

**Presentation at the International Conference to
Commemorate the 20th Anniversary of ASEAN-India
Cooperation 'Seamless Integration into the Third Decade –
Building on Two Decades of ASEAN-India Partnership'
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok
20-21 September 2012**

**Education, Knowledge Institutional Co-
operation especially in areas of Science,
Society and Innovation for Sustainability.**

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From the Conference Note:

Science and Technology is believed to be a main driver of progress. It is evident in its wide spread of discourse claiming its benefits: “knowledge society”, “research university”, and so on.

Furthermore, innovation is treated as a cutting edge for national competitiveness. Indeed, while the gap between science and technology on the one hand and social science and humanities on the other hand is widened (knowledge fragmentation), it seems that science and technology are much more complex and multi-layered social activities than ever before (large amount of investment, research-corporate nexus, etc.).

Conference Notes:

Knowledge Cooperation in Areas of Science, Society and Sustainability

One session will focus on examining the knowledge production and its application, governance of science and technology, probing on how system of innovation can be produced and look for partnerships with Indian institutions where there has been a lot of work done in this area and for envisioning Chulalongkorn University as it prepares to celebrate its centennial anniversary and in the restructuring towards interdisciplinary and research-policy platforms”.

Historical Ties between India and Thailand

◆ Students from both countries have travelled and studied in India and Thailand though the number of Indian students coming to Thailand may be smaller in number. In recent time, in the past decade or so, increasing numbers of Thai school going age children are studying in boarding schools in India especially in Southern India and having acclimatised themselves to the Indian social and cultural environment many of them are returning to study in higher education institutions in India.

◆ Even three or four decades ago, in places like Mysore University, where I am, it was a common sight to see Thai Buddhist monks coming to study at Mysore University. Today increasingly students not just Thai monks are coming to India and states like Karnataka to study Engineering and other subjects.

Historical Ties (contd.)

Malaysian students have trained in Indian medical institution as doctors.

Given that India as a Non-Aligned country continued to maintain relations with Vietnam during the Vietnam War as also maintained close relations with Laos, after the Vietnam war India has also encouraged students from Cambodia to study in India. Students from these countries have studied in Indian higher education institutions and returned to occupy high positions in their governments.

It is interesting to note that when Vietnam gets the opportunity to take the post of Secretary General of ASEAN, an alumnus of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, Deputy Foreign Minister Le Luong Minh is likely to get the post.

Since the Secretariat of ASEAN is based in Jakarta, if Le Luong Minh moves to Jakarta, he will discover another alumnus of JNU, Ambassador, Gurjit Singh is India's Ambassador to Indonesia.

Ambitions for the India-ASEAN relations

Historically ASEAN being a creation of the Cold War and the original founding countries of ASEAN shunned India, and India has also been kept out of APEC in which ASEAN plays a major role.

However, the changing realities of the Indian economy and the ups and downs of the global economy has led to desire for greater ties between India and ASEAN and great ambitions have been placed for this relationship.

Prospects

What are the prospects in this background of both positive shared cultural heritage, natural cultural and historical ties interrupted by the Cold War and new suspicions and alienated relations produced as a result of the Cold War intellectual legacies? (for example the doubts raised in Cold War discourses are issues such as the Open Nature of India's Democracy, Democratic Institutions and Federal Nature of Indian Democracy, Cultural and Linguistic Diversity; Diversity of Political Ideologies present in India....)

The Cold War history is now suspended (whether temporarily or will permanently disappear is difficult to say) in the wake of growing and positive relations in terms of economic relations in the area of trade, investment and heightened economic cooperation.

Prospects

The issue is how permanent these economic ties will be, will shifts happen once the global economy is out of its problems and Europe and the US start witnessing growth?

If one was not to do crystal ball gazing it can be said that the positivist reality of economic relations is bound to create its own ripples in the fields of culture, tourism and educational exchanges

Though a rider must be added that Cooperation on the spheres of knowledge cannot be left to evolutionary economic trends and positivist perspectives. They need normative goals and nurturing

Problems and Ground Realities

- 1) Lack of common frameworks for educational cooperation and exchange
- 2) Little or no cooperation with regard to multilateral and international education standard setting processes
- 3) No coherent strategy in evolving and promoting educational exchange and cooperation and which can in turn lead to networking and relations among Knowledge Institutions and which in turn can foster productive collaboration that adds mutual value with regard to innovation and mutually beneficial relations in areas such as Science, Society and Sustainability.
- 4) Indian decision making being very Delhi-Centric and the behaviour of the Indian State at times like old empires (may be better than China) though this is changing but not fast enough!

Forging partnerships under the constraints of Positivist International Relations

Like the Cold War history and intellectual legacies that keeps us tied to the West and does not give us fresh perspectives to look within Asia, a major disastrous intellectual legacy is positivist international relations and which is major constraint in enabling and providing creative environments that contribute to evolving normative frames and models for Knowledge Cooperation.

Economists and economics and economies have somehow managed by the sheer logic of markets and economies subtly challenged such intellectual strongholds and provide new frameworks for cooperation.

In the Indian case the RIS is a shining example of both breaking such straitjackets of IR as well as bringing non-Delhi centric perspectives to India's relations with the world, both developing and Asia

Enabling environments and pre-conditions for strengthening partnerships for Knowledge Cooperation especially in areas such as Science, Society and Sustainability

1. Cooperation in the area of Science and Technology in general requires perspectives that can draw from disciplines such as public policy and not just IR alone. (Already one can see that India and ASEAN are including areas such as Biodiversity, Climate Change, Renewable Energy and Green Manufacture as areas for cooperation)
2. Normative perspectives are vital for not only laying the foundations for such cooperation and collaboration but the very survival of such cooperation when it comes to fields relating to Science, Society and Sustainability not to mention Innovation. Normative in deciding how to use the Science and Technology base and for what.
3. Knowledge society debates that influence public policy decisions in Science and Technology must inform and influence such cooperation between societies and cannot be done when there is censorship and restrictions placed. Knowledge censorship also interferes with Innovation

Enabling environments and pre-conditions for strengthening partnerships for Knowledge Cooperation especially in areas such as Science, Society and Sustainability (contd.)

4) Strategic think tanks have (and should have) very limiting roles in developing, forging and building on cooperative ties in the area of Knowledge Societies; Science, Society and Sustainability and Cooperation in building Innovation societies.

5) Universities should increasingly play a role but are they equipped for such tasks? What kind of capacity building is required to play such roles?

6) Designing and implementing cooperation between Think Tanks, Science and Technology Policy Institutions and University Researchers and creating knowledge platforms within countries is needed as a basis for cooperation between countries and between regions such as ASEAN and India.

The University as a knowledge institution and as a basis for cooperation between India and Thailand-Some loud thoughts as recommendations

1. The Chula-RIS cooperation is a useful model and the existing strong links must be used to build capacity in other Universities in India and Thailand.
2. The Chula-RIS type of framework of cooperation must be leveraged to extend the scope of cooperation beyond “economics” to other areas of knowledge cooperation. This requires in the case of the RIS that its Ministry beat is widened beyond Ministries such as the Commerce Ministry.
3. Chula and RIS must emerge as the new design alternative and creating new generation institutions in the region that are able to overcome the one-sided “strategic plus sprinkling of culture” perspective of cooperation being propagated by some well funded institutions in the region by countries that are pouring a lot of resources in such directions.

In Conclusion: Can the 20 Year Celebrations of India-ASEAN lead to the founding of an **Asia Futures Institute** at Chulalongkorn that is multidisciplinary and Asian? A venture that is based on the regional and cultural diversity of ASEAN countries and India and not just reduced to relations between capitals. Includes vision that is futuristic and not tied by positivist perspectives based on current contexts including regional rivalries and tensions.

An **Asia Futures Institute** in which Thailand (Chula) and India (RIS) take the lead but other ASEAN Countries as well as Japan which can become part of and is based on future scenario building?

An **Asia Futures Institute** that brings the University Knowledge Community in Asia for trans-border cooperation in knowledge exchange, science and technology policy sharing, building research universities for innovation that connect science, society and sustainability and make sustainable cultures, ecology and society as the focus and not just prosperity. New partnerships that can connect Knowledge (Knowledge Institutions), Well Being and Quality of Life as a the goal for the next Two Decades of Relationships between India and ASEAN.

Thank you