sectors.

In this chaotic situation and the unpredictability of behaviors, the actions of the adversary or its allies cannot be properly understood, so any one of Iran's deterrent actions is perceived in a greater global competition context, by the United States. Meanwhile, the Iranian deterrence strategy does not receive reliable support on behalf of Russia or China. (Ansari Fard and Haji-Yousefi, 2023:99-101). Newly elected president Ebrahim Raisi is interested to continue and making a strong stance on the Look to the East policy, he also presented at the SCO summit, the event the Iranian policymakers' determination to pursue their look to east policy. Being a member of the SCO will provide the country with a better opportunity to cooperate with other members in the energy, security, banking, and business fields (IRNA, 2021). Ebrahim Raisi has placed great importance on the country's "Look to the East" policy. He has stressed the need for closer cooperation with nations like China, Russia, and India, while also urging Iran to reduce its reliance on Western markets. To help facilitate stronger ties with Asian countries, Raisi has emphasized the necessity of investing in transportation and energy infrastructure projects. Overall, Raisi's administration is expected to remain committed to advancing the "Look to the East" policy as a means of enhancing Iran's economic and strategic standing in the region.

6 .Conclusion

The strategic decisions of both India and Iran to shift their focus towards East Asian countries have been driven by economic, political, and security considerations. India's "Look East" policy has proven successful, initially concentrating on attracting foreign investments for infrastructure development. As India achieved its economic goals, its focus expanded to encompass geopolitics, particularly in the South China, ASEAN, South East, and South Pacific regions. The Blue Economy has emerged as a crucial element for growth and prosperity, providing a platform for engagement between India and ASEAN. India has been actively working towards enhancing connectivity between its various states and ASEAN nations. Collaboration in economic projects, development initiatives,

technology transfer, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable ocean resource utilization has become key areas of cooperation between India and ASEAN. For India, sustaining the momentum of its "Look East" policy requires continued investment in infrastructure development, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, and strengthening collaborations with East Asian nations. India's increased engagement in Southeast Asia is seen as a way to balance China's growing influence in the region. By promoting security and stability, cooperating on issues like counterterrorism, maritime security, and disaster response, and addressing territorial disputes, India has contributed to building trust and making the region more secure. This helps ensure that no single country becomes too powerful and dominates the Southeast Asian region. India possesses the necessary political and economic instruments to further strengthen ties with ASEAN. The ASEAN countries view India's presence as a balancing force and appreciate its efforts to maintain a stable and prosperous Southeast Asia.

While India's "Look East" policy holds significant potential, there are challenges that need to be addressed for future success. One major challenge is competition from other regional powers, particularly China, which has been actively expanding its influence in East Asia. To overcome this challenge, India needs to continue building strong economic, political, and security partnerships with ASEAN countries and reinforce its commitment to the region's stability. In order to sustain long-term engagement and cooperation, India should actively participate in regional forums and organizations, such as ASEAN, and leverage existing mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation. This will allow India to contribute to regional decision-making processes and shape the strategic direction of East Asian affairs. Additionally, India should continue to diversify its economic engagement in the region by exploring opportunities in emerging sectors and industries. By promoting trade, investment, and technology collaboration in non-traditional areas, India can broaden its economic partnership with ASEAN and enhance mutual benefits. In conclusion, India's "Look East" policy has demonstrated its potential for promoting economic growth, political cooperation, and security in East Asia. By addressing challenges, such as competition from regional powers and effective project implementation, and adopting a comprehensive and inclusive approach, India can further strengthen its ties with ASEAN countries and play a more significant role in shaping the region's future. The

strategic alignment between India and ASEAN holds immense potential for fostering a stable, prosperous, and interconnected East Asian region.

The "Look East" policy of Iran has been driven by the compulsion to find alternate options for economic survival in the face of American sanctions and the lack of support from European countries. While Iran's focus on its energy sectors, particularly oil and petroleum, provides significant growth opportunities, it also limits the country's ability to diversify its economy and pursue growth in other regions, especially in the East. Iran's vast reserves of natural gas offer leverage in its foreign policy, particularly in relation to East Asian nations. However, Iran's policymakers have primarily concentrated on building relationships with only three countries: China, Russia, and India. To ensure successful implementation of the "Look East" policy and harness the potential for future growth in East Asian countries, Iran needs a well-crafted MicroStrategy that considers its economic, security, and strategic aspirations. This strategy should prioritize infrastructure development in key sectors such as agriculture, energy, connectivity, and banking. Iran should also focus on ongoing projects and actively seek more investments to open up new opportunities for foreign investors. Iran's strategic and politically important location, with the South Caucasus in the north and the Persian Gulf in the south, military strength plays a crucial role in asserting dominance and protecting its interests in the region. While Russia and China have significant ties with Iran, their security cooperation has been limited in recent years and primarily influenced by opposition to American actions. To enhance its influence and receive support for development projects, Iran can consider joining regional organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). These organizations can provide financial and technical assistance, enabling Iran to have greater influence in the region. Iran's heavy dependence on oil exports poses risks, as fluctuations in the global energy market and disruptions in energy supply can have severe consequences for the country's economy and national security. To mitigate these risks, Iran must adopt a diversified and sustainable economic strategy that reduces reliance on oil exports.

The "Look East" policy of Iran faces several challenges moving forward. The primary challenge is navigating the impact of American sanctions, which have severely restricted Iran's access to global markets and financial systems. To address this challenge, Iran can continue efforts to strengthen

partnerships with China, Russia, and India, which have shown resilience in maintaining trade and investment ties despite the sanctions. Building strong economic and diplomatic alliances will help Iran mitigate the negative effects of the sanctions and create new avenues for economic growth. Another challenge lies in diversifying Iran's economy beyond the energy sector. While energy resources provide significant opportunities, over-reliance on oil exports leaves Iran vulnerable to market fluctuations. To address this, Iran should focus on developing a robust industrial base, promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, and investing in sectors such as technology, agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism. By diversifying its economy, Iran can reduce vulnerability to external shocks and establish a more sustainable and resilient economic foundation. Infrastructure development is another critical aspect that requires attention. Iran should actively seek foreign investments and partnerships to support infrastructure projects and leverage its strategic location to become a hub for regional connectivity. Furthermore, investing in human capital and promoting research and development are vital for Iran's long-term growth. By investing in education, skills training, and innovation, Iran can develop a skilled workforce capable of driving economic diversification and technological advancements to get opportunity to stand among East Asian countries or ASIAN countries. Iran's "Look to the East" policy holds significant potential for advancing its economic and strategic interests. By addressing challenges such as American sanctions, diversifying the economy, investing in infrastructure, and fostering human capital development, Iran can create a more resilient and prosperous future. Continued engagement with Eastern partners and active participation in regional organizations will be essential in achieving these goals and securing Iran's position in the evolving global landscape.

7. Acknowledgment

The authors of the article express their gratitude to the Department of Political Science of University of Guilan for providing the opportunity to conduct this research.

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