

**INDIA-MYANMAR RELATIONS: A STUDY OF ITS  
STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF  
PHILOSOPHY**

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**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
AUGUST 2024**

**INDIA-MYANMAR RELATIONS: A STUDY OF ITS STRATEGIC  
IMPLICATIONS**

**BY**

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**Submitted**

**In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in Political Science of Mizoram University, Aizwal**

**DECLARATION**  
**MIZORAM UNIVERSITY**  
**AUGUST, 2024**

I **DIGVIJAY SINGH**, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to do the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute.

This is being submitted to the Mizoram University for the **Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science**.

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### **CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that **Mr. Digvijay Singh**, a research scholar (Ph.D.) Registration No. MZU/Ph.D./1933 of 11.08.2021) in the Department of Political Science, Mizoram University has completed his work on **India-Myanmar Relations: A Study of its Strategic Implications for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Political Science** under my supervision. The work carried out by the scholar is original and no part of the thesis has been published in any form, either in a journal or a book.

He has fulfilled all the criteria as prescribed by the UGC Regulation 2016 with mandatory publication. On completion of all the formalities of Mizoram University, I am pleased to forward the thesis for evaluation and further necessary action.

**(Prof. J.K PATNAIK)**

**Supervisor**

**DECLARATION**  
**MIZORAM UNIVERSITY**  
**AUGUST 2024**

I **DIGVIJAY SINGH**, do hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/ Institute.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AA	-	Arakan Army
ABLC	-	Army Border Liaison Committee
ADMM Plus	-	ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus
ADSL	-	Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line
AEP	-	Act East Policy
AIR	-	All India Radio
AITIGA	-	ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement
AMM	-	Aqa Mul Mujahideen
APEC	-	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARF	-	ASEAN Regional Forum
ARSA	-	Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army
ASEAN	-	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUKUS	-	Australia, United Kingdom, United States
BARC	-	Bhabha Atomic Research Centre
BCIM	-	Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar
BCP	-	Burmese Communist Party
BIA	-	Burmese Independence Army
BIMSTEC and Economic	-	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical Cooperation
BIPA	-	Bilateral Investment Promotion Agreement
BP	-	Boundary Pillar
BRI	-	Belt and Road Initiative
BRICS	-	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CNA	-	Chin National Army
CDS	-	Centre for Development Studies
CECA	-	Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement
CMEC	-	China-Myanmar Economic Corridor
CNF	-	Chin National Front

CNOOC	-	China National Offshore Oil Corporation
CNPC	-	China National Petroleum Corporation
CPEC	-	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
CPIC	-	China Power Investment Corporation
CPTPP	-	Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership
DFTP	-	Duty-Free Tariff Preference
DICA	-	Directorate of Investment and Company Administration
DRV	-	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
DTAA	-	Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement
EAO	-	Ethnic Armed Organization
EAS	-	East Asia Summit
EIA	-	Environmental Impact Assessment
FDI	-	Foreign Direct Investment
FMR	-	Free Movement Regime
FOC	-	Foreign Office Consultations
FTA	-	Free Trade Agreement
GAC	-	General Administration of Customs
GAIL	-	Gas Authority of India Ltd
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
HCQ	-	Hydroxychloroquine
HUJI	-	Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami
IAI	-	Initiative for ASEAN Integration
ICCR	-	Indian Council of Cultural Relations
IIG	-	Indian Insurgent Group
IIIT	-	Indian Institute of Information Technology
IIM	-	Indian Institute of Management
IIT	-	Indian Institute of Technology
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
IPR	-	Indo-Pacific Region
ISRO	-	Indian Space Research Organisation

ITEC	-	Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation
JeM	-	Jaish-e-Mohammed
JSC	-	Joint Steering Committee
JWG	-	Joint Working Group
KIA	-	Kachin Independence Army
KMMTTP Project	-	Kaladan Multi-Modal Transport and Transshipment
LAC	-	Line of Actual Control
LEP	-	Look East Policy
LeT	-	Lashkar-e-Taiba
MCG	-	Mekong- Ganga Cooperation
MEA	-	Ministry of External Affairs
MGC	-	Mekong Ganga Cooperation
MILAN	-	Multilateral Naval Exercises
MoD	-	Ministry of Defense
MOGE	-	Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise
MOIA	-	Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs
MoU	-	Memorandum of Understanding
NDA	-	National Democratic Alliance
NER	-	North Eastern Region
NFLSV	-	National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam
NHP	-	National Health Program
NIIT	-	National Institute of Information Technology
NLD	-	National League for Democracy
NLM	-	National Level Meeting
NNC	-	Naga National Council
NORINCO	-	North Industries Corporation
NPT	-	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSA	-	National Security Advisor
NSG	-	Nuclear Suppliers Group
NSSP	-	Next Step for a Strategic Partnership
NWS	-	Nuclear Weapons State

ONGCVL	-	Oil and Natural Gas Cooperation Videsh Ltd
PDF	-	People's Defense Force
PIO	-	Persons of Indian Origin
PLA	-	People's Liberation Army
PRC	-	Peoples' Republic of China
PSU	-	Public Sector Undertaking
QUAD	-	Quadrilateral Security Discussion
RBC	-	Regional Border Committees
RCEP	-	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
RCSS	-	Restoration Council of Shan State
RIL	-	Reliance Industries Ltd
RTIA	-	Regional Trade and Investment Area
SAC	-	State Administration Council
SEATO	-	Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation
SIPRI	-	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SLM	-	Secretary Level Meetings
SLORC	-	State Law and Order Restoration Council
SPDC	-	State Peace Development Council
SSA	-	Shan State Army
TCS	-	Tata Consultancy Service
ULFA	-	United Liberation Front of Assam
UMEHL	-	Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited
UNCLOS	-	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNSC	-	United Nations Security Council
USCENTCOM	-	US Central Command
USD	-	United States Dollar
USPACOM	-	US Pacific Command
USSR	-	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UWSA	-	United Wa State Army
WTO	-	World Trade Organization
YMEC	-	Yunnan Machinery & Equipment Import and Export Company
ZOPFAN	-	Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality

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WTO	-	World Trade Organization
YMEC	-	Yunnan Machinery & Equipment Import and Export Company
ZOPFAN	-	Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality

## CHAPTER -1

### INTRODUCTION

India and Myanmar were historically part of the extended British Empire in Asia. Since the two countries became independent after the ending of World War II, relations between them have by and large been friendly. At the outset Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru and U Nu worked closely with each other in the area of economic development. India even provided some military assistance to Myanmar, and both were active members of the Non- Aligned Movement. However, relations between the two became strained in 1962. India strongly opposed the imposition of military dictatorship in Myanmar by General Ne Win and supported the pro-democracy forces. The Ne Win regime adopted an anti-Soviet stance at a time when relations between India and the Soviet Union were burgeoning, refused to join the Commonwealth of Nations, and withdrew from the Non-Aligned Movement in 1979.

Relations between India and Myanmar did improve from 1988 onward, however, although some tensions remained. India continued to sympathize with prodemocracy groups and awarded the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding to Aung San Suu Kyi in 1993, by which time she had already become *persona non grata* to the Myanmar government. The isolationist strategy adopted by the State Law and Order Restoration Council further hampered the renewal of full relations between the two countries. After 1993, however, India's policy toward Myanmar was reviewed and India adopted a more pragmatic and less moralistic stance. This purposeful shift from an idealistic foreign policy to one that was firmly anchored in realpolitik has been the driving force behind the improvement of relations between the two countries. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's focus on the Southeast Asian nations reflected India's growing interest in its regional neighbourhood.

Former Indian foreign secretary Shyam Saran explains India's quest to reach out to its Asian neighbours in these words:<sup>1</sup> Proximity is the most difficult and

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<sup>1</sup> Shyam Saran. (2003). Present Dimensions of Indian Foreign Policy, *Indian Foreign Policy: Challenges and Opportunities*, Atish Sinha and Madhup Mohta (Ed.) (2003), New Delhi: Academic

testing among the diplomatic challenges a country faces. We have, therefore, committed ourselves to giving the highest priority to closer political, economic and other ties with our neighbours in South Asia. Geography imparts a unique position to India in the geo-politics of the Asian continent, with our footprint reaching well beyond South Asia and our interests straddling across different sub-categories of Asia-be it East Asia, West Asia, Central Asia, South Asia or South-East Asia.

India's Look East policy was targeted at opening markets in Southeast Asia, and cooperation with Myanmar was important for its implementation. That Bangladesh was a recalcitrant partner in this endeavour further highlighted the importance of Myanmar. Without this shift in policy, the growth of several of India's northeastern states would have been hindered by the attendant risk of fuelling insurgencies.

India's interest in Myanmar and the Look East policy also reflect growing international interest in Asia as an engine of economic growth in the twenty-first century. Myanmar supports India's quest for a place in the sun and is comfortable with India's increasing engagement with its immediate and extended neighbourhood. For the Myanmar government, the additional purpose of addressing problems in the northeastern states comes as a welcome part of the deal. Moreover, India's move to engage Myanmar closely reflects its growing concern over Myanmar's jettisoning its policy of neutrality toward India and China and gradually tilting towards China.

India and Myanmar are neighbouring each other and have a traditional, close and longstanding relationship. Through many ups and downs in history, the political, cultural, religious, social relations between India and Myanmar are the basis for bilateral relations in modern times. On January 4, 1948, India and Myanmar officially established diplomatic ties, opening a new era in the history of bilateral relations. Then, on July 7, 1951, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar Sao Hkun Hkio and Indian Ambassador in Myanmar M.A Rauf had signed the Treaty of Friendship in

Yangon (Myanmar), is a historical landmark offering friendly relations India-Myanmar onto a new level. Warmth in bilateral relations is reflected in the statement of Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru:<sup>2</sup> “We are in frequent touch with the Government of Burma on many matters. We are not only friendly in the normal sense of the word, but if I may say so somewhat more friendly”. Later on March 17, 1953, while making a foreign policy statement in the course of his reply to the foreign policy debate in the House of the People in New Delhi, J. Nehru declared that<sup>3</sup> “India’s relations with Burma have never been so co-operative and friendly as now”.

For India-Myanmar relations, if the period 1948-1962 showed the friendly and close relationship, the years 1962-1991 were the period when the relationship between two countries was reduced and almost “freeze”. The event that marked India-Myanmar relations turning the other way was the military coup led by General Ne Win to overthrow the civilian government of U Nu, ushering in the period when the army took power in Myanmar in March, 1962. Under the rule of the Ne Win government, Myanmar had implemented domestic and foreign policies that were not conducive to this bilateral relation. On the domestic side, Ne Win’s government had ordered the expulsion of the Indian diaspora community from Myanmar in order to quickly abolish the role and status of the Indian business class.

During the 1960s and 70s, many Indians had to leave Myanmar, specifically about 1,00,000 people. This further added to India’s discontent with Myanmar. On foreign policy, the government of Ne Win balanced the relationship between Myanmar and the United States, the Soviet Union and China. Despite being a neighbouring country with an international standing, India was not an important factor in Myanmar’s foreign policy. In addition, during a Sino - Indian border conflict in October 1962, Myanmar military government showed a neutral stand on

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<sup>2</sup> Pradhan, S.K. (1981). *Indo-Burmese Relations - 1948-196*, New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University, p.84

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.84

the issue. The silence of Myanmar was interpreted as 'pro-Chinese' by Indian government and naturally India-Myanmar relations were disturbed. All of these historical facts made India oppose the military regime in Myanmar. In the context of Ne Win's military government in Myanmar being condemned by India and the international community, China was the only country that maintained diplomatic relations with neighbouring Myanmar.

During the period of General Ne Win's reign (1962 - 1988), India generally maintained a neutral relationship with little regard for Myanmar. At that time, the Indian leaders considered that the first priority was the commitment to "democratic values", while the "security concerns" were considered secondary in India's foreign policy with Myanmar. The attitudes and policies of the Indian government to the Myanmar government on democracy had brought relations between two countries to the lowest point during 1988 due to the fierce reaction from India against Myanmar government action to suppress the protesters, including many of Indian descent. After the "August, 8, 1988" event, China became the close ally and had an important voice for Myanmar. By the end of the 1990s, China had also emerged as Myanmar's principal aid provider and economic partner. In the opposite side, along with the actions to suppress the democracy movement, the denial of the parliamentary election results in 1990 of the Myanmar military government also made the international community strongly condemn this government, including India. Therefore, strategically, due to the combination of the isolation of the United States and Western countries from Myanmar, India's policy in the period of 1988-1991 has contributed in bringing Myanmar closer to China. Since 1988, China became the only country with close ties with Myanmar's military government.<sup>4</sup> "The Burmese regularly affirm their appreciation of Chinese friendship, and the Chinese in turn continue to provide key diplomatic support".

The relationship between India and Myanmar since gaining independence to the early 1990s of the twentieth century has been tumultuous and complicated.

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<sup>4</sup> Myint-U, Thant. (2011). *Where China Meets India: Burma and the New Crossroads of Asia*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, p.118

Throughout the process of India- Myanmar relations from 1948 until the Cold War's end, China was one of the factors that greatly influenced not only this relationship but also played an important role in foreign policy of this Southeast Asian neighbour. That has contributed to the deterioration of the India - Myanmar relations, even at times 'tense' and 'freeze'. The increasingly tight relationship between Myanmar and China is an expensive lesson for India in terms of national strategy and interests. This has forced India to recalculate its foreign policy towards neighbouring Myanmar since the early 1990s.

In the field of politics - diplomacy, since 1992, the relationships between two countries have gradually improved and developed through regular exchanges and contacts in high-level relations, through which many important documents have been signed. During the talks, the leaders of the two countries agreed on some important issues: Myanmar will not allow the rebel groups to use Myanmar territory against India, Myanmar is committed to restoring democracy and wants India to support this process; India is committed to supporting military government efforts to establish a democratic government in Myanmar. Referring to the democratic process in Myanmar, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated:<sup>5</sup> "The transition to a democracy is a complex process but it creates the best possibilities for addressing both political stability and economic development".

In 2014, when Prime Minister Modi took over the office, India's Act East Policy (AEP) was unveiled at the 12th ASEAN - India Summit, held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. In his Opening Statement at the 12th ASEAN-India Summit, Prime Minister Modi said:<sup>6</sup> A new era of economic development, industrialisation and trade has begun in India. Externally, India's "Look East Policy" has become "Act East Policy". In terms of policy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is interested in promoting economic programs with Southeast Asian countries to attract investment,

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<sup>5</sup> Vietnam News Agency. (2006). India connects the bridge with Myanmar, Special References.

<sup>6</sup> Modi Narendra. (2014, November 12). India-ASEAN summit opening statement by the Prime Minister on page

<http://www.narendramodin.in/english rendering of the India - ASEAN summit opening statement by the PM.> Nay Pyi Taw.

especially in the fields of infrastructure and commercial locations in area. The Indian Government wants to take more practical actions in strengthening relations with ASEAN countries. This can be seen as an Indian step in strengthening strategic relations and expanding economic relations with Southeast Asian countries. With the first steps of “Act East”, Southeast Asia region still plays an important role in India's foreign strategy. This creates favourable conditions for India - ASEAN relations in general and India - Myanmar relations in particular to be strengthened and developed in the following years.

It can be said that India's practical diplomacy with Myanmar since 1992 is a “parallel two- way policy” combining “India's political and spiritual support for democratic forces” with “a commitment to the Myanmar military government to improve and enhance relations between the two governments”, thereby helping India strengthen relations with Myanmar a neighbouring country with an important strategic position - from the field of politics to bilateral economic and trade cooperation and security - defence. This flexibility has allowed India to support, encourage and stay in touch with the democracy movement, while continuing to strengthen ties with Myanmar's military government.

In the economic field, with the implementation of “Look East” policy, Myanmar was considered a “trade bridge” for India to enter the Southeast Asian market. During the 90s of the twentieth century, since when India and Myanmar improved their relations, bilateral trade almost increased every year. In 2000, the total value of Myanmar's exports to India reached 220 million USD, while that of India to Myanmar was at 75.36 million USD during the same period. In fiscal year 2010-2011, India-Myanmar bilateral trade continued to reach 1,071 billion USD, of which India's exports to Myanmar reached 194.92 million USD and import value was 876.91 million USD. Currently, India becomes Myanmar's fourth largest trading partner, after Thailand, China and Singapore and is Myanmar's second-largest import market for goods after Thailand. India's exports account for 25% of Myanmar's total exports.

In the field of investment, a series of Indian projects investing in Myanmar and joint cooperation projects between the two countries have been implemented. India's first important project with Myanmar is the Tamu - Kalewa - Kalembo highway 160 km from Moreh, Manipur state to Mandalay, worth 1 billion Rupee, fully funded by the Indian government. This is an Indian initiative that will not only boost trade, but also strengthen the friendship of the people of the two countries. In 2002, India and Myanmar also reached a consensus on the approval of the Kaladan multimode transit and transshipment project linking the Sittwe port with Mizoram. In addition, with its outstanding advantages, India has helped Myanmar to modernize satellite communication centres and implement information technology projects.

In 2005, the Indian Government provided a number of credit packages for telecommunications and information technology projects in Myanmar. At the same time, India has also extended credits granted to other special projects such as upgrading the phone line connecting Yangon with Mandalay; open 500 km of fibre optic cable connecting Moreh with Mandalay in order to facilitate communication and connection through wide band between regions; establishing Asymmetric digital subscriber line (ADSL) in Yangon and Mandalay. After the visit of India, President Thein Sein (October 2011), the Indian government expanded the credit flow of 300 million USD for the development of railroads, airports, traffic and refineries for Myanmar.

In terms of military security, since 1992, India and Myanmar have cooperated against rebel forces in the border security, India and Myanmar both agreed to set up four more points (Lungwa, Bihang, Sapi and Zokawathar) in the border area to facilitate the coordination between both countries. Both countries are expected to continue fencing 14 km near the international border in Moreh area.

It is clear that India faces a profound strategic challenge as a consequence of China's rise, although this is not the only threat New Delhi must manage. China's spectacular economic growth gives it great wealth as well as the power and influence that come with such prosperity. Yet an argument could conceivably be made that Pakistan and its asymmetric strategy of supporting terrorism against India

represents a more immediate threat. Even so, China's recent aggressive behaviour - toward India (including its recent reassertion of territorial claims on Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh, as well as its pressure on the India-Bhutan-China tri-junction) and toward other neighbours (in the South China Sea, for example) - makes it difficult to assume that China is any less of a short-term threat to India than Pakistan. Furthermore, Beijing poses a graver threat to New Delhi than Islamabad does. Even if it constitutes a more immediate threat, Pakistan is far weaker than India by most measures, save nuclear weapons. Pakistan's inclination to resort to nuclear threats and asymmetric warfare is a reflection of weakness, not strength.

By comparison, China is a far greater strategic challenge because of the large power imbalance between it and India, which will likely continue to widen. The strategic choices that India faces with regard to China are thus far more consequential. China's growing power poses at least four challenges to India.

China actually has slightly fewer ground forces (1.15 million troops) than India (1.20 million troops), but the former enjoys critical terrain advantages along the Sino-Indian border, accentuated by far superior transportation and communications infrastructure in bordering Tibet. Meanwhile, China fields almost twice as many modern combat aircraft (of the Mirage-2000 vintage or newer) as India (653 to 349) and nearly three times as many major surface combat vessels (79 to 28) and submarines (53 to 14).<sup>7</sup>

It ranges from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). China has at times proved to be an obstacle to Indian foreign policy ambitions. China is likely to continue to obstruct India in this manner, and its capacity to do so will only grow as its power increases. Moreover, as its power grows, China has also started establishing international institutions like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and has also been shaping other multilateral organisation to promote Chinese interests, such as the BRICS (a group consisting

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<sup>7</sup> China is also building its own fifth-generation fighter jet and a new aircraft carrier that will be larger than any Indian carrier. China's growing military muscle would be a concern for India even in the absence of any direct disputes.

of Brazil, China, India, Russia, and South Africa) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

China's willingness to play the role of an external balancer against India in South Asia is a serious challenge, and, in some cases, a military threat. China's support has bolstered Pakistan's military capabilities and (at the very least) accelerated the development of Islamabad's nuclear weapons and missile programs. Moreover, the possibility of a two-front conflict pitting India against China and Pakistan simultaneously also worries Indian national security policymakers, a concern accelerated by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.<sup>8</sup> Aside from Pakistan, the enhancement of China's relations with some other Indian neighbours - including Bangladesh, the Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka provides an understandable temptation for these smaller states to attempt to use China to counter India's natural domination of the region.

Finally, China's great economic power allows it to spread its influence around the world, which it could use to India's detriment. Beijing has used its aid and trade policies to promote its interests, and it is not difficult to imagine that it could use these tools to pressure others, especially developing countries, to support China in a potential disagreement with India.

India, Myanmar and China are three countries that have had a neighbouring relationship from history to the present day. The relationship between these countries has become increasingly important especially since the Cold War's end to the beginning of the twenty-first century. The fierce India - China competition along with the strategic importance of Myanmar's geopolitical position has made the triangular relations of three countries more closely linked, attracting the interest of the international community. In the process of implementing foreign policy towards Myanmar, India cannot help but pay attention to the impact of the Chinese factor. This is a factor that has a regular and continuous impact on India-Myanmar relations. If India - Myanmar relationship has fluctuated in recent decades, China-Myanmar relations is a close tie. The decline in relations between India and Myanmar from

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<sup>8</sup> Siegfried O. Wolf. (2019). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor of the Belt and Road Initiative, *Concept, Context and Assessment*, Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

1962 to 1992, especially in the years 1988 - 1992, contributed to pushing Myanmar closer to China.

While India was still pursuing the ideal principles of peace, friendship, and support for the democracy movement in Myanmar, China established a firm position and close relationship with neighbouring Myanmar. Since 1988, China has become a close ally, largest trading partner and firm backer to the Myanmar military regime against the U.S. and Western countries, United Nation sanctions on democratic repression and human rights abuses in this country. Myanmar's military government considered China's economic, military and political support to be vital in a world where they have very few powerful friends. China-Myanmar relations has developed so well that it is considered as the "brother relationship" (Pauk- Phaw). This reflected the close and intimate relationship between two countries, because the word "Pauk-Phaw" has never been used by Myanmar to refer to its relationship with any other country.

China plays a role as a "key factor" to push India to put aside the principles of "ideal" and democracy to improve and develop relations with Myanmar since New Delhi implemented the new foreign policy - "Look East" policy in 1992. Besides, one of the key factors that prompted the New Delhi government to transform its foreign policy from "idealism" to "realism" in its relations with Myanmar, is the growing influence of China in this Southeast Asian country and security threats from Northeast India, which is bordered by China and Myanmar. China is also the factor that prompted Myanmar's military leaders to multilateralise diplomatic relations in general and establish good relations with India in particular in the 1990s. The intimacy of the China-Myanmar relationship since the late 1980s has become a serious concern for India because it has posed from China's threats to the states in Northeast of India. Therefore, India's leaders have made efforts to build a comprehensive relationship with Myanmar from the fields of political- diplomacy, defence, trade, energy to development aid. It can be said that India-Myanmar relations from 1992 to 2014 are clearly influenced by the Chinese factor. It is the

reality of China- Myanmar relations and the changes in the international and regional situation after the Cold War that forced India to adjust its foreign policy towards a more 'real' direction in improving and maintaining and developing relationships with neighbouring Myanmar.

Since 1992, India's foreign policy with Myanmar has undergone fundamental changes since the time it launched the "Look East" policy and also significantly improved India-Myanmar relations. The change in India's policy with Myanmar since the Cold War's end was influenced by the factor of neighbouring China. India is concerned not only about China's influence and power increasing in Myanmar, but it could also create a "pro-Chinese alliance" in the region that includes countries: Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. From the early 90s of the twentieth century, the Chinese factor continued to have a strong and clear impact on the relationship between India and Myanmar. While India, the United States and Western countries have voiced their opposition to the Myanmar military government over its crackdown on democracy and human rights violations, China has become the only country with almost close ties and supporting the government of Myanmar.

The warmth in China-Myanmar relations has become India's biggest concern, as well as making China's threat to states in northeastern India visible. China also strives to deploy and promote the construction of the China-Myanmar transport corridor on the basis of strategic and economic benefits, creating momentum for the country to implement the "two oceans" strategy. Therefore, the adjustment of India's foreign policy since the Cold War, especially the "Look East" policy since 1992, has proved India's need to improve relations with Myanmar in order to curb the rise of China. India-Myanmar relations have gained a lot of achievements in the main fields of politics-diplomacy, economy and security-defence.

In the process of developing India-Myanmar relations from 1992 to 2014, China has always been a factor of regular impact, not only for the implementation of India's "Look East" policy but also to improve the relationship with neighbouring Myanmar. Besides, China's growing intervention in Myanmar's military government

and the strategic bases that China is building in Myanmar have made India deeply concerned. Myanmar is not only strategically important to India, but also a “key factor” to China’s ambition to reach the Indian Ocean. Indian defence officials said that the possible development of Chinese naval facilities on the Bay of Bengal, in particular, is seen as “an ominous development” with grave implications for India’s long-term security. If such facilities are built, they would give China better access to the Indian Ocean, long considered an Indian preserve, and add a worrying maritime element to the geostrategic competition between the two regional powers. Therefore, in parallel with India’s efforts in Myanmar, China has also acted to protect its rights and influence in this neighbouring country.

Beside of becoming Myanmar’s largest arms supplier, China has assisted Myanmar to build a dock for naval facilities on Coco Island, located about 18 km from Nicobar Island of India. At the same time, China has also set up a modern reconnaissance and electronic information system on the island. China has set up observation posts at Sittwe and Zadetkyi Kyun Island of Myanmar to allow it to monitor traffic in the Malacca strait. In addition, China has assisted Myanmar in the development of naval bases at Sittwe, Hianggyi, Khaukphyu, Mergui and Zadetkyi Kyun by building refuelling facilities and radar stations to support the Chinese submarines, operating in the Bay of Bengal.

China’s moves in the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal are the first steps to ensure the highest interests for China in the Indian Ocean. The facilities are used to gather intelligence on Indian naval operations and serve as a base for Chinese naval operations in the Indian Ocean. As India’s efforts to expand its navy are stagnant, the growing presence of Chinese naval forces in the area has had a huge strategic consequence on India, because of India’s traditional geographic advantages, it is increasingly at risk from China’s increasing ability to penetrate Myanmar.

From the beginning of the 21st century, China has strongly engaged in Myanmar and covertly reduced India’s influence through the implementation of the “String of Pearls” strategy to establish a series of seaports in Indian Ocean and

Southeast Asian countries. To implement this strategy, China has improved relations with most of India's neighbours including Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. In this context, Myanmar is a place where China can use as a springboard for its ambition to expand its sphere of influence in Southeast Asia and South Asia. In addition, China also promotes political support activities with Myanmar. For example, on September 15, 2006, at the United Nations conference, China protested against putting Myanmar's issue on the Security Council agenda. In early 2007, China defended its government at the United Nations forum.

On January 12, 2007, the United States and United Kingdom submitted a draft resolution about Myanmar's problems to the United Nations Security Council. The resolution called on the government of Myanmar to release all political prisoners, including democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi, and engage in political dialogue leading to genuine democratic transition. To support the Myanmar military government, China has used its veto on this draft resolution. Wang Guangya, China's ambassador to the United Nations declared.<sup>9</sup> Experiencing many ups and downs, Myanmar and China have constantly strengthened, tightened and upgraded their relations to a comprehensive strategic cooperation partnership, May 2011 after President Thein Sein's China visit. That fact and many other factors have caused Indian authorities to change their minds in foreign policy to neighbouring Myanmar. Instead of resolving to maintain the traditional views on democracy and peace, India's policies have become more realistic in relations with Myanmar since 1992. As a result, India has strived to improve and build relationships with Myanmar in key areas and first of all build trust at the highest levels of the two countries.

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

When a country reassesses the critical strategic decisions it is facing as India currently is doing, the importance and potential path dependency of such decisions

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<sup>9</sup> "The present domestic situation in Myanmar does not pose a threat to international or regional peace and security" and "similar problems exist in many other countries as well".

can often create a temptation to put off making a final determination. An additional difficulty in the case of India is the country's lack of well-defined institutional structures for deliberating and deciding on matters of grandstrategy. Still, it would be unwise to put off making a decision for a couple of reasons. New Delhi has a limited window of opportunity as India's strategic choices may narrow over time. If New Delhi does not choose, it risks having the choice made for it by others. Whatever decision India makes must be deliberate, not one that is forced on it by others because New Delhi has refused to make a choice itself.

A second reason for decisiveness is that strategic capabilities have long lead times and cannot be built up quickly. This is true for all of India's choices. The domestic military capacity building those internal balancing entails cannot be done in a hurry, for example. After all, it takes time to determine what kind of military forces and equipment India needs, to buy or build these assets, and to deploy them. Likewise, building strategic alignments also requires time. Expecting India to find a suitable strategic partner after a crisis has already developed would be risky: potential partners may not be available when New Delhi needs them. And even if there were willing partners in such a situation, it might not be possible for them to deliver help quickly enough to make a difference. The longer India waits to decide, the harder these decisions become. It is even possible that some choices may no longer be available. Indian decision-makers must also resist the temptation to postpone critical short and medium-term strategic decisions in the hope that long-term economic development will suffice to address the challenges.

For any state, security has to be the preeminent concern because without it no other national objectives can be pursued, including economic development. India is a powerful state that dominates South Asia, a condition that has given New Delhi a large margin for error and has historically encouraged Indian decision-makers to take a much more relaxed attitude toward its security than is healthy. But China's rise is significantly reducing India's margin for error, and Indian policymakers need to recognize this changed reality. For all these reasons, India cannot afford to wait. A number of external and internal factors point to Myanmar's strategic importance for

India.

Myanmar is located at the junction of East, South, and Southeast Asia and functions as a land bridge to Southeast and East Asia. For the government of Myanmar, a policy of engagement with India not only helps balance its excessive dependence on China but also helps to boost its ‘international image and legitimacy’.

Myanmar is the second-largest of India’s neighbours and the largest on its eastern flank. The two countries share a land border of 1,643 kilometres, almost all of it unfenced, along which India’s Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram states border Myanmar’s Kachin, Sagaing and Chin states. Multiple insurgent groups operate in the northeastern states of India, and they are known to operate from bases in Myanmar. Such groups can be successfully tackled only on a bilateral basis.

Myanmar is a key player in the Bay of Bengal littoral region and shares a maritime boundary with India. Given the increasing significance that India now ascribes to its own centrality in the northern Indian Ocean region, Myanmar now shares in that importance. An unfriendly Myanmar could host a rival naval presence in the Bay of Bengal and complicate Indian security.

Myanmar shares a 2,185 kilometres border with China, which is located next to the disputed section of the India-China border.

Myanmar is said to have the tenth-largest gas reserves in the world, estimated at 90 trillion cubic feet. It is in India’s interest to gain from its proximity in the use of these resources. India can provide help by way of investment and technology for exploration as well as production.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since February when the military seized control of the country in a coup and detained Aung San Suu Kyi and other leaders of her

National League for Democracy (NLD). India had been categorical from the very beginning that the gains made by Myanmar over the last decades on the path towards democracy should not be undermined. But for India, challenges emanating from Myanmar and adjoining areas do not cease depending upon the complexion of the government. And direct engagement with the State Administration Council (SAC) and other stakeholders can no longer be put on hold. The deadly attack on an Assam Rifles convoy in November 2021 near the Myanmar border in Manipur was a reminder about the proclivity of China for creating trouble in the Northeast, especially at a time when border tensions along the LAC remain high. The Covid-19 pandemic has also had an impact because of the porous border between India and Myanmar. For India, a humanitarian crisis as a result of the pandemic-induced economic crisis in Myanmar would be a lose-lose situation and it should be prevented with the utmost urgency.

India as the only major democratic country bordering Myanmar, should insist on demonstrable progress on the road to democratic transition, but being a neighbour, it is also aware that Myanmar has never responded well to international pressures. The role of Myanmar's army would be key to the unfolding of any democratic transition there, so an active engagement would be needed. Even as it continues to call for a restoration of the democratic process, both bilaterally and at various multilateral fora, New Delhi has to engage with the army in Myanmar to address Indian concerns as well as to make it a stakeholder that can deliver on the democratic front, including the release of political prisoners. Marginalising the army will only push it into China's arms, which only has its economic and defence interests to secure from Naypyidaw.

Ever since the coup, China's economic grip over Myanmar has only become tighter with a special focus on projects critical for the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor. While the West continues to condemn and sanction, China is investing and pulling Myanmar into its orbit. The US has continued to use the overused threat of ever more sanctions, though to little avail. Myanmar's army seems to have ceased bothering about the rhetoric from the West. It is the neighbouring countries that have

to shape the behaviour of the military junta in a constructive manner. It is not surprising that countries like Japan, South Korea and most ASEAN members have all moved forward with engaging the military junta in Myanmar. It is, therefore, imperative that New Delhi too reaches out and shapes its own trajectory in Myanmar.

## **1.2. Review of the Literature**

Studies relating to India Myanmar strategical relationship, significance and future road map have been undertaken by many scholars. Therefore, a review of some of the relevant literature is presented as under.

Bertil Lintner (2012), in his book “Great Game East” contextualised the expression “Great Game” for Asia, existing at the crossroads of the Indian Subcontinent, China and Southeast Asia. The overall theme of the book is to examine Sino-Indian rivalries in Tibet, North-East India, Myanmar and the Indian Ocean region. The author has explained minute details and accounts of the local narratives of people, non-state actors, spies and agents, journalists and authors and most importantly, government officials and authorities in North-East India, Myanmar and China.

Thant Myint V’s (2012) work on “Where China meets India” highlights the way in which Myanmar and its strategic importance will play a key role in developing India’s economy and the emerging relation between India and China. China and India have always been separated not only by the Himalayas, but also by the impenetrable jungle and remote areas that once stretched across Burma. Now this frontier is vanishing – forests cut down, dirt roads replaced by superhighways – leaving China and India closer together than at any time in history. This basic shift in geography is as profound as the opening of the Suez Canal and is taking place just as the centre of the world’s economy moves to the East.

Nehginpao Kipgen (2016) in “Democratisation of Myanmar” studied the process of democratic transition in Myanmar. He outlines the factors that contributed to the political transition in the country and the circumstances that led to transition from five-decade military rule to democracy. How political groups especially National League for Democracy and the military that had been hostile to the idea and practice of democracy came to work together, paving the way for the political change after protracted struggle. His research also explores the geostrategic and economic reasons for the extended military rule where it’s two giant neighbours, India and China play a key role.

In the book written by Peter Popham (2016), “The lady and the Generals”, the author brings out the vulnerability of Burma to developments beyond its borders. The Burmese have, with time grown to be much braver to fight against all odds and greater resistance to discover new destiny for themselves and the nation. Myanmar is the in-between country. Its size imposing, larger than France, a little smaller than Texas, with a population of approximately 53 million, but because it is squashed between India and China, it seems by contrast a diminutive land and its default posture is defensive.

Rajiv Bhatia (2017) in his book “India-Myanmar Relations: Changing Contours” provides a comprehensive evaluation of India's multi-faceted relations with Myanmar. It unravels the mysteries of the complex polity of Myanmar as it undergoes transition through democracy after long military rule. It traces the trajectory of India–Myanmar associations from ancient times to the present day and offers a fascinating story in the backdrop of the region’s geopolitics.

Abhijit Dutta (2018) in his work, “Myanmar in the world” explores the breadth of the country and the span of its history and gives a real intimate picture of the many ways Myanmar has changed and improved its relationship with India. The author explains what lies beyond the beauty, the fear thriving in people's hearts, the religious divide, the issues they face in day to day lives along with the cracks in the huge structure called Myanmar. Press and media, as always have played a major role

in bringing the world closer and to quite an extent is creating a gap too.

In his work on, “Myanmar’s Enemy within” Francis Wade (2019) explores the manipulations of identities by an anxious ruling elite which laid the foundations for mass violence. It explores who gets to define a nation? Why, at a time when the majority of citizens in Myanmar had begun to experience freedoms unseen for half a century, did much lauded civilian leaders become complicit. It is essential to understand the ethnic cleansing genocide that today threatens Myanmar’s Rohingya population and with it Myanmar’s tenuous path in achieving democracy and good relations with its neighbours.

Thant Myint V (2019) in his work, “The hidden History of Burma” gives a vital background to understand the ethnic crisis, its impact on India coupled with complexities of modern South East Asia. The case for peace in Myanmar has been a tiring and relentless one. The biggest myth of all is that Burma was set to have a bright future during the dawn of its independence from the British Empire however the reality is far more complex. The colonial legacy of the state’s institutions and its impact on the plethora of ethnic groups across Myanmar periphery would continue to haunt its present-day problems.

Most notably among these are the Rohingya crisis and Burma’s half-century struggle for democracy. The colonial era’s martial race policy stands at the forefront of these problems. Despite the great academic legacy left behind by the colonial era, the state was considerably weak at the time when General Aung San founded the nation. This meant that whatever great that was embedded within Burma was either purged or became stale during years of poverty. India and China, the strategic neighbours of Myanmar loom large alongside Burma’s internal fault lines of ethnicity.

Jaideep Chanda (2020) in his book, “Irrawaddy Imperatives” reviews the India Myanmar strategy and provides the necessary background with historical perspective to make sense of this complex country. Myanmar has a chequered history

of long military rule raging ethnic insurgencies and flashes of democracy. The people are Buddhists, peace loving and their ethnic linkage with Chins of Mizoram is an important facet of India-Myanmar relations. The India-Myanmar relations are beyond the narrow confines of border management and need a fresh approach in terms of 'Myanmar Consciousness' in Indian strategic thought and scholarship.

Veteran journalist and Myanmar watcher Bertil Lintner's (2021) "The Wa of Myanmar and China's Quest for Global Dominance", captures the complexity of China's historical relations with the Wa and thereby provides valuable perspective on the decades-long struggle between Myanmar's most powerful ethnic armed group and the national armed forces. As Lintner illustrates in impressive detail, that conflict has disparate historical roots linking anti-Communist Kuomintang militias and the once-formidable Burmese Communist Party (BCP).

A brief review of the literature on the subject provides the extent of importance that the strategic thinkers and foreign policy makers need to attach to Indian-Myanmar relations. However, the works done on the subject suffer from the lacuna of comprehensive strategic implication of the relations between the two neighbours, India and Myanmar for China's overbearing presence in Myanmar. This research work is intended to examine and analyse the strategic implication of India-Myanmar relations in South East Asia in general and Myanmar in particular.

### **1.3. Scope of the Study**

The scope of this research is to study the historical perspectives of India-Myanmar strategic significance and relationship, the development of India's security policy and diplomacy in contemporary period. The study will examine the strategies adopted by the claimant states as a move to uphold their respective interests, the nature and scope of the conflict of interests and the prevalent security and diplomatic dilemmas. Lastly, the study will focus on the rising interests and involvements of the external big powers in Myanmar to shape the security and political framework of the region and its implications on India-Myanmar strategic relationship.

### **1.4. Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the proposed research are as follows:

1. To examine the power politics in South East Asia & challenges for India.
2. To study the historical developments of India-Myanmar strategic relationship.
3. To analyse the significance and scope of strategic alliance/ relations.
4. To examine the involvement of countries especially China in Myanmar.

#### **1.5. Research Questions**

The proposed research has probed the following research questions in detail:

1. Why there is a big power politics in South East Asia and challenges for India?
2. What are the factors contributing to the historical developments of India-Myanmar strategic relationship?
3. What is the significance and scope of strategic alliance?
4. What are the implications of involvement of China in Myanmar?

#### **1.6. Methodology**

The proposed study is historical and analytical in nature. The study has used both primary and secondary sources of data collection. Qualitative method has been used to analyse the data collected from these sources.

Primary data has been collected from Annual Reports of Ministry of Defence, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and Government Archives. Efforts have been made to conduct interviews with Members of Parliament, Ministers of Legislature Assembly of Chin State in Myanmar, retired and serving officials of Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Defence. For that purpose, a structured questionnaire was prepared. Besides these, relevant websites of government of India, China, Vietnam, Philippines, Bangladesh, Taiwan and Malaysia has been accessed. Secondary data has been collected from books, journals, magazines, newspapers, seminar papers, websites, electronic books, Working Papers, Indian Defence Review, topic related associations and agencies reports, publications of Indian Defence and Strategic Analyses etc.

## **1.7. Tentative Chapterisation**

### **CHAPTER I: Introduction.**

The first chapter will examine the theoretical background and prospective of India-Myanmar relationship. It will cover Statement of the research problem, Review of literature, Objectives of the study, Research questions, methodology, Chapterisation scheme and limitations of the study.

### **CHAPTER II: Big power politics in South East Asia and challenges for India.**

This chapter will examine the role, interests and policies adopted by major external powers in South East Asia with special reference to China.

### **CHAPTER III: Historical background and development of India Myanmar strategic Relationship**

This chapter will explore the historical perspectives and development of India Myanmar strategic relationship and how it graduated progressively in the contemporary period.

#### **CHAPTER IV: Significance and scope of the strategic alliance.**

This chapter will analyse the significance and strategic importance of South East Asia and the need for strengthening ties with Myanmar to take forward India's Act East policy.

#### **CHAPTER V: Implications of the Involvement of China.**

This chapter will take into account various implications of external alliances (China) policies and activities on Myanmar.

#### **CHAPTER VI: Summary and Conclusion**

The last chapter will summarize the thesis. It will lay out the findings of the study and certain suggestions to the problem of the study.

## CHAPTER-2

### BIG POWER POLITICS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA AND CHALLENGES FOR INDIA

The Southeast Asian subsystem is gradually coming to play a larger role in the contemporary international system. The region's favourable geopolitical location and abundance of natural resources have made it historically very prominent. This has led to major foreign investments in Southeast Asian concerns by a number of countries, including the US, China, Japan, Russia and India. Ineffaceable ideational legacies have been left throughout the region<sup>10</sup> by centuries of Chinese and Indian influence, colonial rule, and more recent imperial actions. Even in the contemporary period of sovereign nation-states, external powers continue to be essential to regional growth. As such, the whole region has turned into a stage on which fierce power struggles and contests for influence are taking place.

The great power politics of the United States, Russia, China, India and Japan after World War II have consistently influenced the politics of the entire region. Since the middle of the 1900s, they have been assiduously attempting to further their individual goals and interests in the region. These superpowers continue to poke and prod in the region in an attempt to increase their influence, but they frequently abstain from doing anything that would spark a military confrontation between them. Southeast Asian governments also seem to have devised a middle-ground strategy in terms of institutional, military, and economic facets among these major international actors.<sup>11</sup>

Southeast Asian nations are pursuing their regional and national objectives by employing great power tactics. In short, for any nation aspiring to

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<sup>10</sup>Fenna Egberink and Frans-Paul van der Putten. (2010). ASEAN and Strategic Rivalry among the Great Powers in Asia, *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 29(3), pp. 132-141.

<sup>11</sup>Evelyn Goh. (2007). Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analysing Regional Security Strategies, *International Security*, 32(3), pp. 113–115.

become the next global moral police, Southeast Asia has become the new battleground in the fight. The future looked dismal for East Asia after the end of the Cold War. Many experts expected that the region would become more unstable with the demise of the Soviet Union and the development of China, as the US reduced its military presence, Japan demilitarized, China expanded, and other countries in the region, including India and Pakistan, started an arms race. An expanding body of research, led by Asian scholars, praises East Asia for eschewing the instability and unstable power relations that were anticipated. This is primarily due to the US's decision to remain in the region and maintain its wide-ranging friendships as well as its robust geopolitical and economic influence.

However, it can be argued that the relatively peaceful transition that has taken place so far is the result of two complementary strategies that major East Asian states like Japan and regional organizations like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have put into place: "Soft power" measures like trade restrictions and economic sanctions, as well as the establishment of regional multilateral institutions that establish norms, regulate exchanges, and create a sense of regional identity, thereby institutionalising cooperation among the major powers and socialising China. Southeast Asia, however, has seen both competition and collaboration from the great powers throughout its modern history because of its position and wealth of natural resources.

Even in the contemporary era of independent nation-states, outside influences continue to have a big impact on regional developments. As a result, there are currently great power rivalries and competitions for influence throughout the whole region. Significant nations in Southeast Asia have actively attempted to shape the new regional order in addition to utilising tactical or time-buying methods. Major Southeast Asian states differ somewhat in their understanding of the two main routes to regional order: the complex interplay between major powers and their intricate balance of influence. They also have distinct ideas about the hierarchical regional order that is the intended outcome

of power distribution. It would be interesting to see how the changes in Southeast Asia would provide a window into the worldwide changes that we would witness in the contemporary world, where diplomacy would triumph over militarization.

Map 2.1 - Geo Strategic Importance of Southeast Asia



Source : <https://images.app.goo.gl/rpf6wDFUe35tL2DX6>

## 2.1. Understanding Southeast Asia as a Region

Southeast Asia is a sub region on the Asian continent. The word "Southeast Asia" is not that old. German authors from the late 19th century occasionally used the phrase. It gained popularity when the British, under the command of Lord Louis Mountbatten, founded Southeast Asia Military Command during World War II, based in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. In terms of geography, the area is presently situated south of China, east of India, west of New Guinea, and north of Australia. There are two distinct geographical sub-regions within Southeast Asia<sup>12</sup>: the mainland and the maritime Southeast

<sup>12</sup> Sardesai D.R. (1989). *Southeast Asia: Past and Present*, London: Macmillan, pp.9-11. "Mainland Southeast Asia" also known as "Indochina", comprises Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and

Nations.

Southeast Asia is one of the world's most ethnically, politically, and economically diverse areas. But there are also certain things that the entire region has in common. For instance, almost all of the nations in Southeast Asia were colonized by Europeans, and the region has a tropical climate all year round that is hot, muggy, and wet. Ten of these states are members of the regional organization known as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

## **2.2. Geo-Strategic Importance of Southeast Asia**

Southeast Asia's strategic position near the southeast edge of the vast Asian landmass accounts for much of its importance in global politics. The area, which is a tropical extension of the continent, is made up of a large chain of islands that stretches farther along the equator than the distance between New York and San Francisco<sup>13</sup>, as well as a two-pronged peninsula on the mainland. The Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia during the Second World War, the unification of Vietnam, and the growing Chinese influence have transformed the entire region into one of the most strategic and sensitive areas of the world.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the area continues to function as a passageway connecting the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The world's energy sea route, the Indian Ocean, transports natural gas and crude oil from the Iranian Plateau and Arabian Peninsula to East Asia. The South China Sea, which links the Indian and Western Pacific oceans, is traversed by container ships for over 90% of all commercial commodities as they move between continents, accounting for 25%

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Vietnam. "Maritime Southeast Asia" commonly known as "Malay Archipelago", encompasses Brunei, East Timor, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines.

<sup>13</sup>Mishra Paban, Patit. (Winter 2001). India-Southeast Asia Relations: An Overview, *Southeast Asia: An Internet Journal of Pedagogy*, 1(1). <http://www.sdstate.edu/projectsouthasia/projectsouthasia/Resources/%20upload/India-Southeast, Asian-Relations-Mishra.pdf>, accessed on 2022, November 10

<sup>14</sup> Marvin C. Ott. (2005, July 22). China's Strategic Reach into Southeast Asia, Presentation Paper to the U.S.-China Commission, [https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/7.21-22.05ott\\_marvin\\_wrts.pdf](https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/7.21-22.05ott_marvin_wrts.pdf), accessed on November 12, 2022.

of global marine traffic.

The majority of regional actors are also involved in the South China Sea, which is surrounded by the Philippines on the east, Vietnam on the west, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei on the south, and China and Taiwan on the north. Vietnam, China, and the Philippines have sometimes clashed over sovereignty of the islands. The network of straits that runs through Southeast Asia, including the Straits of Malacca, Sunda, Lombok, and Makassar, may be the most significant factor contributing to the region's strategic significance. One of the busiest shipping lanes for international trade is still the Straits of Malacca. It is estimated that some 50,000 ships carrying half of the world's seaborne oil, pass through the Straits of Malacca annually in Southeast Asian waters.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Southeast Asian seas carry two thirds of China's petroleum imports from the Middle East. The Strait of Malacca is the world's most significant maritime chokepoint, passing through around half of the world's oil and gas commerce.

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<sup>15</sup>Bruce Vaughn and Wayne Morrison. (2006, April 4). *China-Southeast Asia Relations: Trends, Issues and implications for the United States*, Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, pp.19-20.

Map 2.2 - The network of straits that runs through Southeast Asia



Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/tbdnZc68w9QJx5x5>

International marine lanes converge in the South China marine, an energy-rich region that serves as the global economic hub of commerce. Southeast Asia has therefore not been a peripheral region throughout the most of recorded history and during the past three decades, a number of circumstances have highlighted its strategic importance and elevated it to the status of a possible hotspot for world conflict.

The significance of Southeast Asia on the global stage is underestimated. With 650 million people, an almost \$3 trillion GDP combined, high rates of economic growth, a middle class predicted to double in the next ten years, nearly 400 million under 35, and navigating disputed and uncertain geopolitics, Southeast Asia, or the ten ASEAN member countries, is vital to the future of the

Indo-Pacific region and possibly the entire world.<sup>16</sup> Southeast Asia's choices on economic integration, diplomacy, and regional security will determine the course of events in the rapidly evolving and increasingly polarized Indo-Pacific region. The major economic, political, and international initiatives coming out of Southeast Asia must be carefully considered, as must the challenges they face and any potential repercussions for multilateral and functional cooperation, the management of strategic competition, and securitization.

### **2.3. Economic integration**

For the past thirty years or so, Southeast Asia's economic growth and integration have been major trends (nearly doubling over 20 years). This dual-pronged integration and growth-performance plan makes use of these intricate and multifaceted elements. Among the many variables that are usually noted are the post-Cold War globalisation, China's growth as a manufacturing and supply chain powerhouse, India's recent Look East Policy, and the United States' generally open markets. Internal decisions and modifications are listed as additional variables. Trade between almost all of the region's nations now predominantly focuses on China and India, with ties to the US, Europe and Japan typically deteriorating. According to a recent evaluation, ASEAN<sup>17</sup> benefits greatly from global value chains that include China and India. Naturally, trade is only one measure of economic collaboration, and it may hide other effective forms of cooperation. For example, one reason for the decline in commerce between the United States, Japan, and the European Union in Southeast Asia is the rise of affiliate firms investing in ASEAN to capitalize on markets and production savings. One of the things the region will need to address in light of this overall picture is what will drive future commercial partnership, which is the one functional area of cooperation that regional governments place the highest

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<sup>16</sup>Leszek Buszynski. (1992). Southeast Asia in the Post-Cold War Era: Regionalism and Security, *Asian Survey*, 32(9), pp. 831-833

<sup>17</sup>Capie, David and Acharya, Amitav. (2002). A Fine Balance: US Relations with Southeast Asia since 9/11, <http://www.ceri-sciences-po.org/archive/jan03/artca.pdf>, accessed on November 12, 2022.

premium on.

Southeast Asia's nearly 25 years of strong growth and increased regional integration are hampered by numerous factors. These challenges include, among many other things, the "decoupling" of the US and China, the ambiguity surrounding COVID-19, and the shifting and disrupted supply networks. If Southeast Asia is to continue its steady growth and integration as demonstrated over the preceding thirty years, then important policy issues must be addressed concurrently with structural reform. Two of ASEAN's most pressing concerns are the variety of economic development and workable policy alternatives. As evidence of this, consider the fact that the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), which does not include any member country in Southeast Asia. Two frameworks intended to promote regional economic integration and growth are the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). China's attempts to impose economic pressure, the US's resistance to joining pan-regional trade agreements thus far, and China, Taiwan, and the UK's pursuit of membership in the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) all coexist, though. Furthermore, there are also a lot of unknowns on a worldwide scale, like with the World Trade Organization (WTO) reform.<sup>18</sup> Because Southeast Asia lacks the power to establish rules and must instead rely on international law to protect and advance its interests, the region faces challenges related to both a stagnant economy and a contested trading regime. The important thing to remember is that a range of confusing clouds and general uncertainties are forming, which has the potential to redefine both the winners and losers in Southeast Asia and the beneficial pattern of regional integration and growth that has emerged over the past thirty years.

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<sup>18</sup>Singh Bhanu Uday. (2007). *Major Powers and the Security of Southeast Asia*, <http://www.idsa-india.org/an-may-07.html>, accessed on November 13, 2022.

## 2.4. Political integration

Southeast Asia's second regional push has been toward political integration. The 1991 signing of the Cambodia Peace Accords marked the beginning of three decades of peace. China's revolutionary role and Vietnam's influence were feared thirty years ago by the original founding members of ASEAN; today, both countries are seen as critical to the future of the region from an economic, diplomatic, and security and defence perspective. Three regional political initiatives were able to be launched by ASEAN thanks to the settlement around Cambodia. Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia were first permitted to become members of the original ASEAN founding members. Secondly, the broader ASEAN-led multilateral groups owe their origins to the "expansion" of membership to former adversaries and suspicious states. Third, while if the "ASEAN project" aims to establish a community with components of socio-cultural, economic, and political security, many believe that the region's geographic expansion has led to the region's loss of cohesion.

Nonetheless, achieving political unification is not without its difficulties. Since many countries view ASEAN as less focused, less able to solve regional issues, and not truly compelling to even its member state governments and regimes, new groups are beginning to emerge. The most recent and well-known are AUKUS and QUAD. Other major nations in and outside of Southeast Asia will therefore pursue mechanisms that cater to a variety and combinations of security, economic, and order interests, even though neither of these organizations specifically or openly seeks to replace ASEAN or ASEAN-led organizations like the East Asia Summit or the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus). This is true both symbolically and practically.<sup>19</sup>

However, ASEAN's weakness is not based on its incapacity to settle the

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<sup>19</sup>Bruce Vaughn. (2007, January 22). U.S. Strategic and Defence Relationships in the Asia-Pacific Region, *Congressional Research Service Report*, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33821.pdf>, accessed on November 20, 2022.

South China Sea or Myanmar concerns; rather, AUKUS and QUAD are not the only, nor even the most important, issues impeding political union in Southeast Asia. On the other hand, deeper trends in relative economic strength, political-security ties with other major countries, and even internal governance are influencing the trajectory and fortunes of various entities in Southeast Asia. As per an economic research, certain countries in Southeast Asia are benefiting more from supply chains in Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, but other countries are becoming less dependent on the extraction and selling of natural resources. Different developing nations may be the centre of attention for foreign powers on the fronts of politics, security, and diplomacy. For instance, the US, Japan, and others may be looking to strengthen their strategic connections with Vietnam. Therefore, it is not only that non-Southeast Asian nations are participating in new groups that impact the region or that ASEAN faces difficulties in the new operating environment; rather, the very trajectories of Southeast Asian nations may make political integration more delicate and riskier.

## **2.5. International integration**

The goal of Southeast Asia's international integration is not entirely unrelated to the region's attempts at "internal" political union. Southeast Asia has created an environment that is more conducive to strategic internationalisation by attracting international discussion participants and members to ASEAN-led institutions. Southeast Asia has gained a lot from this kind of engagement and has been able to mediate the goals and activities of its many organisations. However, Southeast Asia is exposed strategically to a number of contests in a highly contentious international framework that is undergoing significant change, including disputes between the US and China as well as Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK), among others. Southeast Asia still has a lot of autonomy and manoeuvrability at this point to handle the interests of ASEAN and its individual member nations. But in the event that, for example, “strategic competition”

intensifies, pressures on Southeast Asia may build.<sup>20</sup>

All things considered, Southeast Asia has profited immensely from its attempts at global integration, regional political integration, and economic integration and prosperity. However, in a just emerging, highly uncertain and increasingly controversial climate, these projects face a number of challenges that will affect international cooperation, securitization, management of strategic rivalry and functional coordination.

## **2.6. Goals and Interests of the Great Powers in Southeast Asia**

In the context of international affairs, "great powers" are those states that possess the ability to wield significant economic, military, political, diplomatic and cultural influence on a regional and global level. Great powers engage in varied degrees in areas of political, military and economic interest, which leads to rivalry and conflict between them. In order to comprehend their mutual political game over Southeast Asia, five powers—the United States of America (USA), China, Japan, Russia (the former Soviet Union) and India—are considered important from both historical and modern viewpoints.

Southeast Asia is of strategic and economic relevance to the United States. Southeast Asia is strategically significant to the United States because it is located entirely on both sides of the main canal that connects the Western Pacific, Indian Ocean, and Persian Gulf. The area is crucial to the operational and logistical capabilities of US Central Command (USCENTCOM) and US Pacific Command (USPACOM) forces because shipping must pass through one of the major straits in the region, such as the straits of Malacca, the Sunda Straits, or the straits of Lombok and Makassar.

In order to maintain stable economic growth, China has a number of

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<sup>20</sup>McCloud, D.G. (1995). *Southeast Asia: Tradition and Modernity in the Contemporary World*, Boulder: Westview Press.,

interests in the region. These include maintaining and growing trade routes through Southeast Asia, gaining access to the region's raw materials and energy resources, gaining influence in the region to counteract US attempts at strategic containment, severing Taiwan from the region, and advancing the "One China" policy throughout Southeast Asia.

Economic factors have dominated Japan's relations with the countries of Southeast Asia. Japan obviously has an interest in the developments in Southeast Asia given its trade and economic investments in the region. Japan also relies on energy routes that pass through the region, with approximately 80 percent of Japanese oil supplies and 70 percent of its shipping traverse through the area.<sup>21</sup> It is noteworthy that there is a Japanese oil tanker in the Indian Ocean nearly every 100 nautical miles at any one time. Southeast Asian waters are traversed by these tankers. Japan's economy may suffer greatly from any disruption to its energy and commerce routes; thus it will always take strong action to protect its interests in the region's economy and security.

Fourthly, although not being the dominant force in Southeast Asia that the Soviet Union was, Russia continues to make a strong presence felt in the region under Vladimir Putin's leadership. Russia is unwilling to just hand over the region's great power visibility to the United States<sup>22</sup>, China, Japan and India. As a result, Russia's main worry with Southeast Asia is the question of the arms trade. However, Russia also pursues bilateral initiatives with China that encompass the Southeast Asian region<sup>23</sup> in order to maintain the status quo of force projection against the United States and its allies in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

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<sup>21</sup> Strait of Malacca-World Oil Transit Choke points, Energy Information Administration, US Department of Energy, 2012.

<sup>22</sup>Ron Huiskens. (2008, April 3). Southeast Asia: Major Power Play ground or Finishing School?, *Strategic and Defence Studies Centre Working Paper*, 408, pp.1-2.

<sup>23</sup> Karl Hack and Geoff Wade. (2009, October). The origins of the Southeast Asian Cold War, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 40(3), <http://oro.open.ac.uk/18829/1>. accessed on November 20, 2022.

Lastly, India is working to establish stronger economic ties with countries in Southeast Asia. The involvement of India carries several geopolitical ramifications as well. The leaders of New Delhi have responded with a "counter-encirclement" policy in response to what they believe to be China's encirclement via its "string of pearls" approach. Following Myanmar's admission into ASEAN in 1998, India and ASEAN<sup>24</sup> currently share a 1,600-kilometer contiguous border. Furthermore, India's endeavours to strengthen its strategic alliances with Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam underscore the extent to which India's "Look East" policy is heavily influenced by geographic proximity. Observing India's efforts to strengthen ties with the military regime in Myanmar makes this more clear.

## **2.7. Great Power Politics during the Cold War Period**

With the end of World War II and the subsequent start of the Cold War<sup>25</sup>, the majority of the eleven nations that make up Southeast Asia gained their independence. The main factor defining Southeast Asian governments' position in the international system in the early decades of their independence was their alliances with the major Cold War countries. The states used alliance, nonalignment and conflict as diverse strategies to respond to the challenges from the inside and outside. Three significant events provide context for the great power dynamics that shaped Southeast Asia during the Cold War. These incidents include the United States' containment strategy, the founding of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), the three Indochina Wars and the ASEAN's political landscape.

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<sup>24</sup>Batabyal Anindya. (2006). Balancing China in Asia: A Realist Assessment of India's Look East Strategy, *China Report*, p.2.

<sup>25</sup> For example, Indonesia in 1945, Vietnam in 1945, Philippines in 1946, Myanmar in 1948, Laos in 1949 and Cambodia in 1953.

## 2.8. Containment Policy and the First Indochina War (1945-1954)

The USA's "containment" of communism served as the political and strategic cornerstone of international relations throughout the Cold War in Southeast Asia. This approach was most memorably described by George Kennan in his 1947 "Mr. X" essay in the Journal of Foreign Affairs. Vietnam was the main target of containment in Southeast Asia. Ho Chi Minh's<sup>26</sup> communist independence movement and the Viet Minh nationalists were the opponents of the French in the First Indochina War. The United States' perspective on the strategic issue posed by the communist advance in Vietnam was addressed in a memo issued by the National Security Council in April 1952. According to the document:

*[I]n the absence of effective and timely counteraction the loss of any single (Southeast Asian) country would probably lead to a relatively swift submission to or an alignment with communism by the remaining countries of this group.*<sup>27</sup>

This was the core of what a few years later called the 'Domino Theory'<sup>28</sup> of the strategic inter-relatedness of Southeast Asian states that guided American geopolitical thinking about the region for a quarter of the twentieth century. Vietnam was the first domino to fall for the USA. All communist chains of command, including Ho Chi Minh's, ultimately led back to Moscow for Washington. The establishment of the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) provided the Vietnamese both material and technical assistance.<sup>29</sup> China's 1950 Korean War engagement made it clear to the US how urgent it was to restrain communism in Asia. Washington saw the communist menace in both the French

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<sup>26</sup>Sheldon W. Simon. (1985, September). The Great Powers and Southeast Asia: Cautious Minuet or Dangerous Tango?, *Asian Survey*, 25(9), pp.928-930.

<sup>27</sup> Kissinger Henry. (1994). *Henry Kissinger Diplomacy*, New York : Simon and Schuster, p.152.

<sup>28</sup>The 'Domino Theory' was used by successive United States administrations during the Cold War to clarify the need for American intervention around the world and to contain the Communist influence. According to the theory, if one state in a region came under the influence of communism, then the surrounding countries would follow in a domino effect.

<sup>29</sup>Richard Crockett. (1995). *The Fifty Years War: The United States and The Soviet Union in World Politics, 1941-1991*, New York : Routledge, pp.235-251.

battle in Indochina and the Korean War.

## **2.9. Initiation of SEATO**

Following France's defeat, the US rallied its allies to confront the perceived threat posed by the communists' apparent creation of a strategic gateway to Southeast Asia. Eight countries joined together to form the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and sign the Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty in 1954. Only Thailand and the Philippines were Southeast Asian nations at first when SEATO was formed. The United States, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, France and Pakistan were the other signatories. The fundamental principle behind the Manila Pact was that the signatory states would acknowledge that an armed strike inside the treaty area against a party to the treaty or any state or territory that the parties had jointly designated would jeopardize the parties' own security and peace. In that case, they would confer to address the shared threat.

However, a different protocol brought Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam's "free territory" under the purview of SEATO in order to secure the US presence in South Vietnam. The United States declared in an accord to the pact that the commitments under it only extended to communist aggression.

## **2.10. Vietnam War or the Second Indochina War (1961-1975)**

Following the Geneva Conference in 1954, the United States emerged as the leading backer of Vietnam's anti-communist government. Building a South Vietnamese military and political capacity to resist a growing internal conflict headed by Viet Minh cadres abandoned during the division was the goal of American advisors and material support. The National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSV) was the revolutionary political organization. The rebels with weapons went by the name of Viet Cong, or Vietnamese Communists. The leader of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) oversaw both the front and

the Viet Cong. The USSR and China provided Ho Chi Minh, the head of the DRV, with enormous logistical support, including heavy weaponry, food and Communist cadre training. But the leadership of Communism was the source of a Sino-Soviet conflict at the time. Their disagreements extended to the war's tactics as well. Whereas the Soviet Union advised using conventional force, Beijing supported Maoist tactics of long-term guerilla warfare. Between them, Ho Chi Minh adopted military tactics and neutral policies meant to further North Vietnamese goals while avoiding hostility with either of the communist countries.

It was becoming evident by 1961 that the Vietnamese government would not be able to put an end to the insurgency with its own means. John F. Kennedy, the US president at the time, made the decision to send 15,000 US military advisors to Vietnam. Along with forces from Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea, approximately 5,00,000 American ground troops and forces from other countries were fighting in South Vietnam by 1968. Four years passed. In an attempt to maintain American credibility, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and President Nixon coerced the DRV into accepting terms for negotiations.

In the end, the parties to the conflict reached what the United States called "peace with honour" in the 1973 Paris Agreement. The Vietnamese government was left to fight their enemies on its own after US help ended. The southern resistance broke down in two years. On April 29, 1975, Saigon fell. Vietnam was united nine months later. Ho Chi Minh City replaced the name Saigon.

*[T]he United States for its part needed Chinese and Soviet help in extricating itself from Vietnam, and American negotiators were careful to assure the Soviets that the opening to China was not to be regarded as an anti-Soviet move. Once the Vietnam issue was resolved, at least to the extent of removing the United States from the equation, lines of conflict which had always been present were free to flourish. If only for a brief period in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the*

*Vietnam War was the pivot of the triangular superpower balance. With the pivot removed the balance collapsed.*

### **2.11. Establishment and the Politics of ASEAN**

With the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand on August 8, 1967, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was created. Elites within ASEAN have categorically and recurrently denied that ASEAN is a security alliance or organisation. Great care was taken to emphasize that incidents of defence cooperation amongst ASEAN nations were not included in ASEAN. However, ASEAN operated on the tenet of collective political security from the beginning.

In retrospect, a Malaysian foreign minister emphasized that the non-communist states of Southeast Asia formed ASEAN as a political response to the perceived shared threat of communism from the Sino-Soviet conflict, an expanding Vietnam and internal communist insurgencies.

### **2.12. The Third Indochina War (1978- 1991)**

Vietnam invaded Democratic Kampuchea (Cambodia) in December 1978 with the help of a new military alliance with the Soviet Union. This invasion resulted in the expulsion of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge (KR) dictatorship and increased numbers of Cambodian refugees in Thailand. The 180,000-man occupying force was accompanied by pro-Vietnamese ex-KR members. They founded the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) with Vietnamese advisors. ASEAN was disappointed by Vietnam's invasion and occupation of Cambodia because of the "peace offensive" and the atmosphere of expectation for regular relations with Indochina. But there was also antagonism amongst ideologies. Through its pursuit of a Hanoi-centred "special relationship" among the three Indochinese republics, the KR refused to accept the political inequity implicit in

its perception of Vietnamese hegemonic posturing. Territorial disputes arose along the border, stoked by cross-border KR attacks and Vietnamese hot pursuit. By severing ties with Vietnam in December 1977, Phnom Penh ended any special relationship. Finally, Vietnam conducted an examination of the strategic threat that Sino-Cambodian ties posed to Vietnam. Vietnam, a USSR ally, was afraid of Chinese encirclement. In actuality, this carried the Sino-Soviet confrontation to Southeast Asia. The Third Indochina War began with the Vietnamese invasion. The parties' conflict eventually came to an end with the fall of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and the subsequent waning of Soviet backed power.

### **2.13. Post-Cold War Great Power Politics in Southeast Asia**

The big powers—the United States, China, Japan, Russia, and India—and their respective perspectives on the politics of Southeast Asia during the post-Cold War era. Nonetheless, there appear to be differences in the goals and approaches to foreign policy between the major power politics of the region during and after the Cold War. The USA's unipolarity and the subsequent shift in global politics to a potentially multipolar order have caused the great powers to alter their foreign policy formulation and execution in a number of ways.

#### **The United States of America**

The US has a unique, historically unparalleled position in the current world order. The United States was one of just two "superpowers" following World War II that could influence events anywhere in the world. The United States' hegemonic position has been reinforced by the Soviet Union's subsequent fall as a geopolitical foe and the seeming exhaustion of central planning as a counterbalance to free market capitalism. It is vital to discuss the nature of American power and its historical significance in the region in order to comprehend precisely how powerful the US is and why it can have such a significant impact on the future growth prospects of the ASEAN states. Clearly,

the US is the most powerful nation on earth, but what is the basis of its power? How come the US can even affect the actions of governments that seem to be powerful, like China and Japan, and not to mention the less powerful countries of Southeast Asia? To answer these questions, we need a conceptual framework that will identify the constitutive elements of American power in ways that allow comparison with both potential rivals, and with countries like those of Southeast Asia, which plainly do not always have the capacity to definitively influence events within their own borders, let alone in the international system of which they are a part.<sup>30</sup>

Susan Strange (1988) identified four key elements that determine a nation's relative influence in the international system. The US enjoys an unmatched supremacy over all other nations at the level of security, or the traditional arena of international rivalry that focuses on military and strategic interaction. She said that control over security, production, credit, and information is the source of what she called "structural power." In addition to spending more on defence than any other nation, the United States has benefited from the "revolution in military affairs", which has elevated technological dominance to the status of a crucial component of military might. However, America's military hardware's commanding technical superiority is not the only factor contributing to its central position in the global security framework.

On the contrary, in the East Asia in particular, the US presence has been seen by much of the region as pivotal to maintaining a stable balance of power, something that explains the continuing presence of American forces in the region at surprisingly little cost to itself.<sup>31</sup> But recent events have brought forth new fault lines in the area as well as fresh sources of hostility to American domination. China has voiced the biggest concerns about what it perceives to be

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<sup>30</sup>Goh Evelyn. (2005, July). Great Powers and Southeast Asian Regional Security Strategies: Omni - Enmeshment, Balancing and Hierarchical Order, Singapore, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/27123/WP84.pdf>", accessed on October 28, 2022

<sup>31</sup>Mastanundo, M. (2000). Models, markets, and power: Political economy and the Asia-Pacific 1989-1999, *Review of International Studies*, 26, pp. 493-507.

the US's growing assertive, unilateral, and hegemonic goals in the wake of September 11 at the regional level in East Asia. American policies have also led to significant tensions and open hostility in Southeast Asia. After a brief *détente* in which the authoritarian government seemed well-positioned to smash Islamic rebels, Malaysia has been the most outspoken opponent of US strategy in Southeast Asia.

It is also important to remember that even countries that have not been as outspoken or critical of US policies are finding it difficult to cope with its intricate geopolitical and even economic ramifications. It has become challenging for the political leaders of Indonesia and the Philippines because American policy has fuelled divisive internal debates about Islam's place in these countries and national independence. America's position in the political-economy of production and credit is nuanced, sometimes paradoxical, but, barring an unanticipated global market collapse, basically unassailable. In addition to enjoying a renaissance relative to East Asia, which has contributed to the consolidation of American dominance globally, America's status as the world's largest debtor nation has also not been able to destabilise the country's overall economic standing. There is no small irony in the fact that America has largely avoided criticism of this kind given the negative attention that has been given to the debt of nations like Indonesia. However, the enormous budget deficits that have resulted from the "war on terror" and tax breaks for the wealthy may change this and put a fundamental limit on even American power.<sup>32</sup>

Recognising America's pivotal role in the larger, more interconnected global economy is essential to understanding why it may act in ways that other countries cannot. However, the overall strength, diversity, and size of the two economies cannot be compared. As the main creator and financial backbone of

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<sup>32</sup>Robinson, W. I. (1996). *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalisation, US Intervention, and Hegemony*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

the Bretton Woods order<sup>33</sup> that followed World War II, the United States occupied a special place in international affairs. Because it was and, to a lesser extent, still is, the reserve currency of the world, the US dollar enjoys financial benefits that other states<sup>34</sup> do not. Furthermore, American markets made it possible for East Asian nations in particular to successfully begin export-led industrialisation. This has cemented America's dominant position in the global economy and political sphere, despite the resentment that America's growing Asian trade deficits have caused in some US states.

In the end, America's idea of a new global economic order served as the conceptual model for a developing international order. The significance of the knowledge component of Stranger's structural power should not be minimized, despite the fact that this vision was only partially realized in an East Asian region that frequently preferred neo-mercantilist development strategies to the neoliberal orthodoxy supported by the US. This knowledge component remains at the centre of ongoing discussions about the most effective course of action for East and Southeast Asia in the wake of the crisis. It is important to acknowledge that the US has been better able to advance its preferred economic model in Southeast Asia as a result of both the relative economic collapse of Japan and the growing importance of US investment in East Asia in general and Southeast Asia in particular.

With the exception of China and Korea, American foreign direct investment (FDI) increased in East Asia as a percentage of total FDI. The United States' structural influence and potential leverage over the region have been significantly increased when one considers the Southeast Asian countries' general reliance on US markets for the export of electrical goods in particular. Bank lending is the one area where Japan still has a big advantage over US-based

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<sup>33</sup>Trubowitz, P. (1998). *Defining the National Interest: Conflict and Change in American Foreign Policy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

<sup>34</sup>Buckley, R. (2002). *The United States in the Asia-Pacific since 1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

enterprises, but given the role Japanese banks played during the Asian financial crisis, when their own domestic troubles were communicated to the rest of the region, this is no longer a significant advantage. The US's efforts to fortify this undiscovered economic advantage through a variety of bilateral trade agreements are noteworthy. This is partly reflective of American lawmakers' long-standing scepticism regarding the advantages of multilateral organisations such as the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit and its inability to bring about trade liberalization in East Asia. On another level, too, this renewed US preference for bilateralism is a reflection of the country's determination to wield its influence more assertively in order to open up markets and produce the kinds of results that were elusive under APEC.<sup>35</sup> Southeast Asia's collective identity as a cohesive regional actor is gradually undermined by the emergence of beneficial bilateral trade deals between nations such as Singapore and the US. All things considered, America's 'hegemonic' status in the Asia-Pacific area in particular and the international system in general has been sustained by its ascending or structural supremacy. America has the capability to affect not only the positions of the countries in Southeast Asia but also those of the other major regional powers because of its special place at the centre of the post-World War II international system. This interaction has been and will continue to be a major factor in determining Southeast Asia's development, both bilaterally between the US and the ASEAN nations and between the US, Japan, India, and China.

#### **2.14. American power's effects and goals in Southeast Asia**

At first, America's primary interest in Southeast Asia was geopolitical. The bipolar rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War shattered the larger East Asian area on military, ideological, and economic fronts. Though it did so within the larger framework of bilateral connections between the US and its allies in the region, Cold War rivalry helped the ASEAN organization flourish and, as a result, boosted regional cooperation.

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<sup>35</sup>Cummings, B. (1999). Still the American Century, *Review of International Studies*, 25, pp. 271-299.

Put another way, the region is merging and dissolving as a result of the multifaceted effects of American domination. Many Southeast Asian countries, particularly Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia, benefited directly or indirectly from the increased assistance and investment flows brought on by the wars in Korea and Vietnam while the Cold War was still in effect.<sup>36</sup>

As the cornerstone of the new capitalist order in East Asia, it should be highlighted that Japan was under pressure to take on a more expansive economic role in Southeast Asia. The Vietnam War in particular and the Cold War in general were not horrible things for those portions of Southeast Asia that were lucky enough to be out of direct or indirect confrontation with the United States. The event was initially disastrous for Vietnam and Indochina, and it significantly worsened their separate longer-term developmental issues. Following the end of the Cold War, the region appeared to have promising prospects due to a widespread and seemingly sustainable shift from geostrategic to geo-economics concerns, as well as the remote possibility of a worldwide confrontation involving large countries. However, the handling of the 1997–1998 East Asian crisis, which had a particularly bad effect on Southeast Asia, and its aftermath made evident the possible ramifications of a corrective shift in the world's only superpower's foreign policy goals. The US was heavily involved in crisis management efforts, taking advantage of its institutional clout and connections to important organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In this manner it was able to exploit the opportunities the crisis offered to try and break open hitherto relatively closed Asian markets and attempt to systematically reconstitute the political economies of countries like Indonesia and Thailand in ways that suited its normative preferences and economic interests.<sup>37</sup>

Such attempts may not have been totally successful-possibly even

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Capie David and Acharya Amitav. (2002). *A Fine Balance: US Relations with Southeast Asia since 9/11*, <http://www.ceri-sciences-po.org/archive/jan03/artca.pdf>, accessed on December 12, 2022.

counterproductive - as they caused a great deal of local unrest and even led the IMF to admit in retrospect that it might have made matters worse. But the US's role in the crisis and its fallout served as a sharp reminder of the disparities in power between the region and the US as well as the country's ongoing importance on many fronts. Southeast Asia's persistent structural dependence on and vulnerability to changes in North American markets were exposed by the ensuing US economic crisis; even Singapore, with its advanced economy, experienced a recession.

A different disaster, the tragic events of "September 11th," demonstrated that the US continues to have the ability to shape events in the region on a number of levels, highlighting Southeast Asia's ongoing vulnerability to more general shifts in US attitudes.<sup>38</sup> The weaker states in the region were forced to comply with US demands or face retaliation because of the US's desire that other countries declare their support or opposition to its self-proclaimed "war on terrorism." Though primarily low-level or hypothetical, the fear of violence once again created a complex mix of costs and benefits throughout the region. As was previously indicated, Malaysia managed to mend relations with the United States by projecting an image of itself as a bastion against extremist Islam. But everything fell apart, and Mahathir resumed his usual stance as an outspoken critic of "the West" in general and the US in particular. While the Philippines benefited from direct military and economic assistance in fighting insurgent activities, this came at the risk of inflaming political tensions over US-Philippines relations. The position of Indonesia's political elites is even more precarious: pressure from the US to crack down on more radical elements of the country's predominantly Muslim populace has resulted in increased anti-American sentiment throughout much of Indonesia, as it is perceived as offering a haven for international terrorism.

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<sup>38</sup>Mark Beeson. (2001). *Japan and Southeast Asia: The Lineaments of Quasi-hegemony*, [http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/eserv.php?pid=UQ:10797&dsID=mb\\_quasi.pdf](http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/eserv.php?pid=UQ:10797&dsID=mb_quasi.pdf), accessed on December 11, 2022.

The key point concerning US influence in Southeast Asia is that it can achieve its goals in a way that other countries cannot because it possesses institutional, economic and strategic resources. The idea behind this is not to suggest that the US always knows exactly what its "national interests" are. On the other hand, American foreign policy reflects a variety of influences and presents fascinating debates and contrasts on a wide range of topics. Even in light of these serious limitations, the US remains a far more powerful and effective global actor than any potential East Asian hegemonic rival.

## **China**

Similar to Japan, officials in Southeast Asia hold a considerable regard for China. Unlike Japan, China has had greater challenges in its relations with the region due to ideological and strategic factors that have made China, especially in the Cold War era, a more imminent threat to the ASEAN countries in particular. Ironically, though, the "China threat" has not completely disappeared even after the end of the Cold War, as China actively seeks to integrate itself into a more global capitalist economy. More pressing worries are now centred around China's potential as an economic rival to Southeast Asia, which is still struggling to deal with the fallout from economic globalisation, rather than its long-term hegemonic ambitions in the region and the world at large. Once more, understanding these conflicting forces requires setting China's interactions with the area within a historical framework.

### **2.15. The China threat in context**

Historical considerations have affected all three main countries' interactions, but in China's case, the repercussions of history are more apparent and often quoted in a self-aware manner. The challenging task of reconciling China's more recent communist traditions with the demands of an increasingly pervasive market capitalism, or the humiliating and traumatising effects of nineteenth-century European expansion on the country, are just two examples of

the complex, intersecting ideological and nationalistic imperatives that constrain China's leaders and have few counterparts elsewhere.

China was focused on its own internal growth and its relations with the US and the USSR, the two superpowers. China has only started to formulate a unique regional policy<sup>39</sup> since the conclusion of the Cold War. China's pre-colonial key position in Asia helps to explain part of its reflection. China is only now shifting its focus to the maritime Asia-Pacific area. As the dominant continental state in East Asia, China was able to rule the region with little regard for events occurring elsewhere. China's chaotic twentieth-century past, marked by civil war, Japanese invasion, the Cold War, and the massive burden of national restoration, did nothing to promote the development of amicable relations with its neighbours.

Such interactions were considerably less likely in light of US actions and its goal to "contain" China following its "loss" to communism. The triangular rivalry between the US, the Soviet Union and a developing China acted as a spur to greater cooperation amongst Southeast Asian states. The great countries' battle with one another directly led to the formation of ASEAN, which was an attempt by the smaller governments to gain more clout and influence. Regarding China specifically, the country's status as a possible threat and source of instability was further cemented by the significant ethnic Chinese population spread across Southeast Asia, a fact that particularly<sup>40</sup> alarmed Malaysia and Indonesia. The fact that China is still, at least nominally, a "communist" nation is becoming less significant. It is true that the Sino-Soviet split in the late 1950s and early 1960s raised questions about the idea that communism was a unified, homogenous system centred on a single path of advancement. China's incorporation into the greater international community was further cemented in 1972 with the subsequent improvement of relations between China and the US. The fact that

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<sup>39</sup>Dirlik, A. (1997). Critical reflections on 'Chinese capitalism' as paradigm, *Identities global Studies in Culture and Power*. 3(3), pp 303-330.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid

China has become a significant and active player in regional affairs and that its integration into a more integrated regional political-economic system is influencing how China's political elites conduct relations with the rest of the world should not be overlooked, despite the fact that US policy has since fluctuated between containment and engagement. However, there is considerable disagreement around the scope, importance, and applicability of this potential shift in certain problem areas.

## **2.16. China's interaction with Southeast Asia**

Much attention has been paid to the possible impacts China's resurgence as a major actor in East Asian and global affairs may have on the region's power dynamics in general and on its relations with the US in particular. China will undoubtedly play a bigger role in the region throughout the course of the twenty-first century<sup>41</sup>, despite some observers pointing out the country's limitations in terms of economic and military might, especially when compared to the US. Southeast Asia will be significantly impacted both geopolitically and economically by this.

Southeast Asia is greatly concerned about China because it is widely regarded as a "non-status quo power", dissatisfied with the way power is currently distributed in the area, and determined to address what it sees as unavoidable problems that are essential to its domestic politics and sense of national identity. While the future status of Taiwan may be the most obvious issue in this regard,<sup>42</sup> The Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei, and other claimants in the region, in particular, are at odds with China over its claims to the Paracel and Spratly Islands. The ASEAN Regional Forum's (ARF) agenda was mostly developed with input from the ASEAN governments, and one of its main

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<sup>41</sup> "China's Future. (2019, January 22). *The Economist*, <http://www.economist.com/news/essays>, accessed on December 19, 2022.

<sup>42</sup> Bader A Jeffrey. (2005, September 06). China's Role in East Asia :Now and the Future, *Brookings*, <https://www.brookings.edu/on-the-record/chinas-role-in-east-asia-now-and-the-future/>," accessed on December 22, 2022.

contributions was to push China to pursue its goals through multilateral channels as opposed to bilateral ones. While the strategy has not yielded particularly spectacular outcomes thus far, it is beginning to show some effects, particularly when combined with more conventional assessments of the balance of power and China's aim to strengthen its regional position at the US's expense. Significant efforts have been made by China to improve ties with ASEAN, including proposals for a Code of Conduct to handle competing territorial claims in the South China Sea. Stronger ASEAN is seen by Chinese geopolitical strategists like Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao as a potentially substantial counterweight to US hegemony<sup>43</sup>. Crucially, China is taking a far more active role in regional security initiatives these days. It has taken advantage of the anxiety surrounding the "war on terror" to push for a "New Security Conference" aimed at fostering peace and stability among the Asian members<sup>44</sup> of the ARF. Although the security aspect of China's relations with the region always garners the most attention, regional policymakers will increasingly be concerned about China's economic relationship with Southeast Asia, particularly in light of the region's continued lack of a major international conflict. Once more, the problems are intricate and paradoxical.

The good news for Southeast Asia is that China is becoming more tightly bound to a globally regulated, multilaterally organised economic system that effectively governs its behaviour, thanks to its own increased economic integration, demonstrated by its participation in the World Trade Organisation. In recent times, China's direct economic connections with Southeast Asia have been expanding despite the crisis, partly due to the region's economically strong ethnic Chinese communities. Because of this, China views ASEAN as a sizable export market and a potential long-term source of capital investment. Though the ASEAN countries may find some comfort in the idea that China's ongoing

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<sup>43</sup> Shambaugh David. (2021, June 25). *China's Leaders: From Mao to Now*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

<sup>44</sup> Pal Deep. (2021, October 13). China's Influence in South Asia: Vulnerabilities and Resilience in Four Countries" *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/10/13/china-s-influence-in-south-asia-vulnerabilities-and-resilience-in-four-countries-pub-85552>, accessed on December 22, 2022.

economic growth and globalisation may help to modify its behaviour in ways that make it a less dangerous security presence in the area, China still presents a huge economic challenge.

Due to its immense size, capacity to compete in the same markets as products produced even more cheaply, and - possibly most importantly - the fact that China has attracted a growing percentage of foreign investment flows into the East Asian region, the Chinese economy poses a serious long-term threat to the economies of Southeast Asia. According to estimates, China's plan to create a free trade area with the ASEAN countries may enhance Chinese exports to ASEAN by more than 50% <sup>45</sup> while also potentially increasing ASEAN exports to China by about 15%. In 2022, China's imports and exports to ASEAN totalled 6.52 trillion yuan (\$970 billion), a notable 15% rise. According to figures from the General Administration of Customs (GAC)<sup>46</sup>, of this, imports made up 2.73 trillion yuan, up 6.8 percent, and exports made up 3.79 trillion yuan, up 21.7 percent. China is a neighbour that ASEAN will surely find difficult to embrace due to its sheer size, much like Japan did before it. Nevertheless, in spite of these rivalry disputes, China has grown to be an increasingly important part of the political and economic landscape of the area. At the height of the Asian crisis, Southeast Asia was grateful to China for restraining itself from devaluing its own currency, which would have further strained the currencies and competitive standing of the collapsing Asian countries. Additionally, this served to reinforce China's growing reputation as a crucial and accountable regional player at the expense of the obtrusive Americans and the incompetent Japanese.

In summary, China is exhibiting a more complicated "grand strategy" with a rising international component that presents a wide range of opportunities

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<sup>45</sup>Goldstein, A. (1997/98). Great Expectations: Interpreting China's Arrival, *International Security*, 22(3), pp. 36-73.

<sup>46</sup>Trade between China and ASEAN grows 15% in 2022, first year of RCEP's enforcement, (2023, January 13) *Global Times*, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202301/1283779.shtml>, accessed on January 20, 2023.

and risks for the Southeast Asian nations. The development of China's foreign policy and the ability of the governments of Southeast Asia to successfully respond to it will rely not only on the bilateral ties between China and the states in the region but also on the intricate interactions between them and the other major powers. China is becoming the main rival and force behind the policies that the Southeast Asian region<sup>47</sup> is adopting due to its urgency in completing the enormous "Belt and Road initiative" and its aggressive drive towards its "String of pearls" policy. China's goals for global dominance have undoubtedly suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic, but at most it has delayed rather than prevented the inevitable.

Southeast Asian countries now view China as a responsible major actor, with whom Southeast Asia's destiny is inextricably tied. Southeast Asia has learned from modern post-Marxist China that, for the most part, China is a normal nation acting in conformity with recognized international norms. There is a perception in Southeast Asia that China<sup>48</sup> will eventually be the power to be reckoned with, despite the fact that it does not yet match the United States in terms of military might, political clout, or economic influence. What shapes the relationship between China and Southeast Asia today is the necessity to adjust to the changing times. Southeast Asia finds itself immediately engaged by China's expanding economic might.

The development of the US-China relationship will be the primary factor influencing the future configuration of great power involvement in the region, as seen from the perspective of Southeast Asia. The capitals of ASEAN countries recognize that the United States will not be able to retain the same degree of dominance it once held due to China's increasing economic and military might. Nonetheless, American capabilities and interests will continue to make it a

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<sup>47</sup>Goldstein, A. (2001, December). The diplomatic face of China's grand strategy: A rising power's emerging choice, *The China Quarterly*, 168, pp. 835-863.

<sup>48</sup> David Shambaugh. (Winter 2004/05). China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order, *International Security*, 29(3), p. 65.

significant player. The question facing the ASEAN states is not so much one of relative power as it is one of whether the US will accept a true balance of power with China or try to curb its growing influence.

## **Japan**

Japan should be able to make a big influence on regional affairs in general and on its smaller Southeast Asian neighbours in particular, as it is the third largest economy in the world and a member of the larger East Asian region. Due to its enormous economic power, Japan has unavoidably impacted the region's economy, which is becoming increasingly integrated; but it hasn't demonstrated that it is able or willing to have the same impact in the political arena<sup>49</sup>. Despite the apparent advantages and importance, Japan has only been able to exert what has been referred to as a form of "quasi hegemony". To grasp why Japan has such a strong regional effect and what it means for the region as a whole, we need to look at the specific historical factors that have shaped it.

### **2.17. Japan's regional role in context**

Without a question, Southeast Asia has been significantly impacted by Japan. It is up for debate whether this has had a positive or harmful impact. Setting Japan's frequently conflicting relationship with the region in historical perspective is essential to understanding it. In this sense, the years leading up to and including World War II<sup>50</sup> were among the most significant in determining not only Japan's relationship with Southeast Asia but also its relationship with the United States. Particular attention should be paid to a few significant effects of Japan's wartime experiences, which largely shaped its post-war foreign policy. First, Japan's wartime push into East and Southeast Asia did play a significant role in dispelling the fiction of European dominance and in expediting the actual withdrawal

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<sup>49</sup>Nye, J. S. and W.A. Owens. (1996). America's information edge, *Foreign Affairs*, 75(2), pp.20-36.

<sup>50</sup>Hook, G. (2002). Japan's role in the East Asian political economy: From crisis to bloc?, *Asian Business and Management*, 1, pp. 19-37.

of the European powers, while being cruel, traumatic, and even inhumane. Furthermore, Japan's occupation of Southeast Asia accelerated the independence movements in countries such as Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines and established the idea that Asian powers could not only succeed and take centre stage on the international scene, but also possibly come together as Asians. Japan's proposed "Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere," despite the self-serving rhetoric surrounding it, did signal the beginning of the kind of Pan-Asianism that permeates many of the region's contemporary political practices. The US's decisive military victory over Japan during the war was a second significant effect of Japan's actions, one that later shaped the direction and goals of Japanese foreign and economic policy.<sup>51</sup>

Japan is now a minor military force in postwar East Asia as a result of its rejection of military adventurism and the US's active involvement in the creation of Japan's new "peace constitution" after the war. This is not to say that, by regional standards, Japan does not currently possess a capable military force. Conversely, it still has the military power to fend off a significant attack. In spite of this, Japan has shown a conspicuous lack of enthusiasm for use force outside of "self defence" situations. Japan's ongoing strategic dependency on the US, not to mention its obedience to it, has erased a potentially significant portion of Japanese hegemony while concurrently bolstering American hegemony. Despite harsh criticism, the Japanese government has notably provided substantial support for American policy, especially the measures designed specifically for the region. This approach inevitably curtails Japan's capacity to lead the area autonomously. However, there have also been advantages to this kind of legislation.

Economic development has been consistently given priority as a result of Japan's low military and foreign policy prominence. This is the third main effect.

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<sup>51</sup>Hatch, W. and K. Yamamura. (1996). *Asia in Japan's Embrace: Building a Regional Production Alliance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Japan stood out as a new kind of 'trading state',<sup>52</sup> due to its unrelenting post-war economic reconstruction and expansion, its early focus on domestic development, and its persistent mercantilist attitude to foreign commercial interactions. As a result of this strategy's remarkable success and the seeming efficacy of the business-government partnerships that enabled it, Japan has become somewhat of an Asian success story when it comes to industrialisation and growth. Though Southeast Asia may not have historically had the same degree of self-governing capacity that marked Japan's growth, several countries attempted to mimic certain aspects of the Japanese model in an attempt to replicate Japan's swift industrialisation.<sup>53</sup>

## **2.18. Japan's contemporary relations with the region**

Though its current economic woes may have lessened both its primacy as a potential economic role model and its actual significance as a regional economic actor, it's important to keep in mind that for a significant portion of the post-war period, Japan served as the cornerstone of regional economic development and integration. Southeast Asia's economic connections with Japan are growing and more robust, mirroring Japan's own economic development. With the expansion and sophistication of the Japanese economy came the development of a three-way trade between the US, Southeast Asia, and Japan. Up until the middle of the 1960s, Japan was a major importer of industrial goods from the US and an exporter of simple manufactured goods to Southeast Asia, serving as an intermediate in this trade. Japan later became an important source of investment capital for most of Southeast Asia as the nations in the region looked to quicken their own industrialisation processes as their own economies began to pick up speed. The Japanese government, which aimed to enhance

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<sup>52</sup> Khamchoo Chaiwat. (1991, April). Japan's Role in Southeast Asian Security: "Plus ca Change ...." *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2760360>, accessed on December 20, 2022.

<sup>53</sup> Obuchi Keizo. (1998, December 16). Relationship between Japan and ASEAN, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/asean/pmv9812/relation.html>, accessed on December 22, 2022.

Japan's domestic industrial base<sup>54</sup> and export labour-intensive industries, promoted this mutually advantageous cooperation.

A massive new wave of Japanese investment in the region occurred after the Plaza Accord in 1985, which saw a significant increase in the value of the yen, and the subsequent growth of Japan's "bubble economy" in the late 1980s. These events cemented Japan's position at the centre of an emerging regional production structure. There are a few important caveats to this seemingly innocent depiction of a mutually beneficial connection between Southeast Asia and Japan. First, Japanese companies and their subsidiaries have usually benefited the most from government assistance programs intended to promote the regional expansion of Japanese corporations. In addition to primarily benefiting Japanese corporations, the complex assistance and foreign aid packages that the Japanese government has offered have had the unintended consequence of pushing other countries into subordinate roles in the regional manufacturing network. Despite its own economic challenges, Japan continues to support these kinds of activities as part of its long-term efforts to integrate itself into the area by offering technical assistance and promoting the "Japanese way" of doing business.

But and this takes us to our second issue, it has always been difficult for other regional economies to imitate Japan's success because Japanese companies have been reluctant to share their technology with other countries. In response to the increasingly aggressive business practices of their American rivals, Japanese corporations seem to be under pressure to share technology and open up their manufacturing facilities due to the very nature of modern production processes, especially in the electronics sector. Japan will continue to be a major player in the region despite the fall in the competitiveness of the Japanese economy and

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<sup>54</sup> Schmidt, Gustav. (2003). Asia, Europe, North America, and the 'Asian Capitalist Miracle': Changing 'Power Cycles' and Evolving Roles in Regional and International Structures, *International Political Science Review/Revue internationale de science politique*, 24(1), pp. 67–81. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1601330>, accessed on December 14, 2023.

some Japanese firms. This is due to Japan's cumulative economic weight. It is possible, in fact, that Japan may take the lead in this emerging regional political architecture, which has accelerated and become more prominent in the wake of the Asian crisis.

After the 2008 financial crisis, Japan led the way in proposing regionally based financial systems to manage future crises, even though the nation has long struggled to develop an autonomous, coherent, and consistent foreign policy. The subsequent Chiang Mai Initiative shows that there is still life left in the overall project of regional financial integration and that Japan continues to play a major role in promoting it. This initiative agreed to form a network of currency swap arrangements as part of the larger ASEAN + 3 grouping. Despite early US<sup>55</sup> rejection, Japan's proposal for an Asian Monetary Fund and the so-called Miyazawa Initiative failed to gain any traction. Naturally, it is still to be seen how far the ASEAN plus 3 project will go and how well it will be able to allay long-standing tensions between China and Japan, as well as between Japan and Southeast Asia. The foundation for increased financial integration is present, though, and there is strong political backing for it in the wake of the crisis' catastrophic effects and the US and IMF's invasive participation in it. The US, India, Japan and China.<sup>56</sup> are in a four-way competition for regional influence, and being 'insiders' at a time of institutional consolidation within the larger East Asian region, "in opposition to the West in general and the US in particular", would be significant, according to one observer. As we shall see, recent developments and the ongoing realignment of regional relations have made even China seem like a less formidable force.

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<sup>55</sup> Lipsy Y Phillip Y. (Spring 2003). Japan's Asian Monetary Fund Proposal, *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, 3(1), pp.93-103, [http://www.lipscy.org/lipscy\\_amf.pdf](http://www.lipscy.org/lipscy_amf.pdf), accessed on December 25, 2022.

<sup>56</sup> M. Beeson. (2003), ASEAN Plus Three and the Rise Of Reactionary Regionalism", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 25(2), pp 251-268.

## Russia

ASEAN's conversation partner is Russia. The signing of a "Joint Declaration" for an ASEAN–Russian Federation relationship in June 2003 strengthened Moscow's resolve to maintain its regional significance by fostering more constructive engagements between the two countries across the entire range of ASEAN interests. In 2005, Russia hosted its first summit with ASEAN plus 1. Russia's highest bilateral visibility in the Southeast.

As Foreign Minister Kozyrev announced that Russia had been granted participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), he said that Russia had managed to secure a position in Southeast Asia "worthy of a great power". Based on Russian claims, the main justification for joining the ARF was prestige-related: Russia had a right to be represented in any Asia-Pacific forum as a major country. Senior diplomats declared that without Russia's participation<sup>57</sup>, no regional security mechanism could be effective. According to Moscow, the East and Southeast Asian region, where China, the United States, Japan, and India wield influence, makes sense for multipolarity. The shift toward multipolarity, according to Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, is "vividly pronounced in the Asia-Pacific space"<sup>58</sup>. As China, the United States, Japan and India manoeuvre their powers, the East and Southeast Asian region makes sense from Moscow's point of view for multipolarity. The shift toward multipolarity is "vividly pronounced in the Asia-Pacific space," according to Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

"Let us turn our faces towards Asia, the East will help us conquer the West" - Lenin said. Like the United States and India, Russia does not lay claim to any area of South East Asia. However, Russia's position on this is comparatively vague in comparison to the USA and India. However, this does not lessen Russia's standing as

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<sup>57</sup>Rangsimaporn, Paradorn. (2009). Russia's Search for Influence in Southeast Asia, *Asian Survey*, 49(5), pp. 786-808, JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2009.49.5.786>, accessed on January 10, 2023.

<sup>58</sup>Rangsimaporn, Paradorn. (2009). Russian Perceptions and Policies in a Multipolar East Asia under Yeltsin and Putin, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 9(3), pp. 207–44. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26159410>, accessed on March 14, 2023.

a major regional political player. With multiple economic, political, and security considerations, Russia finds itself in a precarious position in the post-1990 world politics. Russia is a powerful, long-standing nation that has suffered from political and economic unrest. Russia needs to re-evaluate its foreign policy decisions and cultivate diverse relationships in order to reclaim its international standing. Russia's attractive foreign policy channels have remained skewed towards the East since President Putin assumed office in 2000. Moreover, Russia started to give attention to developing ties with countries in South East Asia. As a result, the primary tools of Russian policy, the armaments trade and defence are important components of the security framework that surrounds Southeast and East Asia. Since the start of the global financial crisis in 2008–2009, Moscow has paid more attention to Asia, bolstering its opinion that the region has emerged as the "fastest-developing geopolitical zone, toward which the centre of world economy and politics is gradually shifting".<sup>59</sup> Russia's commitment to the region was strengthened by her access to several of the east Asian multilateral forums, including APEC, EAS, and ASEAN.

President Vladimir Putin pushed for admission to the East Asia Summit in 2005, saying that Russia was "ready to make a real contribution to resolving the issues currently affecting the region"<sup>60</sup> in his speech. In 2010, Russia was already using "major changes" in the world and the region that had "radically altered the geopolitical landscape" as justification for closer ties with ASEAN. President Putin's 'pivot to the East' directive has since caused Russia to focus more on the east than it has in the past.

Russia's eastward shift has been successfully implemented through defence cooperation and arms transfers with the area. Its armament sales have increased globally, with the main purchasers being the warring groups in Southeast Asia. In the

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<sup>59</sup> Iseri Emere & Ozdemir Volkan. (2017, February). Russia's Dual Roles in Global Politics as a Traditional Great Power and a Rising Power, *Rising Powers in Global Governance*, 2(1), <https://risingpowersproject.com/geopolitical-economy-russias-foreign-policy-duality-lockean-east-hobbesian-west/> \t "\_blank.

<sup>60</sup> Putin, Vladimir, (2005, December 14). Speech at East Asia Summit, East Asia Summit, Malaysia.

meantime, due to these nations' continuous South China Sea conflicts with China<sup>61</sup>, military spending in Southeast Asia increased by 33% between 2009 and 2018. Russia is the world's second-largest arms exporter, accounting for 20% of all arms exports<sup>62</sup> worldwide between 2016 and 2021 and supplying significant armaments to 45 states, according to SIPRI Factsheet. Russia has contributed 25% of major arms sales to Southeast Asia since 2000, according to analyst Gavin Greenwood of A2 Global Risk, a security consultancy based in Hong Kong. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reports that between 2010 and 2017, Moscow sold 566 billion worth of weapons to Southeast Asia, which is more than the combined sales of the United States and China<sup>63</sup>.

Russia has been Southeast Asia's main supplier of weapons for the previous 20 years, but due to increased competition from other nations and the possibility of US sanctions, the value of its defence shipments has decreased recently. As a direct result, even if Russia is a major supplier of weapons to many of the nations in Southeast Asia, its effective defence diplomacy needs to be re-evaluated if Moscow hopes to expand its sphere of influence in the area. Russia is thought to be conducting subdued diplomacy in the area. According to Moscow, the East and Southeast Asian region, where China, the United States, Japan, and India wield influence, makes sense for multipolarity. The shift toward multipolarity, according to Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, is particularly noticeable in the Asia-Pacific region. Russia sees itself as a key player in pursuing an Asia-Pacific balance of power stance because of this regional perspective. By fostering significant advancements in bilateral and multilateral relations in the area, Moscow aims to establish stability there.

China and Southeast Asia have traditionally relied on Russia as their

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<sup>61</sup> Wezeman t Siemon. (2019). Arms Flows to South East Asia, *Front Matter*, Stockholm: International Peace Research Institute, pp. 1-2. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep20058.1>, accessed on December 30, 2022.

<sup>62</sup> Hunt Luke. (2020, January 18). Russia Touts Arms Across Southeast Asia, *VOA News*, [https://www.voanews.com/a/east-asia-pacific\\_russia-touts-arms-across-southeast-asia/6182779.html](https://www.voanews.com/a/east-asia-pacific_russia-touts-arms-across-southeast-asia/6182779.html). Accessed on January 02, 2023.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

armament source. Joint weapons manufacture is made possible by the November 2013 defence cooperation deal between Putin and Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang. An estimated US \$1 billion in military assistance and an additional US \$1 billion in economic assistance were given to Vietnam by Moscow on a yearly average throughout the 1980s. Between 1995 and 2019, Russia's defence connections were vital given the security situation in Southeast Asia.

Russia conducted its first-ever combined naval drill in the South China Sea in November 2021 with all ten ASEAN nations. The exercises are intended to practice communication between the Russian Navy and the ASEAN member nations in order to guarantee the safety of maritime commerce and navigation, according to Alexander Ivanov, Russia's Permanent Representative to ASEAN. Although Moscow was "not indifferent" to the situation in the region, Russia was "against any meddling by nations other than the Claimant countries in the South China Sea territorial dispute"<sup>64</sup>, according to Russian ambassador to the Philippines Nikolay Kudashev in May 2012. The Chinese denial of the dispute's internationalisation was in line with this statement. Russia's position vis-à-vis China in the region is complicated by her ties to the countries of Southeast Asia, especially in the defence sector. The leaders of Russia and China, Jiang Zemin and Boris Yeltsin, announced the formation of a strategic cooperation in 1996. A Treaty of Good Neighbourliness and Friendly collaboration was signed in 2002 between China and Russia to facilitate collaboration in a number of areas. This pact served as the foundation for Sino-Russian relations in the twenty-first century. As a result of China's ascent, the 2014 Ukraine crisis, and Russia's foreign policy reform since 2010, relations between the two countries have significantly improved. In actuality, Russia's neighbours in Asia were undoubtedly a viable option for dealing with Western economic sanctions.

It is possible to predict that Russia will maintain its neutral stance while stepping up its military sales to South East Asia. Russia will not become involved in

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<sup>64</sup> Kozyrev Vitaly. (2016, April 19). Russia-Southeast Asia Relations: In China's Shadow, *The ASEAN Forum*, <https://theasanforum.org/russia-southeast-asia-relations-in-chinas-shadow-2/> \t "\_blank, accessed on December 30, 2022.

geopolitical conflicts, despite the rising tensions in the South China Sea. Given that Southeast Asia is not Russia's primary area of interest, its position is anticipated to remain stable. Russia's approach and way of thinking about strategy are and will be European. Russia will not make Southeast Asia its top priority right now. Russia is interested in the Asia-Pacific area because of the US's growing interest in the region. The pivot to the east policy was adopted, but the consequences have been largely inconclusive. Russia continues to be a minor economic force in the region despite the existence of bilateral commerce and investments between ASEAN and Russia. Nonetheless, Russia would not stop providing energy and weaponry to specific Asian nations. It is anticipated that Russia will adopt a flexible approach in the area.

President Putin's 2000 visit to Southeast Asia marked the beginning of Russia's reengagement with the region. The first ASEAN-Russian Federation Summit took place in Malaysia on December 13, 2005, during which the two sides signed the "Joint Declaration on Progressive and Comprehensive Partnership." In 2010, the Second Russia-ASEAN Summit resolved to fortify and expand the alliance, emphasizing the value of close collaboration in the context of the Asia Pacific's expanding regional architecture. As one of the founding members of ADMM-Plus, which was established in 2010, Russia has benefited from the alliance by being able to fortify its defence diplomacy in Southeast Asia. On May 20, 2016, Russia and ASEAN reached an agreement on a Comprehensive Plan of Action for the years 2016–2020. The Russia-ASEAN partnership was elevated to a strategic partnership in 2018. The guiding principles of ASEAN's multifaceted engagement with Russia were created by all of these conversations. Russia released its National Security Strategy on July 2, 2021. The world is undoubtedly changing, with geopolitical tensions and instability rising, as acknowledged by the National Security Strategy. "The Russian Federation's foreign policy must contribute to a more stable system of international relations, based on international law, the principles of universal, equal, and indivisible security, the deepening of multilateral cooperation without dividing lines and bloc approaches in order to solve global and regional problems together," the document reads. "This is because geopolitical tensions are growing". Two aspects of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN)

response to the protracted conflict in Ukraine are examined: the responses of the grouping's individual members and the ASEAN itself. The ASEAN statement in the immediate wake of this year's Russian invasion was apathetic; it emphasized the significance of the concepts of "mutual respect for sovereignty" and "territorial integrity" without explicitly denouncing Russia's actions. The region's custom of being wary of interfering in other people's business, particularly over what would seem to be a remote issue in eastern Europe, might be blamed for the ambivalent reaction of the majority of ASEAN nations to the conflict in Ukraine. Governments in Southeast Asia have always taken a strong stand against meddling in the internal affairs of other nations and have taken a neutral position on matters pertaining to far-off regions. The 'ASEAN Way'<sup>65</sup> is the name given to this concept.

## **2.19. India and South East Asia**

Seeing "India" or "Indians" via multiple lenses makes it difficult to comprehend the evolution, complexity, and diversity of the concept of "India", which has a history spanning more than 5,000 years of civilisation. Growing awareness of an emerging India, with its tech-savvy, globalising professionals and entrepreneurs, highly regarded Indian spiritualism and yoga culture, and possibly the best and only alternative to China's increasingly likely regional dominance, is being seen in Southeast Asia and beyond. In the latter half of the 20th century and in the present day, this is particularly true.

Words from Indian culture such as 'karma', 'yoga' and 'guru' have become common place in Southeast Asian and international everyday speech. The Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia is numerically far larger than the Indian diaspora, which makes cultural affinities with China more in line with China's increasing assertiveness in the South China Sea and East Asia. Southeast Asia, which is mostly made up of islands, has been a meeting place for Indian and

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<sup>65</sup> Saha Premesha. (2022, December 16). Observer Research Foundation, *Understanding ASEAN's Non-Linear Approach to the Russia-Ukraine War*, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/aseans-non-linear-approach-to-the-russia-ukraine-war/>, accessed on January 02, 2023.

Chinese cultures for more than a millennium. These cultures have merged with the distinctive native characteristics that define the majority of the states in the region. Because of this, many individuals from Southeast Asia have mixed feelings about India; while they may have a strong sense of cultural affiliation, they may not have a thorough grasp of the nation and its people beyond what is readily apparent from the media. It is impossible to overestimate the significance of respect for one another in the context of a resurgent Asia and the different connections and differences between India and Southeast Asia.

## **2.20. Centuries of Cultural and Religious Connection**

India and Southeast Asia share a unique relationship that has changed significantly over time. Religions such as Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism made their way to Southeast Asia via a variety of land and maritime routes that crossed south Asia, resulting in the mingling of indigenous elements<sup>66</sup> with regional belief systems. These kinds of cultural exchanges and representations take place at the Suvarnabhumi international airport in Bangkok, the Thai capital, where foreign visitors are welcomed by a striking mythical exhibit depicting the Samudra Manthan, or the churning of the ocean, which draws heavily from Hindu mythological beliefs<sup>67</sup>. An analogous portrayal of the Samudra Manthan can be found on the walls of the temples dedicated to Lord Vishnu at Angkor Wat, one of the well-known World Heritage sites in what is now Cambodia. The various Mahabharata and Ramayana dramas that are presented in temples, on stage, or in Wayang puppet theatre are examples of how Indian influences have been localised.

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<sup>66</sup> For instance, Indonesia, which has the largest Muslim population in the world, has as its national bird the fabled bird from Buddhist and Hindu mythology known as Garuda. In addition to the popular Garuda airlines, Indonesia's prime airline carrier, Garuda is represented in an impressive ornate statue in the Prambanan Temple, and also made its way into the Wayang, or the traditional puppet culture of Java. The Garuda makes its pervasive presence felt in Thailand as well, a predominantly Buddhist country, where it is more mythically represented with a human torso and red feathers.

<sup>67</sup> Agarwal, Ruchi. (2012). Thai and Indian Cultural Linkage: The Religious Festivities, *Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Studies (HASSS)*, 11(2), pp. 79–90.

"Indianisation" has never been a standardized paradigm; definitions have evolved with the passage of time and as the concept became entwined in multiple historicities, each with its own different cultural background,<sup>68</sup> says historian and archaeologist Pierre Manguin, describing the trajectories of historical narratives in Southeast Asia. The Indian subcontinent has had a significant religious influence on Southeast Asia, which has been indigenous through a variety of ceremonies, practices, and beliefs. Prior to Buddhism being embraced by several states on the mainland, Buddhism and Hinduism were two religions that originated in India and mostly coexisted peacefully. Even though Islam was introduced to Sumatra by itinerant preachers and traders, the region did not establish an Islamic monarchy until the fourteenth century CE. Southeast Asia developed its own character as a result of the coexistence of all the religions with the pre-existing culture and traditions.

## **2.21. Geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century and the "Indo-Pacific" Factor**

Asia and the rest of the world have seen a fresh surge in globalisation in the twenty-first century. In order to "redirect connectivity through coastal areas, territorial landscapes, maritime spaces and cultural imaginary (values, institutions, laws and symbols through which people imagine their social whole) throughout the region,"<sup>69</sup> geopolitical and academic discourses have been guided by renewed foreign policy strategies, growing multilateralism, and market-driven interests. New opportunities and alignments across political, economic and cultural domains have been brought about by the recent paradigm of contacts, which marks a clear break from isolationism and inward-looking policies and

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<sup>68</sup>Bhattacharya Jayati. (Winter 2020). Ties that Bind: India and Southeast Asia Connectivities, *Association for Asian Studies*, 25(3), [https://www.asianstudies.org/publications/ea/archives/?fwp\\_eaa-volume=volume-253-winter-2020-teaching-asias-giants-india](https://www.asianstudies.org/publications/ea/archives/?fwp_eaa-volume=volume-253-winter-2020-teaching-asias-giants-india).

<sup>69</sup>Pai Nitin. (2021, February 14). Responding to Southeast Asian concerns will Raise our influence, *Mint, The Intersection*, <https://www.livemint.com/opinion/columns/responding-to-southeast-asian-concerns-will-raise-our-influence-11613318261950.html>, accessed on January 10, 2023.

includes the rise of China and India. The broad Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which China launched in 2013, and several other international organisations throughout the Bay of Bengal's maritime region are examples of this transformative viewpoint in action as well as foreign policy initiatives like the Look East/Act East Policy (LEP/ AEP)<sup>70</sup>. Scholarly conversations about "intra-Asian studies", "Indian ocean studies", "diasporic networks" and "borderland networks" have thus been steadily expanding, challenging the limitations of more traditional and rigid area studies approaches.

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a more ambitious project that has invoked historical "Silk Road" links with more strategic opportunities and the development of infrastructural facilities for many developing states. While India's LEP was an effort to rebuild its relations with its eastern neighbours and also energise its northeastern states that were further elevated to the AEP in 2014. Both countries have taken steps, albeit in different ways, to become part of their "extended neighbourhood", which is the maritime space<sup>71</sup> between the Pacific and Indian oceans. China and India have forged a close relationship in India's backyard, the Indian Ocean, thanks to a series of strategic and economic investments undertaken by China surrounding the Indian peninsula, commonly referred to as the "String of Pearls" policy. India's strategic outreach attempts have broadened the scope of shared interests to include the Indo-Pacific region, leading to alliances with the United States, Japan and Australia.

Regional collaboration has been made possible by the market-driven process of regional integration, state-level economic reforms that have raised output, outbound investments, free trade agreements, and professional and entrepreneur mobility between India and ASEAN. With other ASEAN countries,

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid

<sup>71</sup> Chaudhury Roy Dipanjan. (2019, November 03). Northeast India gateway to Southeast Asia under Act East Policy: PM Modi in Bangkok, *The Economic Times*, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/northeast-india-gateway-to-southeast-asia-under-act-east-policy-pm-modi-in-bangkok/articleshow/71871976.cms?from=mdr> . accessed on January 11, 2023.

India has negotiated both bilateral and multilateral agreements to collaborate on infrastructure, commercial banking, energy, tourism, and the advancement of technology and communication. Even if trade has increased dramatically and consistently between India and ASEAN, any gaps or untapped potential in these connections can be found by comparing trade data with China<sup>72</sup>.

Multilateral agreements, multilateral naval exercises (MILAN), and security alliances in the region<sup>73</sup> have resulted from India's growing focus on its maritime space, its expanding role in protecting the sea and oil lanes against piracy, terrorist attacks, environmental degradation, and natural calamities, as well as its exploration of maritime resources. The idea of "Asia-Pacific" has been altered by the "Indo Pacific" strategy, which unites the western Pacific and Indian oceans into a single strategic arc.<sup>74</sup> As a result of the maritime shift and the ensuing power struggle, India and other countries, including the United States, Japan and Australia, founded the Quadrilateral Security Discussion, or Quad (Quadrilateral security discussion), which comprises all four states. The mutual prosperity and collaborations that serve as the foundation for China-Indian relations remain vital. India and other nations have a strong incentive to prevent China from simultaneously ruling Southeast and South Asia.

## 2.22 Looking Forward

After being altered into a sense of "otherness" during the post-colonial era, the interconnectedness that had existed for approximately 2,000 years

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<sup>72</sup> China's imports and exports to ASEAN is 6.52 trillion yuan (\$970 billion) in 2022 and India as the 4<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner is about USD 110.4 billion, Export Import Data Bank, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India. "<https://commerce.gov.in/>" \t "\_blank".

<sup>73</sup>Baru Sanjaya. (2021, May 26). What's going wrong with India's Act East policy?, *The Indian Express*, Opinion: Columns, <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/india-singapore-relationship-southeast-asia-policy-7330227/>, accessed on January 05, 2023.

<sup>74</sup>Pempel, T. J. (2010). More Pax, Less Americana in Asia, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 10(3), pp. 465-490, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26159516>. accessed on March 17, 2023.

between South and Southeast Asia has now reappeared with renewed convergences between states and peoples through soft power approaches, historical re-examination, market exploration, shared economic interests and strategic concerns. Interactions between individuals, a rise in tourism, and recollections of past and cultural ties have all contributed to the widespread belief that "Suvarnabhumi," the "country of gold" referenced in ancient Indian literature, exists. Southeast Asian Buddhists maintain ties to their Indian pilgrimage sites, which continue to be important points of contact. Improved political and economic ties, as well as opportunities for free trade and investment, also facilitate them.

The majority of ASEAN nations and India have excellent foreign policy relationships, with growing efforts made to take advantage of their complementary strengths. Nonetheless, the majority of the region's focus has been drawn to the Asian behemoth due to China's belligerent posture in the South China Sea and the grandiose Belt and Road Initiative. Although India is a nuclear-armed nation (with a declared policy of not using force against its neighbours), it also employs potent soft power tactics to make its fellow QUAD members feel apprehensive and uncertain about Southeast Asia because difficult choices must be made. Approaching Indian interactions outside of geopolitical limitations may be in the long-term interests of the region, Asia and the global community. It can offer new paradigms of pedagogy, policy and research beyond zonal demarcations, potentially influencing creative but unrealized international policies, with new academic discourses based on alliances and allegiances, experiences and imagination between India and Southeast Asia.

### **2.23. Major Powers' perspective on Southeast Asian multilateral security cooperation**

As Southeast Asia moves into the new millennium, the benefit of ideological differences between Indochina and the rest of the world no longer divides the region. Even if this may be a nice convergence of ASEAN effort and

historical circumstance, other developments in the area were not quite as fortunate. There are certain factors that did not make Southeast Asia safer. Stability brought on by problems like the economic crisis, ethnic unrest and political turmoil has given rise to new worries. Southeast Asian nations are mainly concerned with their domestic circumstances, despite the fact that intraregional cooperation seems to have improved. As the traditional divisions between countries that stemmed from the Cold War polarisation receded, new conflicts emerged over a wide range of topics, including copyright, intellectual property rights, human rights, and maritime rights, among others. Economic forces, not ideological ones as Eisenhower had predicted, were the origin of the domino effect that permeated every aspect of the affected countries' activity. International security cooperation is more important now than ever because of the extra security concerns this has raised. Each major power's aspirations and its own regional security and economic objectives play a vital role in determining how ready it is to support multilateral security organisations.

To achieve their own objectives, powerful nations frequently try to subvert or take control of international security structures. The stronger a state is, the more actively it would like to influence the course and speed of a multilateral security forum. This is achieved by planting the seeds of introspection and encouraging doubt about the fundamental values and inherent worth upon which it has been built. Controlling the security institution's membership, leadership, and the pace at which it should advance are more ways to achieve this goal. Initiate an alternative organization or organizations, which fulfil the same purpose but are more adaptable and closely align with your interests, in case all else fails. The great nations do not take a purely realist stance because they recognize that liberal ideology is necessary for even realism to thrive. Most states typically use a more intricate combination.

## **2.24. India: Way Ahead and the Chinese Issue**

India is making significant investments in a more comprehensive balancing strategy at a time when China is expanding the reach of its strategic footprints in South Asia through its Act East Policy, which has provided the framework for India to enhance strategic relations with countries that have comparable concerns about China's increasing assertiveness.

India's security issues have been made even more complex by China's incursion into Indian Territory in Eastern Ladakh, which resulted in the deaths of at least 20 Indian Army soldiers and an unspecified number of Chinese soldiers. Given the ongoing tensions with China, New Delhi has been stepping up its security cooperation and strategic alliances with Southeast Asian nations, especially those that hold significant stakes in the South China Sea issue. In actuality, India sent its warships into the South China Sea<sup>75</sup> as one of its first actions following the border skirmish. When all the pieces come together, these moves seem prepared to offset China's repressive moves in the area.

## **2.25. China's Ambitions in South Asia**

Increasing its naval power and influence in the strategically significant South Asian and Indian Ocean region is essential to China's ambition to dominate Asia. Eighty percent of China's oil imports pass through the Strait of Malacca, a crucial transit route in the Indian Ocean. Apart from its energy-related concerns, China has significantly enhanced its naval powers in the Indian Ocean and fortified its security connections with South Asian countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan. China has rapidly expanded its massive investment projects in significant South Asian states to safeguard its resources and vital

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<sup>75</sup> Blank, Jonah, et al. (2015). *Look East, Cross Black Waters: India's Interest in Southeast Asia*, RAND Corporation, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/j.ctt19gfk53>. accessed on March 15, 2023.

maritime channels of communication. Not only is China's strength being increased, but India's influence in the area is also being undermined and weakened by these measures. China's activities stem from its apprehension over the strengthening strategic alliance among India, the US and its Asian allies. China worries that it will be caught in the middle as India increases its influence in the Indian Ocean and the United States and its allies solidify their position in the Pacific. China therefore wants to weaken this expanding alliance by undermining India's sway over the Indian Ocean region. China has declared that defending its "overseas interests" and "maritime rights and interests" are its top priorities in the area. As India is the only nation in South Asia and the wider Indian Ocean region that may truly threaten China's strategic goals, China has implemented a policy to curtail India's diplomatic, economic, and power projection capabilities in the area. This policy includes the transfer of military weaponry, a surge in economic aid, and the expansion of mega-infrastructure investments to neighbouring states in order to fortify China's regional hegemony over India's communication routes.

India has been prompted by this sequence of events to devise a counterstrategy in order to counterbalance its strategic challenge in its immediate geographic vicinity. India has therefore started looking eastward to counterbalance China's aggression.

## **2.26. India's Pivot towards Southeast Asia**

Previously, concerns over China's response contributed to India's relations with Southeast Asian governments being weak, particularly in the security domain. Even though the governments of Southeast Asia wanted India to have a more significant role in the region, two decades ago, India had showed hesitation in forging strong security relationships with its friends in the region. In actuality, China dismissed India's prior attempts to interact with Southeast Asia as a disastrous and "desperate attempt" to expand its influence in the area. However, India has been adjusting its China policy as China has been making more of an

assertive stance in South Asia and elsewhere.

Prime Minister Modi's Act East Policy provides India with an essential, flexible framework for proactive interaction with its Southeast Asian neighbours, especially with regard to matters of strategy. China's recent transgressions along the Laos-India Corridor, however, present a challenge for India and would require additional optimisation of this system. By continuing to rely on the Act East Policy to level the geopolitical playing field with China, India intends to establish a more successful balancing strategy in Southeast Asia.

As a result, India is beginning to pay more attention to the security problems afflicting Southeast Asian nations, especially China's sweeping claims in the South China Sea. In July 2020, Indian Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Anurag Srivastava made a significant diplomatic move by emphasising that the South China Sea is a part of the global commons. In compliance with international law, particularly UNCLOS<sup>76</sup>, we firmly support the freedom of navigation, over flight, and unhindered lawful commerce in these international waterways. Following this forceful declaration to refute China's territorial claims in the South China Sea, India and the other claimant governments in the disputed region held a number of high-level meetings.

India's shift towards Southeast Asia encompasses tactics that go beyond bluntly resisting China's aspirations. India and Vietnam recently inked a number of agreements in a variety of fields, from defence to nuclear and renewable energy. One of the agreements is a framework that gives Vietnam access to two lines of defence credit totalling USD \$600 million.<sup>77</sup> Both India and the Philippines have expressed pleasure with their growing Indo-Pacific alliance,

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<sup>76</sup> Srivastava Anurag. (2020, July 16). South China Sea part of global commons, firmly stand for freedom of Navigation: India, *The Times of India*, news-India news, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/south-china-sea-part-of-global-commons-firmly-stand-for-freedom-of-navigation-india/articleshow/77002927.cms>, accessed on January 10, 2023.

<sup>77</sup> Press Information Bureau, Government of India. (2022, June 08). *Joint Vision Statement on India-Vietnam Defence Partnership towards 2030*, Press Release, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1831981>, accessed on January 15, 2023.

which includes ongoing negotiations for the Philippines to purchase defence equipment, specifically the BrahMos supersonic missile system. In an effort to further bilateral defence cooperation, India and Indonesia recently organized a joint patrol for their respective navies.<sup>78</sup>

India is steadily reshaping itself into a more formidable counterweight to China by forging stronger strategic alliances with the governments of Southeast Asia. India has presented itself as a more responsible and benign growing force in the region, given that it has no particular territorial or revisionist goals. Consequently, the governments of Southeast Asia have extended support to India's accommodation as a security partner and as a check on China's assertive and unilateral actions.

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<sup>78</sup> Press Information Bureau, Government of India. (2022, December 11). *39<sup>th</sup> Edition of India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol*, “Press Release,” <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1882468>, accessed on January 15, 2023.

**CHAPTER - 3**  
**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT OF INDIA-  
MYANMAR**  
**STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP**

India and Myanmar shares land and sea borders, both countries and internal politics have a clear-cut impact on other country. The relations between both nations can be explained as complex history. After Britain took control of the administration of Burma, they made new policies for trade and forced the cultivators to cultivate rice. The money required for cultivation was generated by bringing in some moneylenders from India to lend money at high interest rates leading to several Burmese losing their jobs and land to Indian merchants as they were not able to pay debts. So for Burmese, Indians were collaborators with Britain. While the Burmese economy grew however, most of the wealth remained in the hands of British firms, Anglo-Burmese people and migrants from India. Even, the civil services were largely staffed by Anglo-Burmese community and Indians. Burmese were largely excluded from military services. The business interests of Indians and Chinese in Burma were encouraged by the Britishers.

The Second World War witnessed administration of Burma being separated from India. During this period Freedom Fighter Aung San and other prominent leaders decided to overthrow British administration by establishing a communist party seeking arms and ammunition support from China. Meanwhile, Japan too contacted him and promised training and support for a national uprising against Britain. Aung San provided full support to Japanese and assisted during Japanese invasion of Burma in 1942. However, the realisation came sooner than later that one set of imperialists had been exchanged for another expansionists. Realizing the mistake, Aung San collaborated with Britain and evicted the expansionists from Japan out in 1942 and subsequently imperialists from Britain in 1948. But before moving out, Britain sowed the seed for trouble in Burma by dividing the major ethnic groups like Chins, Mizos and Nagas on both sides of the border resulting these ethnic groups becoming minority in both countries, the root cause for insurgency in North-

East India. Later, these groups demanded independent state which included part of both countries and resulted in non-negotiable national issue. Basically, Myanmar is important for India in terms of security, prosperity and as part of Act East Policy. In Feb 2021, Myanmar military overthrew the democratic government and most of the democratic leaders have been put under house arrest. India, despite being a democratic nation did not openly criticize Myanmar military to avoid opening a third front in East.

### **3.1. Deciphering Myanmar**

India's relationship with Myanmar has been complex. This can be best understood by appreciating Indian perspective on Myanmar society, nation and state. The portrayal of the country has been attempted by those Indians who studied it, lived and worked in it or had an opportunity to interact with its people. Scholars, pilgrims, and monks have provided account of their travel and experiences since ancient times. These writings provide valuable insights in the understanding of Myanmar and development of linkages. Swapna Bhattacharya's seminal work "India-Myanmar relations 1886-1948" traces the development of India's multifaceted relations with Myanmar. She has followed the works of numerous Indian and foreign scholars while carrying out her research for the book. The unique location of Myanmar has shaped the socio-cultural character of the nation. Thailand, China, India, Bangladesh and Laos share land boundaries whereas the long coastline from Bangladesh in the west to Thailand in the east, makes maritime dimension far more prominent<sup>79</sup>.

The melting pot of Myanmar has witnessed a perennial inflow of socio-cultural influences that has moulded its society, with prominently noticeable impact in border regions. This influence extends right up to hinterlands. Human migration comprising of movement of people from Tibet and South China, inflows from the west and east are reflected in the beliefs, culture, arts, costumes, cuisines and way of

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<sup>79</sup> Bhattacharya, Swapna. (2007). *India-Myanmar relations 1886-1948*, K.P. Bagchi-Co.

life in the Burmese society. The nation is not a mere reflection of Chinese, Indian and Thai cultures but has developed an unique and independent style by absorbing external influences. This inborn feature of the national psyche emanates the dual indication to be friendly to neighbours and to assert independence. Contemporary Myanmar has been shaped by the historical influences which can be broadly categorised into pre-colonial history and the British Raj. It is a cultured, very diverse and complex society. The culture has been deeply influenced by religion and history and it dictates the day-to-day life of its people. “Nearly 89 percent of population in the follower of the Theravada school of Buddhism. The balance 11 percent follows Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. Christians are mostly concentrated in border regions and have fared better in preserving their position and heritage”<sup>80</sup>. Hindus find it easy to coexist with Buddhism however Islamists did poorly due to historical and political reasons. Myanmar has been recipient of Hinduism from a very early period with the story of Ramayana forming an integral part of the country’s cultural landscape.

The popular perception of Myanmar being a Buddhist country is both correct and incorrect. A strong minority of other religious faiths exists along with the pre-Buddhist faith in Animism and “Nat” worship still having hold on many people. The religious factor has played a major part during colonial and post-colonial times and continues to hold relevance to contemporary endeavours towards reform of the polity. Myanmar had to choose between modern and traditional conceptions of the role of religion during its independence. In this clash of visions, views of Aung San prevailed and the initial draft of constitution stipulated that the state would observe neutrality in religious matters and extend assistance to all religious institutions. This, however, underwent gradual change post assassination of Aung San. His successor, Prime Minister U Nu was convinced that Buddhism must be accepted as state religion. However, his approach damaged nation building efforts in the crucial first decade post-Independence. During the military rule of the Ne Win, ‘the Burmese

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<sup>80</sup> Naravane, Gen MM,PVSM, AVSM, SM, VSM, ADC (Retd), (2023, September 05). *Personal Interview*.

way to socialism’ was introduced which both opposed and compromised with the expression of Buddhist faith in public life.

The next strong man, Than Shwe was a devout Buddhist and understood the appeal of religion to the people. He kept the Buddhist clergy happy and subdued, except in 2007 when the ‘Saffron Uprising’ broke out. “The 2008 constitution recognise ‘the special position of Buddhism as the faith professed by the great majority of the Union’ but also recognises Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Animism. The influence of Hinduism is clearly visible in many aspects of people’s lives such as Buddhist rituals, faith in astrology and powers of gems to ward off calamity and to bring good fortune. Impact of Tantric and Mahayana rituals are also reflected in some practices. The most powerful of these influences however, is the worship of ‘nats’ (spirits). Burmese fear the ‘nats’ who need to be keep happy all the time”<sup>81</sup>.

The Myanmar society is diverse and is visible in geography, religion, culture, arts, food, music and social behaviour. “Out of eight main ethnic groups, Bamar are 68 percent of the total population”<sup>82</sup>. The dominant ethnic group is mostly concentrated in lower and upper Burma, whereas the minority ethnic people live in the horseshoe shape of hills and border regions. These minority ethnic people enjoyed ample local autonomy during British Raj which allowed them to retain their past patterns of living and governance. This historical fault line between the majority and minority ethnic groups has prevented the development of a shared sense of cultural identity and national unity. Despite the efforts of Aung San who successfully managed to win the trust of key ethnic groups during independence and success of the second Panglong conference, diversity has remained overarching trait of the Myanmar society.

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<sup>81</sup> Bhatia, Rajiv. (2022). *India-Myanmar Relations, Changing Contours*, New York: Routledge, p. 19.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p.20.

Burmese people exhibit certain special characteristics. They carry their age well as their faces do not reveal their true age even as they advance. Another special feature is the ability to conceal feelings and views. The long military rule has programmed people to be less communicative. The society has experienced much suffering, denial, deprivation and fear since independence. The biggest popular uprising in country's history was put down mercilessly by the rulers during 1988-1990. Extensive fear created to enable the military to rule the country without openly using much force against the civilian population. It is noteworthy that the ethnic rebels and their armed groups too have been guilty of oppression that they fought against. Women were generally not allowed to enter the inner space of a pagoda where Buddha images were placed. Nevertheless, Burmese women are not exactly an exploited lot. They handle shops, work in offices and rule at homes. The general view of the researchers, studying Myanmar suggests that the country has kept it self-isolated from the world at large however Prime Minister U Nu was an exception, his successor, Ne Win has been viewed as the leader who turned Burma into a hermit state. The Military junta post Ne Win was isolated by Western nations by imposing sanctions. During military rule, due to Western sanctions, Myanmar became deeply dependent on China, later it adopted the policy of constructivism and developed relations with India and ASEAN. The reform period witnessed rejuvenation of cooperative ties with the US, EU, Japan, ASEAN, India and many other countries. However, post Feb 2021 coup, imposition of Junta rule and imprisonment of entire hierarchy of National League for Democracy (NLD) has again invited sanctions from Western world and presently the anarchy continues in Myanmar.

### **3.2. Myanmar Transition**

Among India's seven immediate neighbours in SAARC and Myanmar, a special subcategory of four nations exists that has been historically linked in the past. They are India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. The first three were part of India till 1947 and 1971 war, even Myanmar was part of India for 52 yrs from 1885 to 1937. Myanmar is often referred as The Gateway or The Bridge to southeast Asia where India, China and Southeast Asia meets, creating array of opportunities for

various stakeholders. South Asia is characterized by unity and diversity. The reason of this region performing poorly compared to the rest of world is due to incorrect policies of its political leaders.

Myanmar entered a new era of transition to democracy in November 2010, in which Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Secretary General of NLD after getting released from years of house arrest, led her party to landslide victory. Thein Sein, a retired General, was elected as the President in Feb 2011. Both entered into mutual agreement and decided that NLD shall be allowed in political affairs. As reform process gained speed, major political decisions were taken. Several political and other leaders were released from confinement and restrictions on media were released gradually. International seminars were organized by Foreign Affairs ministry and NLD re-registered itself as a political party after electoral law was enabled. Peace initiatives were taken with ethnic minority armed groups leading to cease fire. Suspension of construction of Myitsone Hydroelectric Dam Project in Kachin state was a major decision taken by President to undermine the Chinese influence. Myanmar was also awarded ASEAN chairmanship in 2014.

### **3.3. Development of Indo Myanmar Relations Over the Years**

**The U Nu Era.** Burma gained independence on 04 Jan 1948 from Britain. Prime Minister U Nu and Jawaharlal Nehru were both democrats and with almost similar ideologies on politics. Both were working to foster Asian unity and both Governments wanted to develop cordial and friendly relationship and acted in mutual interest. In Apr 1949, Government of Burma when faced against shortfall to quell against communist rebels and few ethnic minorities, India swiftly provided rifles and ammunition to help Burmese government to overcome the crises. In July 1958, two countries signed the Treaty of peace and friendship for constant economic cooperation to include purchase of Burmese rice and extension of financial assistance. Burma and India worked very closely along with Ceylon (Sri Lanka),

Pakistan and Indonesia forming group called as Colombo Fours which gave rise to Non-Aligned movement to have a choice, beyond joining US led western block or Soviet led communist camp. After U Nu was overthrown by military rule his daughter was given asylum in India where she worked for All India radio from 1980-2000.

**The Ne Win Years.** General Ne win also known as original strong man of Burma ruled the country for quarter of century. “He was member of ‘Thirty Comrades’ who received military training abroad in Japan and returned home to join Burma Independence Army (BIA)”<sup>83</sup>. Ne win era saw five different Prime Ministers of India from Nehru to Rajiv Gandhi. Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru didn’t have cordial relations with Ne Win due to his close relationship with U Nu however normal political dealings continued. Coup in Burma coincided with Sino-India border clashes wherein Burmese government took neutral stand on the India-China conflict. Ne Win government passed Enterprise Nationalisation law during Oct 1963 to nationalise small business which adversely affected Indian community in Burma leading to exodus of approximately 1,00,000 Indian origin people to Indian territory. During the tenure of Indira Gandhi as prime minister between 1966-77, relations with Burma stabilized.

**The Transition.** Burmese stance toward India & vice versa changed during the period between 1987 to 1992, called as period of transition for Burma. During 1989, military announced its four targets as under

- Ensuring law and order.
- Facilitating transport and communications.
- Alleviating the shortage of food.
- Clothing and shelter and promise of holding General multiparty Elections.

The first multiparty elections were announced on 10 Nov 1989 and held on 27 May 1990. Despite of National league for Democracy (NLD) winning over 80

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p. 94.

percent of seats. Myanmar continued under military rule till 2011 in spite of Gen Shaw Maung statement of transferring of powers to elected members after general elections of 1990. Meanwhile, pro-democratic leader Suu Kyi was kept in house arrest following her victory in general elections. India hailed NLD's victory, condemned house arrest of Suu Kyi and non-transfer of power by military through multilateral diplomacy and UN channel. "During this time, India commenced the use of All India radio (AIR) to broadcast special program for audience of Burma in Burmese language by daughter of former prime minister U Nu, Mrs Than Than Nu",<sup>84</sup>.

**The Than Shwe Rule.** Than Shwe took over the Chairmanship of SLORC in April 1992, subsequently in 1997, it was replaced by SPDC. Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and his successors V P Singh and Chandra Shekhar supported the cause of democracy in Burma. Owing to India's call for democracy, the Chinese took full opportunity to strengthen its ties with SLORC. To counter the Chinese influence, India adopted a two-track policy from 1995. It kept extending its moral support for democratic forces and leaders and engaged military government to upgrade relations directly. From 1992 to 1994, Indian government made it clear through various statements given during VIP visits that it will continue to press for restoration of democracy and release of political prisoners however was also willing to build fresh government level relations. Myanmar conveyed a clear message that China would remain close and vital partner but was willing to extended cooperation to India in dealing with insurgency in border regions. Two important agreements were signed in Jan 1994 i.e. agreement on border trade and agreement on cooperation between civilian Border Authorities. In Nov 1995, a joint training exercise of Indian Army and Myanmar army was conducted named as 'OP Golden Bird' to aim at anti-India insurgents. However, in a diplomatic faux pas, at the same time Jawaharlal Nehru Prize for International Understanding was awarded to Suu Kyi which led to withdraw of security forces from joint operation by Myanmar government & Suu Kyi reward was received by Daw Than E in New Delhi.

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p. 98

**The New Phase.** Under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, NDA led government adopted a different approach instead of two track approach of its previous government. In Myanmar's top leadership discontent was growing due to growing dependency on China and India was seen as better alternative. India's drawback in eliminating insurgency in all four border states despite deployment of heavy regular and paramilitary troops and Myanmar's lack of cooperation resulted in Indian government change of stance towards Myanmar land. PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee and NSA chief Brijesh Mishra decided to utilise military diplomacy to supplement India's foreign policy which resulted in vice chairman of SPDC Maung Aye assurance that Myanmar will not allow its territory to any organisation or insurgent groups to pose threat to its neighbours. India supported various infrastructure projects such as Tamu-Kale-Kalena highway to increase trade between countries and provide valuable cross border link between India and Myanmar. When Myanmar was struck by cyclone Nargis during 2008, India provided immediate medical and food relief package to Myanmar and also convinced Myanmar government to accept UN aid for its people during hard times. Prior to the military coup on 01 Feb 2021, PM Modi led government expressed support for democratic reforms in Myanmar. Since the coup, the actions of Modi's government appear to be designed to curry favour with Senior General Mil Aung Hliang and his military junta, the State Administrative Council (SAC). A mixed message was given on the day of the coup and since then, the Modi government has taken several actions to foster friendly relations with the new military junta while continuing to make statements in support of "restoration of democracy in Myanmar" and condemning "any use of violence" in the country. The NE states were asked to stop the inflow of Burmese refugees from neighbouring Chin State and various measures have been enforced to minimise the growing humanitarian crisis along its borders with Chin State.

### **3.4. Geographical Peculiarities of the India-Myanmar Border**

The India-Myanmar border is a virtual wall of jungle-clad mountains stretching from the Patkai, the Naga and the Manipur hills in the north to the Lushai

and the Chin Hills in the centre of the frontier region. A set of narrow and relatively low-heighted hills (averaging 7,000 feet), these ranges join the Arakan Yomas in the south, which further continues into the maritime sphere and emerge as the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal. The India-China-Myanmar borders meet in Myanmar's northernmost region of Kachin state and the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. A set of parallel ridges and valleys averaging about 100 miles broad, this hilly border is difficult to penetrate and has few land routes connecting the two countries. Demographically, the region is *mélange* of different linguistic, ethnic, religious and tribal groups. The more prominent communities include the Nagas, Mizos, Kukis, Meiteis, Bodos and the Assamese on the Indian side and the Nagas, Kachins and Chins on the Burmese side. In practice, the border has meant little for people living in these areas. However, from a bureaucratic and security perspective, it defines the sovereign limits for both Myanmar and India<sup>85</sup>.

### **3.5. The Sociopolitical Dynamics**

Historically, three aspects define the socio-political dynamics of this frontier. First, were the British Raj's relations with Burma. Much like its northwest frontier where the Raj fought various wars with Afghan and Sikh kings, it fought three wars with Burma before colonizing it completely in 1885. King Thibaw Min of Burma was considered both inept and unfriendly and viewed as a hindrance between easy trade access between India and China via Burma. This powerful economic drive to 'tame' Upper Burma (akin to 'Lower Burma' which was under British influence) to access lucrative Chinese markets played a decisive role in the removal of the king. Second was the Raj's relations with local powerbrokers in the Northeast, such as the Maharaja of Manipur and various Naga tribal leaders, as well as relations these powerbrokers had with Burma. Various power brokers in India's northeast had accepted British suzerainty and became princely states under British rule. These small kingdoms had traditionally been at odds with the Burmese who had invaded Assam and Manipur in early nineteenth century before being defeated

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<sup>85</sup> Paliwal, Avinash. (2020). A Cat's paw of Indian reactionaries? Strategic Rivalry and Domestic Politics at the India-China-Myanmar Tri Junction, *Asian Security*, 16(1), pp. 73-89

comprehensively by the British in the First Anglo-Burmese war (1824-1826). The Burmese were forced to cease interference in the Cachar and Jaintia Hills Districts, pay an indemnity of £1 million in four instalments, exchange diplomatic representatives between Ava and Calcutta, and sign a commercial treaty. The indemnity payment that adversely effected Burma financially coupled with loss of territory, began a slow but sure process of deep anger against the British. Conversely, Assam and Manipur became assertive in demanding more territorial and financial concessions from Burma with British help. Apart from debates and disagreements over land issues involving authority on villages, dispute over the Kabaw Valley became a serious diplomatic issue. However, to pacify protests, the valley was ceded to Burma in January 1834, and the British Indian government promised to pay Rupees 6,000 yearly to the Maharaja of Manipur as compensation for property lost. Yet, disputes over forestry rights and raids across this border ensued, prompting colonial authorities to begin demarcating the boundary in 1880. A portion of the boundary was demarcated in 1882, and the rest i.e. between boundary pillars, or BPs, 1 and 39 was completed in 1896, with the border lying at the eastern foot of the chain of mountains that rose immediately from the western side of the Kabaw Valley. Though agreeable to the Burmese, the boundary on the ground allegedly bereaved Manipur of large tracts of teak forests and, as forcefully stated by the Maharaja in 1926, it differed considerably from the terms of Agreement in 1834. The central government was concerned that reopening the boundary question in Manipur could lead to similar demands in other sectors potentially unsettling the border. Rejection of Manipuri demands by the British set a precedent wherein regional advocacy on the boundary issue were suppressed or bypassed completely by central governments in independent India. Thus, the contours of the boundary, as viewed by either side, were representative of this multi-levelled political push-and-pull and continue to remain so till today<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid

### **3.6. Formalisation of India-Myanmar Border**

There were three axis along which the situation developed. One, bilaterally, India's relations with Burma improved after a hiatus after 1962 due to the Sino-Indian war and the military coup in Burma. Two, domestically, the security situation in Northeast worsened. Three, regionally, India's relations with both China and Pakistan remained poor. All these aspects created an environment for India to take the lead and propose the formalisation of the boundary in 1966. The disadvantages of an un-demarcated boundary with Burma were evident to the Indian leadership since the defeat of 1962. Till 1965, Nehru's ill-health and a lack of rapport with Ne Win, coupled with U Nu's unceremonious ouster had prevented fruitful dialogue on most pressing bilateral issues including the exodus of Indians from Burma. Ne Win's 'neutral' participation in the Colombo Powers meeting in 1962 to resolve the Sino-Indian border dispute did not help the cause either. Rangoon's failure to condemn Chinese actions distressed India even if New Delhi tried utilizing the Colombo Powers' proposals to reach a settlement with China. Moreover, by mid-1964, the bonhomie between China and Burma had faded. Ne Win was unhappy by Chinese support to the Burmese 'White-Flag' Communists whereas the Chinese were worried by Ne Win's 'Burmese Way to Socialism'. Improving relations with India resonated in Rangoon. For India, ensuring territorial security required resolving outstanding boundary disputes with smaller neighbours. Burmese head of state and military dictator General Ne Win and his wife visited India in February 1965. His first to India since the military coup in 1962. Ne Win's visit highlighted that a change in leadership in New Delhi had paved way for improvement in bilateral ties. Though there is no evidence of India bringing up the boundary issue, visit of Ne Win in 1965 was with an aim to develop friendly relations. Ne Win's friendliness during the visit became a driver in pushing the formalisation of the boundary in 1966-67. By this time major issues were of Naga 'hostiles' crossing into Burmese territory and visiting China, only to return home to ignite separatist violence and the condition of the Persons of Indian Origin and their (mis)treatment by Burma. Notably, the two leaders also did not talk about Naga separatism. The Nagas, engaged in a fractured dialogue with New Delhi at that point, routinely crossed into Burma. When asked in

the parliament on March 01, 1966 as to why this issue was not discussed, the government argued that it was India's 'internal matter'. In mid-1965, Gandhi's private secretary visited Burma to secure a supply of 80,000 tons of rice as a gesture of friendship and laid the ground for continuous dialogue<sup>87</sup>. The demarcation of boundary was finally resolved in 1969 by a Joint Border Demarcation Committee. It has been the continuous process till then and it was in August 2018 that Indian government stated that there was no border dispute between India and Myanmar and the demarcation of nine pillars was being worked out in a complete understanding with Myanmar.

### **3.7. Gradual Build Up of Relations**

A large Indian diaspora is settled in Yangon and other urban centres which connects itself with the majority because of religion, Buddhism. The dream of an average Buddhist in Myanmar is to visit Bodh Gaya in Bihar where Siddhartha achieved enlightenment. Diverse tribes such as Mizos, Nagas, Kukis, Tangkhul and Paites were earlier living in border regions and had close religious, linguistic and cultural ties. With the advent of Britishers and their divide and rule policy, the relations deteriorated, and modern concept of national border was introduced. As a result, even after independence, it was felt that the security development of North East Region are linked to the border areas of Myanmar especially parts of Sagaing Division, Kachin, Chin and Rakhine states. China and India are in a constant process to seek Myanmar friendship because for India Myanmar support is not merely related to economical or political but also of national security. Myanmar is seen as a buffer state one that should not be used as a base to launch anti-social activities. Myanmar size is about 20% that of India and its population is around 5% of later population. Myanmar is often referred as "The Land of Brahma" blessed with creativity and richness. Trade between the two countries has been prevalent since ages.

A decisive mandate and a clear majority in 2014, of the Narendra Modi-led

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid

Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and National Democratic Alliance (NDA) was welcomed in Myanmar as a sign of India's stability and growing political strength. The new government arranged the 14th round of Foreign Office Consultations between India and Myanmar quickly. Held in Delhi on 23 July 2014, they were led by Sujatha Singh, foreign secretary of India and U Thant Kyaw, deputy minister of foreign affairs of Myanmar. Both sides reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations and expressed satisfaction at the friendly relations between the two countries. External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj paid a four-day official visit to Myanmar from 8 August 2014. While her main goal was to participate in India-ASEAN, ARF and EAS Ministerial Meetings, a separate bilateral dimension was added to the visit by ensuring that she held discussions with Myanmar's leaders on various aspects of India-Myanmar relations. During the bilateral, she raised the issue of insurgent groups and matters relating to Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs), visa issues and connectivity projects. She suggested that a direct flight linking Delhi, Bodh Gaya and Yangon should be started<sup>88</sup>.

Myanmar's reform period thus witnessed an unprecedented range of high-level political interaction between India and Myanmar. The driving motivation for India was to assist a vital neighbour in its quest for development and democracy through increased cooperation across the board. The Myanmar government, eager to reduce its excessive dependence on China, was willing to profit from enhanced attention and offers of assistance from all quarters, especially a strategic and powerful neighbour India. Two constraints, however, also became sharply visible towards the end of the said period. First, there were unspoken worries as to what might happen to the positive trends in bilateral relations if the reform train in Myanmar stalled. From about mid-2013, the equation between the Thein Sein government and Aung San Suu Kyi started to suffer as she began mobilizing people's support for constitutional reform and reduced role for the military. Second, it was also obvious that while political relations between India and Myanmar had warmed up considerably, economic cooperation would take more time to be strengthened. A critical role will be played of India's ability to complete ongoing development

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<sup>88</sup>Bhatia, Rajiv. (2022). *India-Myanmar Relations, Changing Contours*, New York: Routledge, p. 49

projects.

The changing situation in Myanmar led to three major amendments in India's foreign policy. India being the world's largest democracy invariably assumed the responsibility to contribute actively in development of democratic principles and ideologies in the newly formed democratic nation. Economic reforms led to lifting of sanctions which created new space for trade and development. Transition to democracy resulted in shift in Myanmar external relations with International Organisations like IMF, EU, BRICS etc. It implied that "Business as usual" or the routine policy might no longer be sufficient to cater for the changing political and economic order. The relations have further strengthened since the onset of PM Modi led NDA government which has supported the democratic process in the country and at the same time have been relatively silent about the military coup.

### **3.8. Bilateral Relations**

Geographical contiguity, ethnic and cultural heritage, shared Asian values and the legacy of religions- Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam have been permanent factors moulding ties between India and Burma/Myanmar. A new phase in their mutual discovery began from the starting of 21st century which gathered momentum from early 2011 as Myanmar embarked on a new journey of reform and renewal. Since the beginning of 2015, the Bilateral relations has been progressive and promising, but also constrained. The ties between both nations are based on their mutual assessment of other motivations and inclinations in sub-regional and regional context.

Myanmar is currently sandwiched between two Asian giants-China and India and is keen to leverage its strategic location for deriving maximum benefits. India's viewpoint is that Myanmar is vitally important for defence and internal security needs, stability and development of North Eastern Region (NER) and expansion of its influence in Bay of Bengal region and Southeast Asia. Myanmar is a gateway, the only land connectivity between India and ASEAN and beyond, through expansion of connectivity and cooperative links. North East India is bordered by Bangladesh,

Nepal, Bhutan, China and Myanmar and the people of the region view it as India's link to Southeast Asia. It is pertinent to analyse the situation in North East India and achieve peace in the region to ensure inclusive development for national benefits. North East India must enjoy a place of priority in India's foreign policy, particularly its South Asian policy, China policy, Look and now Act East policy and Myanmar Policy.

The Indian Insurgent Groups (IIGs) when under pressure, take refuge by fleeing to Myanmar and similarly Burmese Insurgent groups and victims of oppressive Burmese authorities have sought shelter in India. Economic experts suggest establishing a free trade and investment area with North East Region (NER) with the aim to secure its all-round development. Indians belonging to other parts of the country must do more to accept the North East people as an integral part of India. The artificial delineation of the border was one of the major cause/factors leading to the newly independent states of India and Burma reaping a harvest of insurgencies since 1947-48. In Indo-Myanmar border region, the insurgents have essentially operated against India, whereas the Kachins and Wa in the China-Myanmar border areas and the Karens located along the Thai Myanmar border waged wars against Myanmar military. China, India and Thailand have been key stakeholders in Myanmar's ethnic policy. Ethnic groups play a vital role in Myanmar policy. The impact of ethnicity should always, therefore, be kept in view while evaluating India-Myanmar relations.

Connectivity plays a vital role in NER's development, in the development of Myanmar and in the potential expansion of India's relations with Myanmar. The value and impact of India's Myanmar policy could be enhanced by forging multi-dimensional connectivity between NER and Myanmar and sharing the fruits of investment and development with the people of NER. Many ambitious projects have been drawn by India and few have been implemented. The Indian government has received much criticism for delays in the execution of two of its flagship projects which are Trilateral Highway project that would link India, Myanmar and Thailand (1360 Km long route) and Kaladan Multi-modal Transport and Transshipment project also popularly known as KMMTTP that would link Kolkata via Sittwe with

Mizoram (1328 Km long route). It's generally perceived as a zero-sum game in which China's gains are seen as Indians losses and vice-versa. Myanmar has been giving clear signs of seeking greater room for manoeuvre in its external relations and shows that it's not dependents on China completely as the country is heading towards more inclusive government and transition to democracy<sup>89</sup>.

The two governments have been on the same page about forging regional and sub-regional cooperation along with convergence in the development domain through BIMSTEC, Mekong- Ganga cooperation (MCG) and BCIM Channels. Various institutional mechanisms have been developed to forge and nurture bilateral cooperation in variety of sectors including Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) for annual review of all bilateral issue at the level of foreign secretary/ deputy minster level. National Level Meeting (NLM), Secretary Level Meetings (SLM), Army Border Liaison Committee (ABLC) Meetings, Regional Border Committees (RBC) meetings to review security cooperation matters. Joint survey, maintenance repair and reconstruction of Boundary Pillars (BP) are being undertaken by two survey Departments on a regular basis as both countries share 1,643 Kms long boundary.

India has extended visa on arrival facility to seven ASEAN countries, including Myanmar. As such the Indian and Myanmar nationals residing within 16 Kms of both side of International border of India – Myanmar of approximately 1,643 Kms, can travel and stay up to a duration of 14 days without visa under a unique treaty signed by both countries, known as Free Movement Regime (FMR). Myanmar consistently supported India's quest for permanent membership of the Security Council. Both sides have cooperated closely at the UN and other regional and international fora. Myanmar acquired the status of observer in SAARC with India's support. Significant strengthening of relations has taken place though a series of regular visits at high levels, provision of training facilities, visits by naval ships, supply of equipment and continuing dialogue on professional matters and strategic issues. India's perception is that although Myanmar authorities extend cooperation, it

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<sup>89</sup> Chanda, Jaideep. (2021). *Irrawaddy Imperatives, Reviewing India's Myanmar Strategy*, New Delhi: Pentagon Press.

is episodic and inadequate as Indian Insurgent groups (IIGs) keep on operating and taking shelter in Myanmar's border regions. Myanmar view on the other hand is that greater infrastructure development in the region would facilitate more security cooperation. An MoU on Border Area Development was signed in May 2012 and an MoU on Border cooperation with Myanmar was signed in May 2014.

India-Myanmar bilateral trade commenced in 1970 and has grown steadily, albeit with a slight decline in the Eighties. Bilateral trade stood at US\$ 1.7 billion in 2018-19, an increase of 7.53 per cent from 2017-18, while India's imports from Myanmar saw a decline of 18.47 per cent with India's exports to Myanmar witnessing 24.74 percent growth during the same period. India was the fifth largest trading partner of Myanmar. India's exports to Myanmar during 2018-19 was US\$ 1205.60 million and imports from Myanmar was US\$ 521.49 million. In terms of investment, India stands at the 11th position with an approved investment of US\$ 768.567 million by 31 Indian enterprises (out of an estimated US\$ 81.598 billion from 50 countries by 1846 enterprises) as on October 2019. Myanmar's investment in India is US\$ 8.97 million. The major import items from Myanmar are beans, pulses, wood, metal and so on. India's exports to Myanmar are agro-commodities, chemicals, fuel, pharmaceutical items and machinery. Border trade with Myanmar during 2018-19, estimated at US\$ 154.04 million, took place through two land border crossing points-Moreh-Tamu in Manipur and Zowkhathar - Rhikhawdar in Mizoram. The bilateral trade stood at US\$ 1.03 billion in 2021-22. The growth is, however, not commensurate with the potential. The bilateral trade has risen from US\$328 million in 1997-98 to US\$921.19 in 2006-07; US\$2.18 Billion in 2013-14 and US\$2.17 Billion in 2016-17. Bilateral trade however witnessed a decline of 14.15% in 2020-21 over the 2019-20 before increasing again in 2021-22 on account of increased import of pulses. India's imports from Myanmar increased by 55%, and India's export to Myanmar witnessed an increase of 45% during 2021-22 over the previous year's trade figures. India-Myanmar bilateral trade is conducted under ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) and India's Duty-Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) scheme. Twelve Indian Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) have their representative

offices in Myanmar<sup>90</sup>. Myanmar is potentially an important partner in the energy sector as future offshore gas finds can be piped to India. India currently has a JWG on Oil and Gas and JSC and another JWG on Power Cooperation. Sectors like pharmaceutical, fertilisers, cement, manufacture, agro-processing and small industry offer attractive potential for of greenfield investments and joint ventures. Several Bilateral agreements have been signed including bilateral Investment Promotion Agreement (BIPA) and Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA).

Oil and Natural Gas cooperation Videsh Ltd (OVL) holds 20% and Gas Authority of India Ltd (GAIL) holds 10% equity, whereas the remaining 70% equity is shared by Korean companies. An MoU on cooperation in the petroleum sector was signed between the governments during Indian president's visit in Mar 2006. In Sep 2007 new production sharing contracts were signed for three deep water exploration blocks (i.e. AD-2, AD-3 and AD-9) between OVL and the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE). India offered a line of credit of 20 million dollars for revamping of the Thanlyin refinery in Myanmar. Indian company Jubilant Energy won a onshore block in 2011-12. Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) won two shallow-water blocks (M-17 & M-18) in Moattama Basin and Oil India Ltd secured two blocks (M-4 and YEB) in 2013 more here<sup>91</sup>. Myanmar is potentially an important partner in the energy sector as future offshore gas finds can be piped to India. The then MOS for Petroleum & Natural Gas, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, visited Myanmar from Feb 20-24, 2017. India currently has a Joint Working Group (JWG) on Oil and Gas, a Joint Steering Committee (JSC) & a Joint Working Group (JWG) on Power cooperation and a Joint Working Group (JWG) on Renewable Energy. However, China's energy footprint remains far bigger than that of India.

Development cooperation assistance of 1.2 billion dollars and a line of credit of 500 Million dollars have been placed by Indian government in 2012 covering

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid

<sup>91</sup> Ministry of External Affairs. (2022, November 22). India-Myanmar-Bilateral Brief, [http://www.mea.gov.in/portal/Foreign Relation//Myanmar 22 nov.pdf](http://www.mea.gov.in/portal/Foreign%20Relation/Myanmar%2022%20nov.pdf)

sectors such as roads, railways, telecom, automotive, energy and remote sensing<sup>92</sup>. India's Lines of credit became substantial in quantum in view of Myanmar's needs and its growing importance for India. In early years, emphasis was laid on expanding connectivity, mainly through port and road construction as well as upgradation. While choosing new projects, special attention was accorded to capacity building and skill development in IT, agriculture and health care areas.

There has been substantial support from Indian government for strengthening Myanmar's human resource capacity. Initiatives covered training for government officials, assistance under the Indian Technical and Economic cooperation (ITEC) programme as well as the Tata Consultancy Service (TCS) and Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) scholarship schemes. Myanmar researchers were provided ten research fellowships for joint research in universities such as IIT, Indore under the cooperation programme in the science and tech sector. Cooperation in education, culture, tourism and other means of strengthening people-to-people relations have been employed to deepen friendship. Indian authorities have rendered support through humanitarian relief operations during natural calamities like Cyclone Nargis in 2008 and earthquake in Shan state in 2010. Relief and reconstruction assistance have been provided to victims of Rakhine State and recently during COVID-19 pandemic, India provided one million dosages of coronavirus vaccine and 10,000 tons of wheat and rice during 2021<sup>93</sup>.

Human trafficking has emerged as a major issue in Myanmar, with several criminal syndicates running a racket luring Indian citizens with fake job prospects. The MEA spokesperson, according to media reports, cautioned Indian nationals of being wary of trafficking while stating that "We are aware of IT companies recruiting Indian workers in the pretext of jobs in Thailand, who were then taken to Myanmar. Thanks to our efforts, we have facilitated the rescue of some of those people. We urge Indian nationals to exercise caution before taking up job offers there." There have been reportedly close to 200 Indian nationals who have been

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid

<sup>93</sup> Ibid

duped into this job racket<sup>94</sup>.

### **3.9. Recent Initiatives Undertaken by India in Myanmar**

Pragmatism on account of the growing presence and inroads of China in Myanmar has possibly pushed India to give up on its moralising about democracy and increase its outreach to Naypyidaw. While the pro-democracy elements within Myanmar as well as India's strategic partners in ASEAN may not be particularly pleased with this outreach, especially India dropping ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus on Myanmar, it appears that New Delhi sees itself as having not too many choices. During 20-21 November 2022, Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra made a two-day visit to Myanmar. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in a press release stated that he met with members of the military junta that is currently ruling the country and discussed security and stability in the border areas, human trafficking issues (several Indian nationals have been victims) and infrastructure development. Kwatra was received by Lt. Gen. Yar Pyae, a member of the State Administration Council and minister at the Union Government Office. According to Myanmar National portal, the two sides held discussions on "Myanmar-India friendly relations, exchanged views on the promotion of bilateral cooperation and the implementation of Myanmar's peace process". The foreign secretary spoke about continued Indian support for "people-centric socio-economic developmental projects" and early completion of connectivity projects including the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project and the Trilateral Highway between India, Myanmar and Thailand<sup>95</sup>.

India is Burma's 5<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner after Thailand, China and Singapore, and second largest export market after Thailand, absorbing 25 percent of its total exports. India is also the seventh most important source of Burma's imports. The governments of India and Myanmar had set a target of achieving \$1 billion and bilateral trade reached US\$1.3 billion by 2021-22. The Indian government has

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<sup>94</sup> Rajgopalan Pillai Rajeshwari. (2022, November 26). India Engages Myanmar; what explains New Delhi's greater engagement with the country's military government? *The Diplomat*, <http://the-diplomat.com//2022//india-engages-myanmar>

<sup>95</sup> Ibid

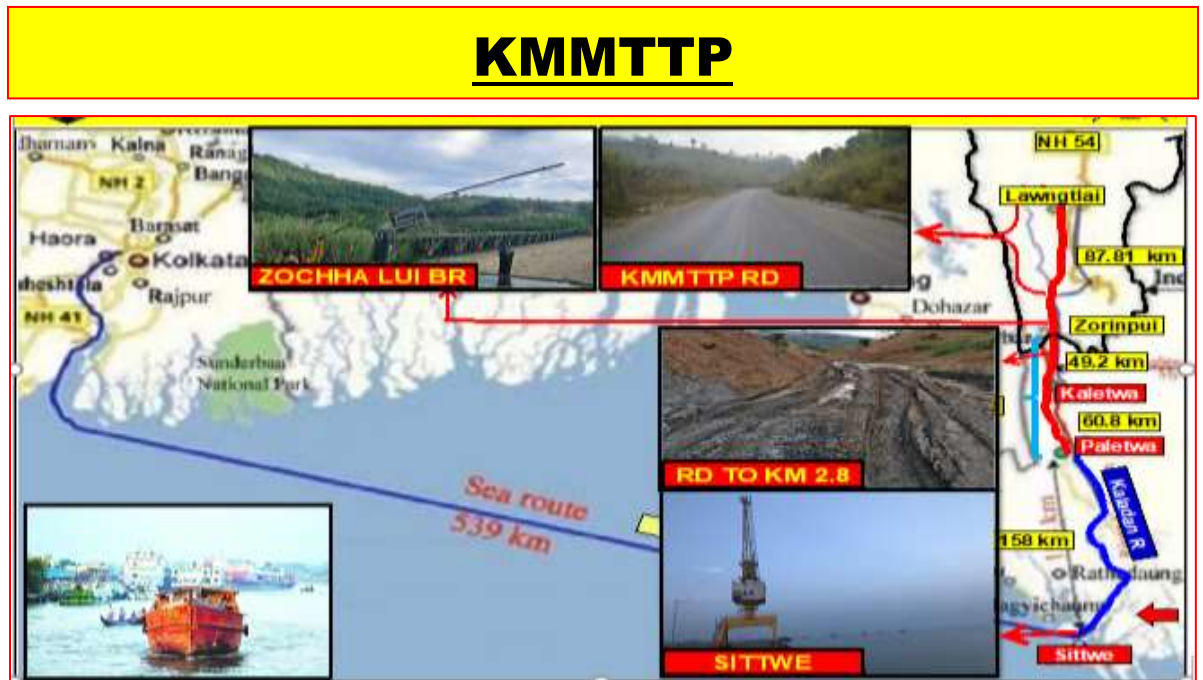
worked to extend air, land and sea routes to strengthen trade links with Myanmar and establish a gas<sup>96</sup> pipeline. While the involvement of India's private sector has been low and growing at a slow pace, both governments are proceeding to enhance cooperation in agriculture, telecommunications, information technology, steel, oil, natural gas, hydrocarbons and food processing.

India Myanmar have agreed to a four lane 3200 km triangular highway connecting India, Myanmar and Thailand. The route, which is expected to have completed during 2016, runs from India's northeastern states into Myanmar, in this project 1,600 km of roads were built or improved. The route begins from Guwahati in India and connects to Mandalay in Myanmar, route continues to Yangon in Myanmar and then to Mae Sot in Thailand, which then continues to Bangkok. India is undertaking two sections of the Trilateral Highway mainly, construction of Kalewa -Yagyi road section in Myanmar, and construction of 69 bridges on the Tamu-Kyigone-Kalewa (TKK) road section in Myanmar. The work on both these sections has been awarded on Engineering, Procurement and Construction mode and is underway since May 2018 for Kalewa -Yagyi section and November 2017 for the TKK section. The first phase connecting Guwahati to Mandalay will eventually be extended to Cambodia and Vietnam under Mekong-Ganga Cooperation within the wider framework of Asian Highway Network. This is aimed at creating a new economic zone ranging from Kolkata on the Bay of Bengal to Ho Chi Minh City on the South China Sea. The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transshipment Project will connect the eastern Indian seaport of Kolkata with Sittwe seaport in Myanmar by sea; it will then link Sittwe seaport to Lashio in Myanmar via Kaladan river boat route and then from Lashio on to Mizoram in India by road transport. During a 2017 visit to Nay Pyi Taw, Prime Minister Modi announced that India would offer gratis/no-cost visas to all Myanmar citizens visiting India.

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<sup>96</sup> Press Trust of India, India to Grant greetis VISA to Myanmar citizen. (September 06, 2017). *The Economic Times*, [http://m.economictimes.com/nri/visa-and-immigration/india to grant-greetis-visa-to Myanmar-citizens/articlehow/6](http://m.economictimes.com/nri/visa-and-immigration/india-to-grant-greetis-visa-to-myanmar-citizens/articlehow/6)

Picture 3.1 - Kaladan Multi-Modal Transport and Transshipment Project



Picture 3.2- Kaladan Multi-Modal Transport and Transshipment Project Work Progress



India's move to forge close relations with Myanmar are motivated by a desire to counter China's growing influence as a regional leader and enhance its own influence and standing. Concerns and tensions increased in India over China's extensive military involvement in developing ports, naval and intelligence facilities and industries, specifically the upgrading of a naval base in Sittwe, a major seaport located close to the eastern Indian city of Kolkata. India's engagement of the Burmese military junta has helped ease the regime's international isolation and lessen Burma's reliance on China. Both nations sought to cooperate to counteract drug trafficking and insurgent groups operating in the border areas. India and Myanmar are leading members of BIMSTEC and the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, along with Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand, helping India develop its influence and ties amongst Southeast Asian nations. In 2020, India gifted the Myanmar navy its first ever submarine, a kilo class (INS Sindhuvir) attack submarine

which has been refurbished and modernised by Hindustan Shipyard Limited and recently a warship INS Kripan on 22 July 2023.

Indian and Myanmar troops carried out jointly Operation Sunrise and Operation Sunrise 2 in 2019 in their respective territories to destroy several insurgent camps. However, the threat to the Kaladan multi-modal transit transshipment project, India's gateway to Southeast Asia continues. In January 2023 operations by the Myanmar Air Force in a sparsely populated area along the border were carried out in close proximity of local population resulted in their disquiet.

India has also supported Myanmar in its efforts to combat Rohingya insurgent groups like the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and Aqa Mul Mujahideen (AMM), after Indian intelligence agencies found ARSA and AMM to have links with terror groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) as well as reported Rohingya terrorists fighting alongside Pakistani extremists in Kashmir.

### **3.10. Illicit Flow of Drugs from Myanmar to India**

India's national security is seriously threatened by drug trafficking from Myanmar to India, especially in the Northeastern regions. The "Golden Triangle" is made up of Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos and is famed for its drug trafficking. Myanmar is the second-largest producer of opium and a significant hub for synthetic narcotics. States like Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh are susceptible to drug trafficking because to the nearly 1643 kms long and porous border between India and Myanmar. Due to the shared cultural heritage, drug gangs easily set up networks and take advantage of the FMR which allows movement of citizens of both countries up to 16 km both side of international border without travel documents and a stay for a period of 14 days. Drug cartels easily conduct drug trafficking owing to the political unrest in Myanmar and clashes between the Tatmadaw and ethnic militias. Drug production takes place in large quantities in the war zones, especially in the Chin, Shan and Kachin states. One of the main markets for narcotics trafficked out of Myanmar is now India. Land borders like Moreh in

Manipur and Champhai in Mizoram, as well as sea routes across the Bay of Bengal, are exploited for drug trafficking. Ethnic Armed organizations (EAOs), who are potent actors engaged in drug manufacture and distribution, such as the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Arakan Army (AA), United Wa State Army (UWSA) and Chin National Army (CNA) are among the main participants in drug trafficking out of Myanmar. The issue is further complicated by the connections that certain local officials and political parties have with drug traffickers.

The problem of drug trafficking has gotten worse since the 2021 coup in Myanmar. More individuals have been compelled to turn to illicit economies due to the political unrest, economic downturn, and poverty, which has increased drug production and flow. Numerous drug seizures in northeastern states like Manipur and Mizoram show that the drug flow is growing. India's national security is challenged in several ways by drug trafficking. The region's peace and security are threatened by the relationship between drug traffickers and rebel organisations. Drug cartels that operate outside of India provide financial assistance to insurgent organisations, further aggravating the security situation. The trafficking of small arms and light weapons, human trafficking, and the spread of HIV/AIDS are all connected to the illegal drug trade. Drug misuse in the area has an impact on the region's socioeconomic conditions, human resources, and health, with generational effects. To sustain peace and stability in the area, India must address drug trafficking and the issues it raises. To stop the illegal flow of narcotics from Myanmar to India, it is necessary to combine efforts in border security, intelligence sharing, fighting corruption, and dealing with socioeconomic difficulties<sup>97</sup>.

Post-coup in Myanmar huge quantity of narcotics have been caught by Assam Rifles & Police in border states of Manipur & Mizoram. A study by the United Nations office on Drugs and Crime revealed the dimensions for drug trafficking in North-east India Smuggling of heroin and amphetamines into Northeast India from Myanmar in moderate quantities. Trafficking of pharmaceuticals such as codeine-

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<sup>97</sup> Naravane, Gen MM, PVSM, AVSM, SM, VSM, ADC (Retd). (2023, September 05). *Personal Interview*.

containing cough syrups from other parts of the country into Northeast India and their smuggling to neighbouring countries. Trafficking of ephedrine and pseudo-ephedrine precursors for the manufacturing of amphetamines from India to Myanmar. Myanmar's role as a major drug producer and its proximity to India pose significant challenges to India's national security. The post-coup scenario has worsened the drug flow, affected socioeconomic conditions and increasing the involvement of insurgent groups. Addressing drug trafficking is crucial for maintaining peace and stability in the region.

Table 3.1 - Various recoveries from 2015 to Oct 2023

<u>RECOVERIES FROM 2015 TO OCT 2023</u>					
Year	Weapons/Warlike Store (Nos)	Narcotics (Crores)	Contraband (Crores)	Apprehension	
				Indian	Myan
2015	30	3.19	3.43		
2016	14	0	0.35		
2017	16	5	1		
2018	17	2	3		
2019	6	8	14		
2020	4	61	32		
2021	37	91	49	182	08
2022	60	353	2	77	42
2023	27	917.97	66.10	115	77

Picture 3.3 - Various recoveries from 2015 to Oct 2023 published on National Media

### 3.11. Growing Chinese Presence



Located strategically at the tri-junction of South Asia, South East Asia and East Asia, Myanmar occupies an important place in China's foreign policy towards her neighbours. In the last two decades, China-Myanmar relations have been transformed dramatically. China's motives to engage in Myanmar can be primarily understood under its three strategic interests ie energy procurement and energy security, securing access to the Indian Ocean and security of the border areas and border trade. Presently China is strongly entrenched in Myanmar's economy which includes trade and strategically important infrastructure projects and is also the main

supplier of military hardware. Bilateral ties between China and Myanmar have been elevated to the level of strategic partnership. While several motives are attributed to China's desire to expand its economic and strategic influence in Myanmar and the Indian Ocean, one major factor influencing China's long march into Myanmar is the long term ambition of emerging as an undisputed power in both the Pacific and Indian Ocean (Two Ocean objective). China is the only country in Asia which is a permanent member of Security Council (P-5) and a recognized Nuclear Weapons State (NWS) and has seen exponential growth in her economy and seeks to emerge as a truly global power.

### **3.12. India's Security Concerns vis-a-vis China in Myanmar**

India's Security Concerns vis-a-vis China in Myanmar can be understood in the framework of its 'Look East Policy', which was adopted in the early 1990s to reconnect and reach out in the civilizational space. India's strategic geographical location makes its relations with Myanmar very important. Indian north-eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram shares its border with Myanmar; India shares the strategic waters of Bay of Bengal- the Andaman and Nicobar Islands; it gives India a geographical contiguity with the Asia-Pacific region, acting as a gateway for India into ASEAN and Southeast Asian politics and also provides India a transit route to southern China. India acknowledges the importance of cooperation with Myanmar in combating cross-border terrorism and drug trafficking, which pose significant security threats to both countries. Consequently, India's pragmatic approach towards Myanmar is based on a multifaceted understanding of the bilateral benefits and regional stability that such cooperation can foster. The development of Chinese infrastructure in Myanmar is the central aspect that has garnered significant attention from India owing to the growing Chinese involvement in the country. The expanding Chinese influence holds significant implications for India as provides the flexibility to the Chinese to deploy their sea assets in India's maritime areas of interests, posing a direct threat to India's eastern flank. There is a real concern that the infrastructure built by China could be used against Indian interests, posing a serious threat. In this view, the most crucial

security and strategic concern for India lies in two key areas: first, the Chinese military buildup in Myanmar's Great Coco islands, which is only 20 Kms away from India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands and second, the reconstruction of the Stillwell Road, of which 1000 plus kilometres pass through Myanmar. India's concerns over Chinese military facilities to Myanmar is reflected in the anxieties that "China is increasing its presence; its navy is growing and we are aware of it. We are conscious about it. We are also developing, modernizing, increasing and building our capacity", said Air Marshal PK Roy, commander-in-chief of the Andaman and Nicobar Command.

India's threat perceptions have aggravated majorly in two aspects, the first one is Chinese support for the upgradation of Myanmar's naval facilities. China has built a triangle-shaped series of four naval bases connecting Coco Island, Haigyi island, Mergui and Thilawa, where the Coco Island which is located 20 kilometres away from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is of primary concern for India. These bases are suspected of being Chinese security agencies to conduct electronic intelligence and maritime reconnaissance. The perceived threat is that these ports are likely to be used as potential support bases for Chinese warships and submarines intended to dominate the Straits of Malacca and in controlling the SLOC (Sea Line of Communication) through the Indian Ocean to the Middle East. And secondly, China's sale of sophisticated military technology to Myanmar. The most significant arms agreement between China and Myanmar has been the China's North Industries Corporation (NORINCO) signing a copper mining contract with Myanmar in June 2010.<sup>98</sup> NORINCO is the largest arms manufacturing wing of the PLA. There is a strong Chinese military presence in Myanmar's Tatmadaw air force which is essentially equipped with Chinese MiG-21 (60 J-7s) and MiG19 (12 J-6 and 36 Q-5) variants<sup>99</sup>. While China is also involved in providing training, the Chinese PLAN (PLA Navy) regularly conducts joint exercises with the Tatmadaw Navy. This

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98 Shanghai Metals Market (SMM). (2010, June 24). China's Norinco Signs Myanmar Copper Mine Contract to Strengthen Reserves, <https://news.metal.com/newscontent/100010339/chinas-norinco-signs-myanmar-copper-mine-contract-to-strengthen-reserves> \t "\_parent.

99 Jash, Amrita. (2014, June 01). China in India's 'Look East'- Myanmar: Strategic Interests and Security Concerns, *International Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(6), pp.54-57.

military involvement raises concerns that the deeper strategic military coordination of Myanmar and China will influence Myanmar to comply with the strategic designs of China. With these ongoing Chinese actions in Myanmar, there are apprehensions on the Indian side that China uses the signals intelligence facilities it had set up in Coco Islands to monitor Indian naval operations at the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as well as its missile and satellite launching facilities along the Indian east coast. It is believed by the strategists that the aim of the Chinese presence in the Coco islands and other naval bases in Myanmar is to keep a check on the Indian missile test-firing ranges.

In the immediate aftermath of the February 1, 2021 military coup led by Min Aung Hlaing, China initially took a wait and see approach, to keep a balanced approach with the military and the National League for Democracy (NLD), which it had partnered with in implementing billions of dollars of strategic infrastructure projects as part of China Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC). While Chinese state media played the Myanmar army's propaganda, calling the coup as cabinet reshuffle, at the same time China also sent public signals of the importance of its relations with the NLD. In the current scenario, as the global pressure on Myanmar's generals is growing, China is particularly sensitive about signals that Western support for Myanmar's powerful Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) or People's Defence Forces (PDFs) that are fighting the military may increase. Chinese government is sensing that it will have to become more assertive in leveraging its strategic relationships with both the military and the most powerful of the EAOs, which operate in the border areas in the immediate orbit of China's influence to shape the overall trajectory of the conflict<sup>100</sup>.

Thereby, it can be stated that for India, the expanding Chinese influence in Myanmar not only impacts India's trade and maritime interests but has strong and severe geopolitical implications in the long run. Though the constant piling up of security threats at its periphery has prompted India to revise its position on the

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100 Ibid.

presence of Chinese bases in Myanmar, but the perception of the Sino-Myanmar bond as a threat to Indian security interests has not diminished. This is because there is an increasing strengthening of the Indian fear of China using Myanmar's bases in future. And this security dilemma has impelled India to focus on building its naval strength. The trajectory of relations between India and China has had its peculiar fluctuating impact on Myanmar and its ties with two big neighbours. Through all these years with multiple engagements over territorial disputes, the two governments set to strengthen political communication, deepen strategic thrust as well as intensity of political dialogue and consultations at all levels. A key limitation of the relationship-trust deficit remains a challenge to be addressed optimally by the two sides.

### **3.13. Future Directions**

The future of the relationship will obviously be moulded by developments in the Indo-Pacific Region (IPR), ASEAN region and the sub region in which Myanmar is located. Indo-China equations in Myanmar are relevant to determine whether IPR would head towards an era of peace and prosperity or tension and cold war or confrontation and conflict or a combination of all of it. India's neighbourhood policy and Act East policy are likely to receive a major thrust with added emphasis on crafting a balance in India's relations with ASEAN, Japan, China and other regional powers. The most important determinant will undoubtedly be Myanmar itself, particularly the road that it takes in the next decade. It is maintained that there is a link between peace and stability in Myanmar and further blossoming of India-Myanmar relations. It is a link that works both ways. Myanmar economy was growing at a decent rate of 7.8 percentage. Aid and investment were flowing in albeit slowly. Despite minor differences, the pathology, the ideological outlook and the experience of the two countries are so similar that Myanmar is likely to follow the same trajectory. Transition to genuine multiparty democracy seemed set to be characterised by gradualism and action and it was time for the country's rein to be given to democratically elected, popular and charismatic leaders of the people. However, post the recent military coup, it is yet to be seen how the trajectory of

economic growth will prosper<sup>101</sup>.

There is currently a convergence between India's acknowledgment of the region's significance and the country's aspiration to establish an autonomous foreign policy, while simultaneously striving to strike a harmonious balance in its relations with neighbouring nations. Despite the numerous constraints, India has the potential to cultivate a strong political relationship with Myanmar, providing ample opportunity for further expansion and diversification of the two countries' relations. The nations need to establish a strategic partnership. The two countries need to work out tangible and effective ways of increasing their cooperation in sub regional institutions such as BIMSTEC, MNC and BCIM. India would need to improve its image as a reluctant power in Myanmar's eyes and consider taking bold steps to strengthen defence and security cooperation especially with regards to its maritime dimension. It's time to make commitments into actions.

On trade and investment cooperation, progress has been slow as India has not been fully enthused about business attractiveness of Myanmar, due to variety of reasons. The governments should expand their dialogue on economic ministries and provincial authorities in both countries. The key is for the heads of the government and foreign ministers to motivate and persuade other actors to invest more in economic aspects of the relationship. Besides the government-to-government and business-to-business facets, the third pillar of bilateral relations, people-to-people contacts needs to be strengthened in an appreciable manner. It is suggested that the two governments as well as a few interested companies and other institutions may join hands to provide substantial funding for establishing the proposed foundations. It is only by involving the society at large that we may hope to bring the two nations closer together.

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<sup>101</sup> Bhatia, Rajiv. (2022). *India-Myanmar Relations, Changing Contours*, New York: Routledge.

## **CHAPTER - 4**

### **INDIA-ASEAN RELATIONSHIP: SIGNIFICANCE AND SCOPE OF THE STRATEGIC ALLIANCE**

Southeast Asian and Indian civilisations have been closely connected for more than a thousand years. Both have historically been connected through trade and culture. Asia's thriving trade was shaped historically by the prominent roles played by China, India, and regional maritime hubs like Singapore. India and East Asia's spiritual exchanges and the fertilisation of human experiences have had a profound impact on the art, architecture, language, and culture of the region.

The fact that India is located right next to ASEAN is a basic geographical truth. India borders Myanmar, Indonesia, and Thailand on land and at sea. Some ASEAN countries are closer to India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal than they are to the country's mainland. The Indian landmass and its island possessions are crossed by the crucial trade sea-lanes that connect West Asia with Southeast Asia.

India did not realise the full potential of its relationship with South East Asia in the first few decades following its independence. This did not indicate that it was a lesser priority. It resulted from the differences in political philosophies, economic ideologies, and security presumptions, all of which were enforced by the Cold War. Fortunately, the obstacles to deeper India-ASEAN cooperation were eliminated with the end of the Cold War. India joined the ASEAN Regional Forum in 1996 after becoming a sectoral conversation partner in 1992 and a full dialogue partner in 1995. The Partnership for Dialogue has been in operation. India has consistently worked to incorporate its advantages in a number of social, scientific, and economic fields into the pertinent ASEAN procedures. As a path to shared goals, India and ASEAN have collaborated to produce India-ASEAN Vision 2020, which reflects India's aim to deepen its involvement with the region.

The nations in the area are at the forefront of the Knowledge Revolution, developing and implementing state-of-the-art technologies into their economy. This offers a significant chance to overcome past limitations and shorten the time interval between progressively higher developmental stages. In several technological fields, the countries have attained expertise and even domination. In order to fully utilize the synergies, cooperation is essential as opposed to duplication of effort or undermining one another. One example might be a connection between complementing IT capabilities. Still, these must be investigated.

India has also been concerned about the rise in Chinese influence in Southeast Asia. India is displeased with China's strategic ties to Pakistan due to China's covert meddling in South Asia. In 1997, Myanmar joined the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN. India and ASEAN now have a 1,643-kilometer continuous border. India's relations with the ASEAN member states have taken on a new strategic meaning in this regard. The reason behind India's resurgence of interest in its "Look East" policy is its aim to further accelerate economic development through liberalisation and reforms.

India now has a unique chance to increase defence cooperation with Southeast Asia thanks to the new dynamics in the region. Delhi can now effectively contribute to the evolution of security politics in the area for the first time since the end of World War II, when Indian soldiers were instrumental in ending the conflict in Southeast Asia.

#### **4.1. India's Historic Role**

Southeast Asia's cultural, political, and economic developments have long been shaped by the Subcontinent. It supplied the means for the establishment of Western empire in Southeast Asia, promoted the expansion of Islam, and exported Buddhism. Following its victory over the competing European powers, the British Raj emerged as the main force behind the development of Southeast Asia's regional

security order. When Japanese imperialism disrupted this order, the Subcontinent had to mobilise all of its resources in order to stop Japanese aggression. Under Lord Mountbatten's leadership in Southeast Asia, over 7,50,000 Indian soldiers won a valiant battle that is sometimes referred to as the “forgotten war.”<sup>102</sup> K. M. Panikkar contemplated the post-war security arrangements in Southeast Asia following decolonisation and the war, writing during the period when Japan was still occupying the region. Panikkar emphasized the significance of India while calling for a collective security framework for Southeast Asia that includes all major nations, including China. For the success of such a collective security system, Panikkar stated that “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.”<sup>103</sup> The most important prerequisite is that India has a free and stable government that is capable of participating in Southeast Asia and conscious of its obligations.

The division of the Indian Subcontinent as the conventional geopolitical anchor for the stability of Southeast Asia was something Panikkar could not have imagined in 1943. Military might sprang from the Subcontinent throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, reaching every part of the Indian Ocean and its neighbouring areas. Due to the lingering effects of the Partition, the Subcontinent's military forces have become more inward-focused. Furthermore, India's military efforts were directed even farther northward by China's incursion into Tibet. India's ability to shape Southeast Asia was quickly losing ground. The fact that the dissolution of the Raj left a security void in Southeast Asia that has been difficult to fill since the middle of the previous century is equally significant. Whether it is the new security forums headed by the ASEAN or the U.S.-led alliances like the SEATO, Panikkar's observation that Southeast Asia cannot secure itself and will require a major Indian contribution to regional stability is still true. That truth has become more apparent because to the United States' relative fall and China's

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<sup>102</sup> Bayly Christopher and Harper Tim. (2007). *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire*, London: Allen Lane.

<sup>103</sup> Panikkar K. M.. (1943). *The Future of South-East Asia: An Indian View*, New York: Macmillan, pp. 11–12.

explosive military build-up.

#### 4.2. Mutuality of Interests

Christophe Jaffrelot has claimed, convincingly, that India's post-Cold War Look East policy may be linked back to the Asianist principles of the national movement.<sup>104</sup> The notion of a shared destiny with Asia became an enduring leitmotif of the Indian national movement as its own rich past and its extensive engagement with East and Southeast Asia came to light at the turn of the twentieth century. The idea of "greater India" also served to strengthen the rise of Indian nationalism in the early decades of the 20th century. The term "culture colonies" from India was coined by nationalists and quickly gained popularity in the east.<sup>105</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru went a step further and discussed the solidarity of Asia's oppressed and colonized people as well as the possibility of the main Asian countries eventually joining "eastern nations."<sup>106</sup> Later, in 1955, Nehru and Sukarno, the leader of Indonesia, sponsored an Asian-African conference at Bandung, Indonesia, with more structure. The Asian conferences in Delhi (1947) and Bandung (1955) highlighted the significant contrasts among the newly developing states<sup>107</sup>, notwithstanding the romanticism around a "Nehruvian" foreign policy that is popular today and the propensity to over interpret some of Nehru's diplomatic attempts.

However, it would be incorrect to assume that India's early involvement was solely focused on international projects and that its objectives were wholly idealistic. In actuality, in 1951, Nehru secured two treaties of friendship with Burma and

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<sup>104</sup> Jaffrelot Christophe. (2003). India's Look East Policy: An Asianist Strategy in Perspective, *India Review*, 2(2), pp. 35-68.

<sup>105</sup> Susan Bayly. (2004). Imagining 'Greater India': French and Indian Visions of Colonialism in the Indic Mode, *Modern Asian Studies*, 38(3), pp. 703-744.

<sup>106</sup> Venkatasubbiah H. (1949). Prospects for an Asian Union, *India Quarterly*, 5(2), pp. 99-112 and pp. 212-228;  
G. D. Deshingkar. (1999). The Construction of Asia in India, *Asian Studies Review*, 23(2), pp. 173-180.

<sup>107</sup> Seng Tan and Acharya Amitav (Eds.). (2008). *Bandung Revisited: The Legacy of the 1955 Asian-African Conference for International Order*, Singapore: NUS Press; and Itty Abraham. (2008). From Bandung to NAM: Non-alignment and Indian foreign policy, 1947- 1965, *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 46(2), pp. 195-219.

Indonesia. A vague but equivalent language requiring security consultations whenever necessary was present in both treaties. "The two Governments agree that their representatives shall meet from time to time and as often as occasion requires to exchange views on matters of common interest and to consider ways and means for mutual cooperation in such matters",<sup>108</sup>, reads the pertinent item in both accords. This was no abstract clause; in the 1950s, India and Burma enjoyed significant defence and security cooperation. However, India's relationship with both of these significant Southeast Asian allies soured in the 1960s, and until the 1990s, bilateral collaboration was severely restricted in all areas.

A new chapter in political, strategic, and economic cooperation between India and Southeast Asia was marked by the introduction of the Look East Policy initiative by India. During the November 2014 India-ASEAN meeting in Myanmar, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared that the country's long-standing "Look East Policy" (LEP) would now be replaced with a more proactive "Act East" approach. The Act East strategy differs from its predecessor, the LEP, in that it is a more forceful foreign policy based on the belief that India's economic performance determines its geostrategic power. India is expanding the definition of the "East" to include countries beyond Southeast Asia and develop a strategic vision for the larger Asia-Pacific region as it seeks to strengthen economic connections with nations to the east. Growing collaboration in all areas from comprehensive economic cooperation to counterterrorism and ensuring maritime security in the region-was the outcome of the approach. The approach places a strong emphasis on catching up to the economic miracle of Southeast Asia. If, in the middle of the 20th century, Asia looked up to India, it was now India's turn to draw inspiration from East Asia's explosive economic expansion in the 1970s and 1980s. India's own arduous discussions on economic reforms used ASEAN and its policies as models. Many historical, social, and cultural traits between India and the nations in the region could serve as a catalyst for closer ties between the two nations, even though India's

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<sup>108</sup> Article III of the friendship treaty with Indonesia (1951, March 03) and Article IV of the friendship treaty with Burma (1951, July 07).

engagement with them was sparked by compelling economic and geopolitical circumstances. Southeast Asia views India's historically benign ties to the area as such. India has not engaged in combat with neighbouring nations, funded anti-government insurgencies, or invaded Southeast Asia. If India has any "historical debt" to Southeast Asia, it is from sporadic annoyance rather than invasion or intervention.

India has been gradually increasing its defence cooperation, both bilaterally and multilaterally, with the countries of Southeast Asia since the early 1990s. However, neither India nor ASEAN considered defence cooperation to be their top priority. For India, the emphasis on institutional and economic integration with East Asian frameworks was paramount. In terms of defence, India's top aim in the 1990s was to dispel the mistrust that the Cold War had built up in the area, resume high-level discussions, and cautiously investigate the possibility of closer collaboration. As it welcomed India into the ASEAN fold in the early 1990s, the region had no reason to regard India as a counter to China. ASEAN's relations with China were improving, there was no need for concern regarding Beijing's ascent. Indeed, many in the area counselled India against bringing its historical grievances against Pakistan or China into the ASEAN negotiations. Thus, a cautious first response to security concerns appeared to support both ASEAN and India's Look East policy goals.

India gradually re-entered the institutional framework of the area, first as a conversation partner of ASEAN in the mid-1990s and then as a member of the inaugural East Asian Summit in 2005. The area started to reluctantly acknowledge India's importance to the Asian order after years of protesting that it had no place in Southeast Asia, much less the greater East Asian region. The area grew increasingly receptive to the idea that New Delhi is crucial for Asia's strategic future as the country's economy picked up steam and its ties with all the major countries, particularly the US, China and Japan, improved. India's decision to become a founding member of the East Asian Summit (EAS) demonstrated ASEAN's desire in India playing a more direct role in promoting regional security. Ever since, there has been a steady increase in interest in ASEAN for security cooperation with India.

### 4.3. Economic and Trade Ties

When both countries' economies were going through a transitional period, the economic linkages between India and ASEAN were necessary. India lost its main defence and strategic ally in the 1990s when the Soviet Union fell apart, and as a result of its close-knit economy since independence, the country's economy was in terrible shape and in danger of imploding. By initiating structural economic reforms, India committed to following the International Monetary Fund's guidelines in an effort to revive its flagging economy, but it also began to expand its economic and strategic influence beyond South Asia. It has to implement the Look East Policy in order to diversify its economic ties with the ASEAN nations in particular as well as with the Asia-Pacific region as a whole in order to achieve this goal.

India's Look East Policy is aimed at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the larger Asia-Pacific area. Even while ASEAN was originally the focal point of Look East strategy, it was quickly understood to act as a launching pad to access nations outside of its defined borders. The India-ASEAN connections will benefit immediately from this. India's expanding connections with Southeast Asia were aided by its transformation from a Sectoral Dialogue partner of ASEAN in January 1992 to a full Dialogue partner of ASEAN in December 1995. A new era of global economic growth and development<sup>109</sup> was made possible by the shift in its economic strategy.

In the ASEAN area, India has been a major advocate for economic cooperation. India's current foreign policy toward Southeast Asia is a component of its new foreign policy strategy, which is centred on collaboration and positive engagement. It lends credibility to those elements that are vital for creating ties between Southeast Asia and East Asia. An ASEAN-India Economic Linkages Task Force was established to improve trade and investment ties, and it authored the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA), which ASEAN and

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<sup>109</sup> Das Salini, Chakraborti Tridib. (2014). Exploring Myanmar in ASEAN Orbit: Implication for India. *World Focus*, 36(6), pp.11-12.

India signed during the October 2003 Bali Summit. The India-ASEAN partnership was institutionalised through the highest-level multilateral engagement and the expansion of areas of cooperation in order to further the integration process.

The goal of Comprehensive Economic Cooperation is to create an FTA in products, services, and investments as well as an ASEAN-India Regional Trade and Invest Area (RTIA). Among the areas of economic cooperation that have been identified are customs cooperation, trade finance, trade facilitation, agriculture, forestry and fisheries, among others. To expedite the adoption of CEC, an early harvest program was implemented under RTIA. Various deadlines were established for achieving tariff reduction or removal for investment, trade in products and services and trade, which resulted in the creation of the India-ASEAN Free Trade Area.<sup>110</sup>

Another historic agreement, the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress, and Shared Prosperity, was signed at the Vientiane Summit on November 30, 2004, one year after the ASEAN-India CECA was inked at the Bali Summit. The path for the strengthening of India's ties with the nations of Southeast Asia was mapped out in this agreement. It is a blueprint that outlines a thorough set of long-term goals and an action plan with a variety of cross-sectoral areas where the parties can collaborate. In order to create a more cohesive ASEAN community that includes the ASEAN security community, the ASEAN economic community,<sup>111</sup> and the ASEAN socio-cultural community, the agreement requires India and her ASEAN partners to reaffirm their complete support for the implementation of the ASEAN concord-2 declaration.

Following ratification by all ASEAN countries, the ASEAN-India Trade-in-Goods Agreement, which was signed during the ASEAN-India Economic Ministerial

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<sup>110</sup> Sharan, Shayam. (2012). *Re-engaging the Neighbourhood: A Personal Perspective on India's Look East Policy*, New Delhi : Indian Council of World affairs, pp. 131-133.

<sup>111</sup> Thomas, A. M. (2009). *India and Southeast Asia: The Look East Perspective*, New Delhi: Orient Black Swan, pp. 304-305.

Meeting in Bangkok on August 13, 2009, became fully operational on August 1, 2011. In 2011–12, trade between India and ASEAN was USD 79.3 billion. India is fortunate to possess substantial hardware and manufacturing capabilities compared to other ASEAN countries, in addition to its own software capabilities. The combination of the two would advance science and technology while fortifying the region's IT base. As per ASEAN statistics, the overall trade volume increased from \$2.9 billion in 1993 to \$131 billion in 2022–2023. Additionally, India's share of ASEAN trade quadrupled from 0.7% in 1993 to 2.8% in 2008, and it currently stands at 10.6%, making it the fourth largest trade partner of ASEAN. The highest percentage of trade between India and the EU<sup>112</sup> is 11%.

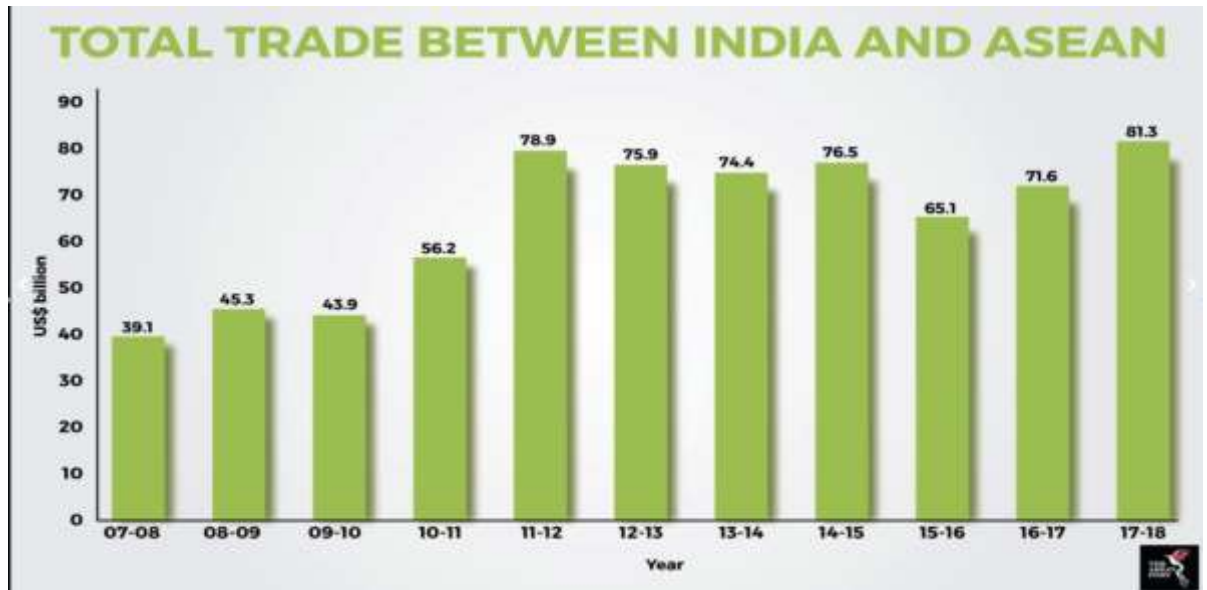
In addition, India and ASEAN collaborate in the space domain. The first meeting between the chiefs of ASEAN's and India's space agencies was held in Bangalore on June 19–20, 2012, to discuss collaboration in the space sector. India and ASEAN are working together to develop their travel and tourism sectors. India is eager to collaborate with ASEAN in this sector to encourage two-way travel and take advantage of its advantages over the ASEAN tourism circuit in the global travel industry. India is looking for experience in building its tourism infrastructure. A protocol to alter the Memorandum of Understanding on increasing tourism cooperation between ASEAN and India was signed.<sup>113</sup> during the fourth ASEAN-India Tourism Ministers Meeting, which took place in Vientiane on January 21, 2013.

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<sup>112</sup> Kumar, Saurabh, Secretary (East), Indian Ministry of External Affairs. (2023, September 05). PM leaves for ASEAN, East Asia Summits Today, *Express News*.

<sup>113</sup> Appadorai, A. and Rajan, M.S. (2003). *India's Foreign Policy and Relations*, New Delhi: South Asia Publishers Private Limited, pp. 182-183.

Figure 4.1 - Total Trade between India and ASEAN



Source: Indian Ministry of Commerce & Industry

#### 4.4. Political and Security Cooperation

India understands that if ASEAN becomes weaker, a major power may be able to force its members into exclusive alliances and create competition with other nations, including India. India would rather have a robust ASEAN that can shield Southeast Asia from rivalry between superpowers than a feeble regional organization that opens itself up to outside influence. India understands how important the ASEAN has been in turning what was before described as Asia's Balkans into the main organization fostering regional integration. However, India will progressively have to face the reality that ASEAN's own capacity to guide the region's future may be called into question. Numerous scholars, particularly those with a realist perspective, are doubtful about ASEAN's ability to establish a stable Asian order and highlight the myth that weaker governments can be disciplined by stronger ones.<sup>114</sup>

In the face of China's explosive growth, the United States' relative decline,

<sup>114</sup> David Martin Jones and Michael L. R. Smith. (2007, January). Constructing Communities: The Curious Case of East Asian Regionalism, *Review of International Studies*, 33(1), pp. 165–186.

Japan's reorientation, and India's development, the ASEAN is coming up with innovative solutions to handle the security issues brought on by this realignment of power in Asia.<sup>115</sup> Although the ASEAN has supplied the largest possible platform for Asian regionalism in recent decades, it is not apparent if ASEAN can keep that position in the future. Having a strong and cohesive ASEAN is arguably more important to India than to anyone else.

#### **4.5. India's Regional Security Strategy**

India's major power relations do not just determine its policies towards East Asia. India has every incentive to cooperate with all regional institutions and strengthen its autonomous ties with all of the main East Asian countries. If the first phase of India's Look East policy was notable for its lack of security initiatives, the second phase, which started in the middle of the 2000s<sup>116</sup>, has given it new significance. Even though India started hesitantly engaging in defence affairs with countries in Southeast Asia in the early 1990s, strong security diplomacy in the area<sup>117</sup> was really sparked by the signing of a bilateral defence cooperation agreement with Singapore in 2003. The Indian Navy responded swiftly to the tsunami tragedy at the end of 2004 on its own, and it later teamed up with the fleets of the United States, Japan and Australia to offer assistance in Southeast Asia. The Indian aircraft carrier INS Virat made its first port calls in Southeast Asia in 2005, to the ports of Singapore, Jakarta, Indonesia, Klang and Malaysia.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Goh Evelyn. (Winter 2007/08). Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analysing Regional Security Strategies, *International Security*, 32(3), pp. 113–157.

<sup>116</sup> Devare Sudhir. (2006). *India and Southeast Asia: Towards Security Convergence*, Singapore: Institute for Southeast Asian Studies.

<sup>117</sup> Singh Bhanu Udai, (2008). *India and Southeast Asia: Enhanced Defence and Strategic Ties*, in N.S. Sisodia and Sreeradha Datta (Eds.), *Changing Security Dynamics in Southeast Asia*, New Delhi: Magnum, pp. 329–345.

<sup>118</sup> Mohan, C. Raja. (2008). India's Geopolitics and Southeast Asian Security, *Southeast Asian Affairs*, pp. 43–60. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27913351>, accessed on August 19, 2023.

The Indian Navy travelled all the way to Vladivostok in the spring and summer of 2007 to conduct a series of bilateral and multilateral exercises with a number of countries, including regional players like Singapore, Vietnam and the Philippines and major powers like the United States, Japan, Russia and China. Large-scale naval drills in the Bay of Bengal with the United States, Japan, Australia and Singapore were the result of India's military diplomacy in 2007. Concerns regarding a possible "Asian NATO" and India's alleged a typical desire for such an alliance were aroused by these drills.<sup>119</sup> However, a closer examination revealed that India is more concerned with raising its own status in the region than with forging new alliances. The Indian Navy's initiative to hold the first-ever Indian Ocean Naval Symposium in February 2008 was a reflection of this. Only the littoral navies of Australia and South Africa were invited. Geopolitically, Indian authorities explain why the navies of the United States, China and Japan were not invited, but there is no mistaking India's persistent aim to affirm its own autonomous engagement of the Indian Ocean littoral.<sup>120</sup> Additionally, India has attempted to bring the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation back to life and add a security component to its discussions.<sup>121</sup>

Beyond the increased breadth and depth of its most recent military operation abroad, India has intensified its bilateral security cooperation with neighbouring countries. India has negotiated security cooperation agreements with several Southeast Asian nations in the past few years, including Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and Cambodia.<sup>122</sup> These entail arms transfers and military

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<sup>119</sup> Caryl Christian. (2007, September 10). Asia's Dangerous Divide: Beijing and Washington are building new alliances throughout the continent, *Newsweek International*; Praful Bidwai. (2007, September 10), *Five Nation Drill Presages Asian NATO*, New Delhi: Inter Press Service.

<sup>120</sup> Khurana Gurpreet. (2008, February 22). Indian Ocean Naval Symposium: Where From... Whither Bound?", *IDSA Strategic Comments*, <http://www.idsa.in/publications/stratcomments/gurpreetkhurana220208.htm>

<sup>121</sup> Sakhuja Vijay (ed.). (2012). *Reinvigorating IOR-ARC*, New Delhi: Pentagon Press.

<sup>122</sup> Scott David. (April/June 2007). Strategic Imperatives of India as an Emerging Player in Pacific Asia, *International Studies*, 44(2), pp. 121–140; and Pant Harsh. (2007). India in the Asia-Pacific: Rising Ambitions with an Eye on Rising China, *Asia Pacific Review*, 14(1), pp. 54-71 and Ramachandran Sudha. (2011, August 20). Indian Navy pumps up eastern muscle, *Asia Times Online*.

training assistance from India. India now exports far fewer weapons than China does, but even so, growth is expected, albeit slowly. India is putting itself in a position to address some of the security requirements of the nations in Southeast Asia as it starts to privatize its defence sector and collaborate with European manufacturers to create cutting-edge weapon systems. India has already promised to maintain several of the fighter aircraft that Southeast Asia has purchased from Russia and to train local military personnel to fly them. Considering New Delhi's previous attempts to balance Beijing in Indo-China, considerable emphasis has been paid to India's growing defence cooperation with Vietnam. It is regarded by some as the most important strategic alliance between India and Asia.<sup>123</sup> However, given Vietnam's obligations to maintain an acceptable relationship with its large northern neighbour, China, it may be too soon to declare a robust future for this relationship.

India is also aware of the risks associated with getting sucked into a dispute between China and its neighbours. Vietnam and the Philippines want more visible Indian naval presence as well as more political support from India in their dispute with China. In December 2012, the Indian naval leadership sent out a signal that it is rehearsing for such emergencies and is ready to send forces to the South China Sea if necessary. The Indian political elite quickly distanced itself from the naval establishment's<sup>124</sup> perspective, despite initially being wary of taking a too active role in the South China Sea. The security establishment in Delhi is obviously divided about the nature of India's approach to the South China Sea. Timing and articulation play a part. The definition of strategic priorities plays a major role. For instance, should India concentrate on strengthening its position in the Indian Ocean or on gaining the capacity to conduct operations in the South China Sea, China's backyard? In addition, there is the geographical issue and the difficulties of continuing Indian

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<sup>123</sup> Brewster David. (2009, January). India's Strategic Partnership with Vietnam: The Search for a Diamond on the South China Sea?, *Asian Security*, 5(1), pp. 24–44.

<sup>124</sup> Kumar Vinay. (2012, December 04). We'll send force to protect our interests in South China Sea, says Navy Chief", *The Hindu*; Ananth Krishnan. (2012, December 06), Media needs to 'more accurately reflect' ties, says Menon after Navy Chief's comments, *The Hindu*; and Bagchi Indrani.(2012, December 19), ASEAN nations lap up Navy Chief's South China Sea comments, *Times of India*.

naval operations in the South China Sea.<sup>125</sup> The South China Sea issue has grown in importance as a topic of discussion within the Indian strategic community in the recent several years. This move highlights the increasing importance that certain ASEAN nations place on defence and security cooperation with India, as well as India's expanding influence in the waters east of the Indian Ocean and the Sino-Indian rivalry. Furthermore, it is clear that India does not intend to invade and dominate the South China Sea. Simultaneously, India is cultivating the capacity to ultimately surface as a significant actor in Southeast Asian waterways.

India and ASEAN's bilateral collaboration, which had begun in the economic realm in 1992, unexpectedly expanded into the political and security domains in 1995, following India's full ASEAN Dialogue partner status. India rejoined the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1996 and participated in the East Asia Summit in 2005. In 2003, India signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. It joined the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation Initiative, and negotiated free trade agreements (FTAs) with Thailand and Singapore. The Plan of Action to carry out "The ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity" was finalized during the 2004 summit in Vientiane. Strong ties have developed significantly as a result of the India-ASEAN summit and the invitation extended to all ASEAN heads of state to attend the Republic Day Parade as the chief guest in January 2018.

India-ASEAN economic and political cooperation paired with collaboration for tackling terrorism, piracy, sea lane protection and climate change would produce a stable, peaceful Asia. Additionally, they are both interested in and share a similar concern for fighting issues such as climate change, natural disaster relief, drug trafficking, terrorism and piracy.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> James R. Holmes. (2012). Inside, Outside: India's Exterior Lines in the South China Sea, *Strategic Analysis*, 36(3), pp. 358–363; Prakash Arun. (2011, October 01). Where are our ships bound, *Indian Express*.

<sup>126</sup> Mishra, Dr. Rahul. (2014). Myanmar in India-ASEAN Relations. *World Focus*. 35(6), pp. 41-42.

India and ASEAN share a desire to see peace and security established in the area. Terrorism has grown to be a worldwide danger since the attack on the US World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001. India and ASEAN strive to bring about peace and security in the area while also being frequent victims of terrorism. The Indian Ocean became a path during the 9/11 attack. Numerous terrorist groups are free to operate in the Indian Ocean region. Terrorism is a marine and territorial issue in both India and ASEAN. In this regard, the nations of Southeast Asia are looking to India for assistance in training their armed forces for counterterrorism operations. The rebel organisations from Northeast India have relocated to Southeast Asia, particularly to Thailand and Myanmar. India and ASEAN need to issue a unified declaration against terrorism that covers information sharing, cooperation in legal concerns, cooperation in enforcement matters and training.

India is becoming more dependent on energy security and maritime trade, both of which depend on the safety of Southeast Asian nations' maritime communication routes. The Malacca Strait and the economy are negatively impacted by maritime piracy. It affects ASEAN and India in a cascading manner. Approximately 97% of India's international trade is conducted via marine routes. India therefore needs the security of the water lanes encircling the ASEAN nations. India greatly needs a successful and stable ASEAN with secure maritime routes connecting it to the Pacific Ocean.

When talking about India-ASEAN security cooperation, it becomes clear that safeguarding the Strait of Malacca is in both of their interests. Due of this, the Strait of Malacca serves as a bridge between the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, facilitating the flow of products essential to ASEAN and India's economic and energy security. Southeast Asian countries and India are separated by straits that include Sunda, Makassar, Lombok and Malacca. India must concentrate on bilateral and multilateral relations with Southeast Asian nations in order to meet the region's growing energy needs.

Regarding non-traditional security issues, ASEAN and India are coming together, especially in the areas of climate change and natural disaster aid. Southeast Asia is especially vulnerable to climate change because of its vast agricultural industry and heavily populated coastline. Even though India and ASEAN have worked together to establish the Green Fund and the India-ASEAN Network on Climate Change, among other non-traditional security initiatives, there is still a lot of room for future cooperation, such as working together in the agriculture sector to address the issues surrounding food security.<sup>127</sup>

#### **4.6. Terrorism**

Since September 11, 2001, terrorism has taken centre stage in nation-states' security concerns, particularly in Asia, having a substantial impact on intra- and intraregional ties. While transnational terrorism posed new security difficulties, domestic politics and state-society relations in the region's states, as well as their relationships with other governments, were profoundly altered, even though terrorism was nothing new for many Asian countries. The conventional bilateral alliance structures that supported a large portion of the security framework and interactions in the past are proven to be insufficient to address the threat of transnational terrorism in the new dynamics. As a result, increased collaboration between the countries in the region and increased involvement with partners outside of it through multilateral agreements are required.

Transnational terrorism is one of the many security risks that Southeast Asia and India must contend with. Paradoxically, terrorism offers special chances for both of them to collaborate. One imperative that could lay the groundwork for mutually beneficial collaborations in their economic and security interactions is the shared goal to combat terrorism. India and Southeast Asia possess significant expertise in handling acts of terrorism. Both could take advantage of their shared skills to take

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<sup>127</sup> Sahu, Preeti and Sengupta, Deboleena. (2013). Contemporary Relations between China and Myanmar and the Indian Strategy. *World Focus*. 34(10), pp. 100-101.

decisive action against the threat. Additionally, economic cooperation between India and the nations of Southeast Asia has the potential to quicken growth, which might aid in the resolution of intra and interregional conflicts as well as the improvement of living standards.<sup>128</sup>

India is worried about many different aspects of Southeast Asian security and stability. Terrorism and transnational crime now represent “two prominent sources of non-state violence and instability in the Asia-Pacific region”. The enduring acts of terrorism in South and Southeast Asia, along with the growing connection between terrorism and organised crime, bear noteworthy long-term consequences for India. With organisations like Laskar-e Toiba (LeT) and Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI) operating in both Pakistan and Bangladesh, a large number of terrorists from Southeast Asia have received their training in Afghanistan, Pakistan, or Bangladesh. According to information obtained from the 2003 arrest of Hambali's brother Rusman Gunawan, Jemaah Islamiyah was using a network of students from Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore to train the next generation of leaders in Lashkar-e-Taiba facilities in Pakistan. One of the organisations defending Kashmir is Lashkar-e-Taiba, which has been closely monitoring events in Southern Thailand. Given that Lashkar-e-Taiba has transnational ties to Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom, its entry into Southeast Asia could pose a challenge to New Delhi's strategic interests in the area.<sup>129</sup>

The security of the sea lanes of communication with respect to the vital straits and waterways in Southeast Asia as well as the wider Indian Ocean region—an operational zone that extends from the “Straits of Hormuz to Straits of Malacca”—is another area of concern. According to New Delhi, its legitimate security concerns span Southeast Asia, China's northeast and the Persian Gulf in the west. The economy of India and the ASEAN area depend on unhindered access to the South

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<sup>128</sup> Acharya, Arabinda. (2006). India and Southeast Asia in the Age of Terror: Building Partnerships for Peace. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*. 28(2), pp. 297-321.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

## China Sea and the Malacca Straits.

India's worries about Southeast Asian terrorism are partly a result of the necessity of supply chain and energy security. India's energy needs have increased significantly along with its economy, making it more and more dependent on an uninterrupted supply of energy from outside the country. With an eye toward obtaining supplies from Indonesia and investigating prospects for long-term energy resources from Russia<sup>130</sup>, India has steadily shifted its focus to North and Southeast Asia. This is an attempt to lessen India's reliance on Middle Eastern energy supplies, which it sees as becoming excessively unreliable and competitive. The majority of the goods coming from the East would pass through Southeast Asian waterways. For the whole Indian Ocean-South East Asia Region (IO-SEAR)<sup>131</sup>, this forms the basis of India's maritime doctrine and strategy.

Indian naval build up and its force projection into the broader Indian Ocean region with specific reference to the Straits of Malacca are founded on the necessity to counter the spectrum of conventional and non- conventional threats. In South Asia, this entails dealing with threats from terrorist organisations with marine terrorist capabilities in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Additionally, there is fear that terrorists may collaborate with pirates or adopt their strategies to seize a big ship and use it as a floating bomb or sink it in the shallow seas of the Straits, which would have disastrous effects on the environment and the supply chain.

The trafficking of human beings, illegal weapons and transnational organised crime are further areas of concern. Weapons of mass destruction being transported and/or used by state (North Korea, for example) and non-state actors is a related

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<sup>130</sup> India started buying up Urals crude selling at a discount after the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. India's imports of Russian oil rose from a very low base at the start of 2022, increasing significantly throughout year.

Russian oil now accounts for nearly 20% of India's annual crude imports, up from just 2% in 2021.

<sup>131</sup> Sondhi, M. L., Tyagi, K.G. (2001). *Asia-Pacific: Security, Globalization and Development*, New Delhi: Manas Publication, pp. 56-57.

concern. India has also been expanding its economy to the nations of Southeast Asia and making large investments in neighbouring countries. India and Singapore signed a Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation in 2003 and 2005, respectively. Along with Thailand, New Delhi is creating a model similar to this and forming a Joint Study Group to finalize free trade agreements with the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Japan. Under the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC),<sup>132</sup> comparable pledges are made.

Indonesia, a member of ASEAN, may act as India's link to the Muslim population, and ASEAN members may be able to learn from each other's experiences<sup>133</sup> by using India's background in managing minorities as an example. The ASEAN-India Joint Declaration for Cooperation to defeat International Terrorism, which intends to prevent, disrupt and defeat international terrorism through the exchange and flow of information, intelligence and capacity-building,<sup>134</sup> demonstrates recognition of this area for cooperation.

With investments in manufacturing, services, and infrastructure, Indian investors controlled assets in Indonesia valued at about US\$1.7 billion. India is Indonesia's biggest importer of mining, petroleum, pulp and paper, textiles and crude palm oil. India exports iron and steel, sugar, wheat, rice, and refined petroleum products. Given that terrorist and separatist groups in Indonesia already harbour strong feelings against the exploitation of their resources by foreign corporations, India's expanding trade relations with nations like Indonesia would be put under strain.

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<sup>132</sup> Reddy, K Raja. (2012). *Foreign Policy of India and Asia-Pacific*, New Delhi: New Century Publications. pp. 69-70.

<sup>133</sup> Acharya, Arabinda. (2006). India and Southeast Asia in the Age of Terror: Building Partnerships for Peace, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 28(2), p.297

<sup>134</sup> India Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, <http://www.aseansec.org/15276.htm>, accessed on February 20, 2023.

Violent protests against the exploitation of natural resources have been common in various parts of the nation, including Aceh, Kalimantan, and West Papua. In the event that radicals are successful in using the complaints to further radicalize the populace, India would have good reason to be concerned. In general, Southeast Asia faces significant political and economic concerns due to the growth of terrorist networks and rising extremism in the region. Long-term, the region may easily become the centre of Islamist terrorism if it gains a reputation as a "soft touch" in the worldwide web of terror. This might be disruptive, driving away foreign investment and the economic growth that it stimulates.<sup>135</sup>

Thus, both India and Southeast Asia battle with an array of security risks, not the least from transnational terrorism. Paradoxically, terrorism offers special chances for both to collaborate. The necessity of establishing mutually beneficial alliances could stem from a shared goal to combat terrorism. India is becoming more widely acknowledged as a security influence in Southeast Asia. India's support to the war against terror could be seen more positively by the nations of Southeast Asia. The fact that India has been able to reassure the states in the region about its manifest neutrality and determination to keep South Asian matters outside of its sphere of influence is equally significant. This is seen in the willingness of the surrounding nations to allow India to play a larger role in countering emerging asymmetric threats like terrorism and piracy. During Operation Enduring Freedom, for instance, the Indian coast guard and navy escorted valuable commerce through the Straits of Malacca.

Along with other major players like the US and other European nations, India actively participates in and conducts joint naval drills in South and Southeast Asian waterways. In light of concerns over the United States playing a similar role, the countries in the region also looked to India to assist in maintaining the safety of the sea lanes in the Malacca Straits. The Indian navy now seems more acceptable and

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<sup>135</sup> Prof. Kaul, Man Mohini. (2010). India's Look East Policy: New Era of India ASEAN Relations, *World Focus*, 31(10), pp. 432-433.

more equipped to contribute to peace and security in the Indian Ocean region, notwithstanding earlier worries. This was explained in detail in India's April 2004 Naval Doctrine, which outlined strategies that are neither aggressive nor harmful to other people. The philosophy is based on the idea that cooperative maritime security must be developed with the nations bordering the Indian Ocean in order to address threats from terrorism<sup>136</sup> and ensure safe trade and energy flows.

India and Southeast Asia possess significant expertise in handling acts of terrorism. Both could take advantage of their shared skills to take decisive action against the threat. With policies of democratic tolerance and empowerment, India's experience dealing with linguistic, cultural, and religious minorities may help other countries in Southeast Asia address similar issues in their own local contexts. Concerns about the development of radical Islamist doctrine are always expanding, especially in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Pakistan. India and the other nations in Southeast Asia enjoy special advantages due to their traditions of moderation and tolerance, socio-cultural synthesis, political dissent channels and a propensity to keep religious matters separate from politics. By banding together, we could weaken the allure of radical ideology and create a rich and stable Asia.<sup>137</sup>

#### **4.7. Issues on Nuclear Non-proliferation**

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his administration initiated the first nuclear program to utilise natural thorium supplies following India's independence in 1947 in response to the country's quickly rising energy needs. Nonetheless, India gained the technical capacity to produce nuclear weapons as a result of its decision to develop the whole nuclear fuel cycle. The motivation to pursue its nuclear ambitions was sparked by India's defeat in the war with China in 1962. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi further authorized the weaponisation of India's nuclear capabilities in the

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<sup>136</sup> Reddy, C, Ravindranath. (2010). India's Look East Policy: Problems and Prospects, *World Focus*, 31(10), pp. 437-438.

<sup>137</sup> Chenoy, Kamal, Mitra. (2007). Indian Foreign Policy Shift and Calculus of Power, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42(35), pp. 3547-3549

1980s, following Pakistan's actions in advancing its efforts to get nuclear weapons and Islamabad's nuclear threats during the Brasstacks incident.<sup>138</sup>

India needs to reassert itself on the international scene with the fall of its ally and the rise of China as a new regional power. It started to establish closer ties with the United States. As a result, Indian combat aircraft were able to deploy nuclear weapons as early as May 1994, and in 1996, nuclear warhead technology advanced. The Indian government declared India to be a nuclear power on May 1998 after approving two nuclear tests.<sup>139</sup>

Notably, the US and India signed the Next Step for a Strategic Partnership (NSSP) agreement in July 2005, and a year later they began working together on civilian nuclear and space projects. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is thought to be in conflict with these agreements. Nevertheless, India has neither been a signatory or a party to the NPT since the 1970s.<sup>140</sup> This is due to India's perception that the NPT is a discriminatory tool that divides nations into "nuclear haves" and "have nots," and that the only way to address the issue of nuclear proliferation is through total worldwide disarmament.<sup>141</sup>

India embraced the "retaliation only" or "no-first-use" nuclear philosophy. This doctrine's main goal is to dissuade foreign nations from posing external nuclear threats to India and its armed forces. Should deterrence fail, India will not think twice about launching counterattacks that cause the enemy to suffer losses. However,

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<sup>138</sup> Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI). (2009). India profile: Nuclear overview. Nuclear Threat Initiative : Working for a Safer World Organizational Research Library, [http://www.nti.org/e\\_research/profiles/India/Nuclear/index.html](http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/India/Nuclear/index.html), accessed on February 27, 2023.

<sup>139</sup> Dillon, Dana and Spring, Baker. (2006). Nuclear India and the Non-Proliferation Treaty, *The Heritage Foundation*, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2006/05/Nuclear-India-and-the-Non-Proliferation-Treaty>, accessed on February 27, 2023.

<sup>140</sup> Wilson, Michael. (1995). The nuclear future: Asia and Australia and the 1995 conference on non-proliferation, *Griffith University and World Nuclear Association*, <http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/inf53>. Html, accessed on February 28, 2023.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid

the policy also declares that no non-nuclear state<sup>142</sup> will be threatened by the use of nuclear weapons.

As ASEAN's stance on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons was perceived as conflicting with India's nuclear ownership, problems with the relationship began to appear. The Treaty of Bangkok, often known as the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, was signed by all ten ASEAN members and went into effect in March 1997. The ASEAN Declaration on Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) served as the inspiration for this treaty. Furthermore, this treaty imposes a duty on all of its members to refrain from developing, producing, obtaining, possessing, or controlling nuclear weapons. Member states are further required to abstain from all nuclear operations, including the transfer, financing, production and purchase of nuclear weapons. This is to prevent nuclear weapon testing and the disposal of radioactive waste that could cause major risks in the area<sup>143</sup>, as well as to prevent member states from developing into nuclear weapon installations there.

ASEAN has once again called on all parties that possess nuclear weapons to fulfil their responsibilities and pledges as outlined in the NPT in order to achieve the treaty's objectives of universal and total disarmament. However, ASEAN finds India's nuclear weapon activities—including testing and proliferation-problematic since it is not a signatory to the aforementioned pact. The two opposing positions on nuclear proliferation-India's NSSP pledge and civilian nuclear and space cooperation with the US and ASEAN's responsibility in upholding the NPT-could therefore lead to a potential clash.

Even said, given that ASEAN has managed to maintain regional security stability in spite of the presence of nearby nuclear powers like China, India's nuclear

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid

<sup>143</sup> James Martin Centre for Non-proliferation Studies. Southeast Asia Nuclear- Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Bangkok), Inventory of International Non-proliferation Organizations and Regimes. [http://www. nti.org/research/official docs/inventory/pdfs/seanwzfz, pdf](http://www.nti.org/research/official_docs/inventory/pdfs/seanwzfz_pdf), accessed on February 28, 2023.

weapons may not necessarily undermine the organisation's long-standing stance. It is clear that India is concerned that the NPT will simply deepen the divide between nuclear and non-nuclear states and raise the possibility of terrible confrontation, leaving ASEAN with little option in this regard.

Considering a number of political factors that could spur non-nuclear states to pursue nuclear technology development, including uncertainty surrounding US security guarantees, the deterioration of non-proliferation regimes, concerns about China's rise, a cross-strait conflict, or North Korea's<sup>144</sup> nuclear capability demonstration - India's deterrent nuclear posture and its nuclear capacity provide ASEAN with a means of maintaining regional security, peace, and order while counterbalancing the growing military might of North Korea and China. Generally speaking, though, India and ASEAN have differing perspectives on the establishment of peace and order in the region and here is where possible policy disagreements may arise. While the latter maintains that complete and absolute nuclear disarmament is the key to attaining stability and security in the region, the former claims that the region will only be secure from any threats when all states have nuclear capability due to the fear of reprisal.

Complete nuclear disarmament is challenging to achieve because five of the eight states with declared nuclear weapons are in Asia (North Korea, Pakistan, China, India and Russia)<sup>145</sup>. This makes tensions and threats among the non-nuclear states that share borders with the nuclear states much higher. Therefore, in this instance, the significance of international efforts to manage non-proliferation was highly acknowledged in order to demonstrate their state's authority and influence in international affairs and to regulate the movement and activities of nuclear technologies. The ASEAN's insistence on non-proliferation may serve as a springboard for India's ongoing NPT discussions. India may eventually be

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<sup>144</sup> Reiss, Mitchell B. (2005). Prospects for nuclear proliferation in Asia, *NBR Forums*, [http://nbrforums.nbr.org/publications/strategic asia/pdf/sa05xs 1 lproliferation.pdf](http://nbrforums.nbr.org/publications/strategic%20asia/pdf/sa05xs%201%20proliferation.pdf), accessed on February 28, 2023.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

"socialised" by ASEAN to embrace more of the peaceful coexistence strategies used by ASEAN to deal with potentially hostile neighbours.

#### **4.8. Issues on Energy Security**

A stable and sufficient supply of food and energy across the nation or a region is required, in addition to the expanding population and quickening pace of industrialisation. An essential component of production processes for economic growth is energy. Therefore, energy security-which is the ongoing availability of energy in a variety of forms in sufficient amounts at fair rates to support economic growth<sup>146</sup> is required.

Seventy percent of India's energy demands are met by its local coal reserves, which rank it as the sixth largest energy consumer and producer in the world. Oil makes up the remaining thirty percent, at least sixty-five percent of which is imported. India's primary energy source<sup>147</sup> is coal, but its coal reserves are insufficient to support the country's long-term energy needs. Furthermore, India is burdened with environmental worries due to the poor quality of its coal, which is the dirtiest hydrocarbon fuel. The demand for a stronger and more dependable coal source is increased by the fact that India's coal is inappropriate for use in steel and other significant industries.

India turned to buying gas from its neighbours, including China, Iran, Myanmar and Vietnam, as it is thought to be more environmentally benign. This is also intended to help the nation's rising gas shortage. Due to Myanmar's proven massive gas reserves, Daewoo International of South Korea is able to operate and own 60% of its gas-rich A-1 block. GAIL India Ltd and Korea Gas Corp each hold 10% of the block, while Oil and Natural Gas Corp. of India holds 20%. Afterwards,

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<sup>146</sup> Government of India, Integrated energy policy: Report of the expert committee. Government of India - Planning Commission, [http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/genrep/rep\\_intengy.pdf](http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/genrep/rep_intengy.pdf), accessed on March 01, 2023.

<sup>147</sup> Zissis, Carin. (2007). India's energy crunch, *Council on Foreign Relations*, [http://www.cfr.org/publication/12200/indias\\_energy\\_crunch.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/12200/indias_energy_crunch.html), accessed on March 01, 2023.

Myanmar designated GAIL India Ltd to handle the gas marketing from the A-I block. Installing pipelines is seen as one way for India to fulfil its obligation to transport and utilise its gas reserves. In 1988, ONGC entered the Vietnamese market after being granted the exploration license for Block 06.1. Natural gas is being produced at the Block. In 2006, the business was additionally granted exploration blocks 127 and 128. Block 127 was given up once the work program was over. Block 6.01 is jointly owned by ONGC and a Vietnamese partner, and during the 2020–21 fiscal year, ONGC produced 1.330 million tons of condensate and oil equivalent gas from the block. The India Times reports that the business has, for the seventh time since 2014, requested for a two-year extension, expiring in June 2021, to explore Block 128 in the disputed waters of the South China Sea. In May 2006, the Indian business and Petro Vietnam inked a production sharing contract (PSC) for the deep-water exploration Block 128 in the Phu Khanh Basin, Vietnam, which covers an area of 7,058 square kilometres. Two producing fields, Lan Tay and Lan Do, are located in the Nam Con Son basin's 955 square kilometres Block 06.1, of which Petro Vietnam owns 20% and holds a 35% share. According to ONGC, the business is still searching the block, which has a water depth of 200–2,000 meters,<sup>148</sup> for oil and gas.

In order to address the nation's energy challenges and guarantee its energy security, India eventually created an integrated energy policy. Additional actions include strengthening the climate for investment in energy reactors, improving energy conservation and efficiency, expanding the exploration of domestic hydrocarbon reserves, developing strategic oil reserves, lowering the cost of energy poverty, and addressing climate change and sustainable development. Additional steps have already been made to assist these efforts, including as safeguarding oil-navigation sea lanes<sup>149</sup> and continuing to build and install transnational pipelines.

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<sup>148</sup> Vu Minh. (2021, December 18). Vietnam pledges protection of India oil exploitation, *Hanoi Times*, December 18, 2021. <https://hanoitimes.vn/vietnam-pledges-protection-of-india-oil-exploitation-319578.html>, accessed on August 28, 2023.

<sup>149</sup> DARE. Implementation of integrated energy policy must to ensure India's energy security: CII. DARE. <http://www.dare.co.in/news/others/implementation-of-integrated-energy-policy-must-to-ensure-indias-energy-security-cii.htm>, accessed on March 01, 2023.

India's approach to sustainable development actually aligns with the ASEAN for Sustainable Development's Regional Energy Policy and Planning, which places a high priority on creating a clean and green ASEAN. By doing this, ASEAN hopes to safeguard the environment, the sustainability of its natural resources and the high standard of living of its citizens.<sup>150</sup>

Therefore, the ASEAN places a high value on sustainable growth, which cannot be fully guaranteed by actions like gas extraction and pipeline expansion in India to satisfy its energy issues. However, India's gas extraction from Myanmar benefits Myanmar's economy greatly in one way or another. India can resolve its energy constraint problems with Myanmar's assistance. As a result, both parties may benefit from the energy sector.

#### **4.9. Food, Health and Pandemics**

The Indian government created its first National Health program in 1983. It reformulated the program in 2002 and called it the NHP-2002. The primary goal of the revised NHP-2002 is to achieve an acceptable standard of good health among the country's general population and has set goals to be achieved by the year 2015. The NHP-1983 sought to achieve the goal of "Health for All" by the year 2000 through the provision of comprehensive primary health care services. The NHP-2002 indicates that the public health sector needs a significant infusion of resources, naturally taking into account the resources' availability. Developing a policy framework that lessens disparities and gives the underprivileged segments of society more equitable access to public health care is another of NHP-2002's main goals.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> ASEAN n.d. Regional energy policy and planning in ASEAN for sustainable development, [http://www.asean-sustainable-energy.net/dsp\\_jpage.cfm?view=page&select=5](http://www.asean-sustainable-energy.net/dsp_jpage.cfm?view=page&select=5), accessed on 3 Mar 2023.

<sup>151</sup> Government of India. (2002). National Health Policy: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. <http://mohfw.nic.in/>, accessed on March 03, 2023.

On the other side, ASEAN stated in its 5th Health Ministers Meeting in 2000 that by 2020, health should be the primary focus of development and that ASEAN health cooperation should be expanded to guarantee that people are living in harmony and safety in safe environments<sup>152</sup>, as well as being well physically and mentally.

In order to ensure that they meet their objectives for health development, the ASEAN has also made a number of steps. The Medium-Term Plan of Collaboration on Health and Nutrition, the Work Programme on Community-Based Care Programs for the Elderly, the Plan of Action for Strengthening Disease Surveillance, the Medium-Term Work Programme on Tuberculosis Control, the Medium-Term Work Programme to operationalize the ASEAN Regional Programme on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control, and the Technical Cooperation in Pharmaceuticals, Phase V are a few of the specific plans of action that ASEAN currently has that they would like to put into action. Additionally, ASEAN intends to undertake initiatives to support the use of traditional medicine<sup>153</sup> and accelerate the execution of programs on disability prevention and rehabilitation, polio, malaria.

In terms of health, ASEAN and India are similar in terms of priorities, values, and guiding principles. It is therefore natural that the two organisations will interact and address health-related issues. Some of the goals listed in the Pharmaceuticals and Health section under the Economic Cooperation section of the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Prosperity include: exchanging knowledge and skills in developing a high-quality generic pharmaceuticals industry; lowering the cost of medicine for people; working together to jointly produce diagnostic and therapeutic supplies for HIV/AIDS; vaccines, including but not limited to BCG, anti-venin, equine rabies, anti-hepatitis and anti-tetanus, serum vaccines; and addressing health-related issues affecting the region's

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<sup>152</sup> ASEAN Secretariat (2009a). Declaration of the 5th ASEAN health ministers meeting on healthy ASEAN 2020, 28-29 April 2000, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. ASEAN Secretariat, <http://www.aseansec.org/660.htm>, accessed on March 03, 2023.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid

countries, particularly in light of the challenges posed by pandemics like COVID<sup>154</sup>. In support of COVID diplomacy, India provided hydroxychloroquine (HCQ), paracetamol tablets, and other medical supplies to at least 123 countries, including the United States, Germany, Spain, South Africa, Kuwait, Jordan, the Dominican Republic, Antigua and Barbuda and countries in its extended neighbourhood, such as Mauritius and the Seychelles. India's efforts to engage with the neighbouring ASEAN region were first restricted but have now significantly expanded. Early in 2021, the prime minister of India had personally discussed health and economic issues with his colleagues in the majority of ASEAN member states. Additionally, Malaysia was to get HCQ pills from India. Regular citizens, university students, and government officials in the Philippines were provided with masks, hand sanitizers, and medications by the Indian embassy located in Manila. Over the past decade, both BIMSTEC and ASEAN have emerged as important areas of interest for New Delhi within the framework of the AEP and the Neighbourhood First Policy. Via multisectoral initiatives in the areas of traditional and nontraditional security, New Delhi has actively engaged with both regional organisations. Now, in light of the COVID-19 epidemic, these activities are being advanced.

#### **4.10. Migration**

Both internal and foreign migration are prevalent in India. Marriage has been a major influence in internal migration, whereas the desire for work is a major element in exterior migration (AZAD India Foundation 2002). India's policies on internal migration have received little attention. Huge urban slums have grown and become entrenched throughout the nation as a result of the absence of migration policies (Ram 1993).<sup>155</sup> Furthermore, there is a great deal of stress due to the enormous number of migrants, particularly for those who are competing for the same

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<sup>154</sup> ASEAN Secretariat. (2009b). Plan of action to implement the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity. Asian Secretariat. <http://www.aseansec.org.16842.htm>, accessed on March 04, 2023.

<sup>155</sup> Ram, S. (1993). A case for internal migration policy in India, Population Geography. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12179084>, accessed on March 05, 2023.

jobs.<sup>156</sup>

India has been developing its first migration policy in recent years, with the goal of defending Indians who travel overseas in pursuit of employment. A research team affiliated with the Centre for Development Studies (CDS) and supported by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) spearheaded the development of this new draft policy. Additionally, it is said that the research centre has conducted studies on Indian migration and the Indian diaspora.<sup>157</sup>

While it is still in the planning phases, the draft policy aims to include a more expansive definition of migrants, extending beyond a group of unskilled and semi-skilled foreign workers to include professionals and students. It is anticipated that the draft policy would most likely become a new law<sup>158</sup> after it is finalised.

At the moment, the Emigration Act of 1983—which alone oversees the safety of unskilled and semi-skilled labourers is the primary migration law that regulates India. Alternatively, the purpose of the new policy is 'to combat human smuggling and to enable migration of Indians for both jobs and education'. Along with these important areas, the policy also emphasises 'preparing the migrants before they leave, controlling and monitoring the licensing of agents and brokers, safeguarding the migrants' rights in countries of temporary residence, maximising their remittance potential, and facilitating reintegration upon their return' (ibid.).

Conversely, over the past 20 years, ASEAN has been a significant hub for labour movements across national borders. For this reason, in 2007, the ASEAN started working on a Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of

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<sup>156</sup> AZAD India Foundation. (2002). Migration in India. AZAD India Foundation. <http://www.azadindia.org/social-issues/migration-in-india.html>, accessed on March 05, 2023.

<sup>157</sup> India Enews. (2006). India working on Migration Policy, *India Enews*. <http://www.indiaenews.com/nri/20060915/22420.htm>, accessed on March 05, 2023.

<sup>158</sup> Handique, Maitreyee. (2009). India plans new policy on temporary migration, *mint*, <http://www.livemint.com/2009/06/29221009/India-plans-new-policy-on-temp.html>, accessed on March 20, 2023.

Workers Who Are Migrants. The proclamation provides sending and receiving governments with information about their labour migration commitments in an effort to improve the welfare of migrant<sup>159</sup> workers.

A major step toward improving the promotion of security and respect for migrant workers' rights in the area has been taken with the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection of Migrant Workers' Rights. It lays out the fundamental ideas and delineates the obligations of the countries of origin and destination. Since it is the first of its sort in the region, the ASEAN Declaration is seen as incredibly ground breaking. It is unique in that it specifically addresses, from the perspective of the region, the protection and advancement of migrant workers' rights. In order to ensure a methodical and organised migration process, it is also being executed with regard to origin, transit and destination duties.<sup>160</sup>

Proposals have been made for the establishment of a regular mechanism for discussions and discourses on the myriad issues presented by migration in order to further advance the coordination of economic and social policies among the ASEAN countries, particularly with regard to the issue of migration.

There is currently no explicit migration policy or agreement between India and ASEAN. India's domestic economy receives significant remittances from its enormous labour pool. Since 2003, India has really been able to take in one-tenth of the global remittance market. This fact further demonstrates the need for India to give the formulation of its immigration policies adequate consideration. Since 2001, the majority of Indian diaspora residents—roughly 35% of all diasporic Indians—have resided in Asia, according to the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora.

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<sup>159</sup> ASEAN Secretariat. (2009d). ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers. ASEAN Secretariat, <http://www.aseansec.org/19264.htm>, Accessed on 20 Mar 2023.

<sup>160</sup> International Labour Organization.(2007). Good practice - The ASEAN Declaration on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers, International Labour Organization, [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/migpractice/migmain.showPractice?p\\_lang=en&p\\_practice\\_id=41](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/migpractice/migmain.showPractice?p_lang=en&p_practice_id=41), accessed on March 20, 2023.

As a result, ASEAN has been increasingly preoccupied with issues related to migration, particularly labour migration.<sup>161</sup>

#### **4.11. Challenges to ASEAN- India Relations**

India and ASEAN both confront significant obstacles in the non-traditional security space. The international nature of these problems creates opportunities for collaboration and encourages actual collaboration between India and the regional organization. If there is to be any improvement in future cooperation, two obstacles must be considered. First and foremost, ASEAN and India need to do more to foster confidence because in certain domains, like non-proliferation, migration and pandemics, a lack of vision beyond national interests impedes further cooperation. For instance, India faces competition from several ASEAN member states that are also labour suppliers when it comes to migration. Furthermore, there is no established strategy for safeguarding citizens' rights or preventing nationals of different countries from being treated unfairly when they work in one other's countries. Additionally, India's nuclear program runs counter to ASEAN's overarching objective of guaranteeing a region free of nuclear weapons. Leaders and diplomats must address this mismatch on critical strategic issues if only to prevent medium countries like those in ASEAN from being disadvantaged in the event that India becomes a major East Asian force.

The policy frameworks of ASEAN member states present the second obstacle to better relations. While 'ASEAN- India ties' as a concept has seen reality through their economic relationship, the reality for ASEAN is that agreements at the regional level have to be embraced and altered at the national level. Because ASEAN, even though its charter, respects the sovereignty of member nations and will not force them to follow any regional accords they are not happy with, member states that want to opt out or delay generally have no legal obligation to abide by regional level

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<sup>161</sup> Naujoks, Daniel. (2009). Emigration, immigration, and diaspora relations in India, *Migration Information Source*, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=745>, accessed on March 20, 2023.

agreements. This demonstrates the disparities in the region's degrees of development. The political and economic structures are asymmetrical, which makes complete agreement impossible at the implementation stage. While some members will find it easier to adapt to regional accords than others, others may require more time. The way each member state sees securitisation is much more crucial to take into account. Different approaches resulted from their inability to attain the same level of securitisation, even though they may have agreed that certain concerns are in fact global challenges. This prevented them from having a shared view of the problem. It is imperative that future collaboration address the asymmetries among ASEAN member nations so that, in enhancing their relations with India, common ground will be simpler to identify than disparities in how issues are seen and how best to respond to them.

#### **4.12. Way Ahead**

India understands the practical reasoning behind using sub regional groupings to further particular socioeconomic objectives in the area. Thus, we wholeheartedly endorse the Mekong Ganga Cooperation, which unites India, Vietnam, Thailand, Burma and Cambodia. India is supporting the Initiative in building a communications network that includes roads, trains, river navigation, and port facilities. Additionally, India has started a second sub regional initiative to build a road connecting Thailand, Myanmar and India that will eventually be a part of a more complex regional communications network.

When attempting to address the critical challenges of growth and security, it is vital to acknowledge the political and economic realities as they exist. India, with its population of 1.5 billion, must play a key role in any regional process concerning the Asia Pacific region. With all of the major nations in the region, India has positive and diverse connections. The same may be said about India's ties to its neighbours in East Asia who are members of ASEAN.

India and China are involved in a growing partnership that benefits both

parties. India and Japan have started a global partnership for the twenty-first century. As a respected trade and business partner, the Republic of Korea the strategic alliance with Russia is still robust and active, and the US and Russia are currently actively engaged on a wide variety of bilateral and global problems that are important to both countries.

The Indian economy is currently quickly assimilating into the world economy. The region's prosperity, peace, security and stability would be strengthened by the growing ties with the major economies of the Asia-Pacific area. It is a political and geographical fact that India is a part of the Asia-Pacific region. Its recognition and survival do not depend on official membership in any regional organisation.

India and ASEAN are currently in a position to expand on their mutually advantageous economic and commercial ties by stepping up their political and security discussion. Both deal with a dizzying number of security challenges, the most prominent of which has just lately been international terrorism. The world community is now fully aware that combating and reducing terrorism requires an all-encompassing, global strategy.

However, due to the nature of Global Village, comprehensive measures are required to address security concerns that are not military in character. The stability of societies is threatened by poverty and energy and food shortages. Deeply concerning issues include population increase, the quick spread of illnesses like AIDS and TB, environmental deterioration and cybercrime. Transnational crime, drugs and maritime piracy are among endemic problems that haunt the area.

Seven of the ten most populated nations in the world, the largest standing armies, four states with stated nuclear weapons, and multiple nations that produce and export missiles are all located in Asia. Additional instability is a result of the continent's diverse political and civilizational landscape. On the one hand, projections indicate that Asia will provide 57% of global GDP during the next 25

years. However, the economic issues that initially arose in 1997 have a tendency to come up again. Another issue that has an impact on security is how to control this economy's erratic behaviour. The trends suggest that a worldwide economy and the might of technology will rule the future century. Asia will inevitably become the centre of gravity for global socioeconomic shifts. The Asia-Pacific area must think outside the box to adapt to this transformation and create a network of cooperative agreements that will support the transition in a steady way. Prime Minister Modi advocated for everyone's commitment and coordinated efforts to strengthen the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations<sup>162</sup> during the ASEAN-India Summit in Jakarta on September 7, 2023. "India's Indo-Pacific initiative places a high priority on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and New Delhi is dedicated to collaborating 'shoulder to shoulder' with it". India is a dialogue partner of ASEAN, which is regarded as one of the most powerful regional alliances. Other discussion partners include the United States, China, Japan and Australia. Asia's century is the twenty-first. This century is ours. The Prime Minister, who is co-chairing the summit, stated that in order to achieve this, initiatives for human welfare and the development of a rule-based post COVID global order are imperative. "It is in everyone's best interests to advance a free and open Indo-Pacific and strengthen the voice of the Global South". Additionally, the prime minister reiterated that ASEAN's significance and its vision on the Indo-Pacific are completely supported by India, which bases its Act East Policy on ASEAN. India and ASEAN are connected by geography and history. He said that the alliance had a "prominent place" in India's Indo-Pacific effort. "In addition to shared values, regional unity, peace, prosperity and a shared belief in a multipolar world also bind us together," the speaker stated.

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<sup>162</sup> Modi, Narendra. (2023, September 07). ASEAN- India Summit, Jakarta.



Picture 4.1 – 20<sup>th</sup> ASEAN - INDIA Summit

Therefore, it falls on the democracies in this region to take the lead in ensuring that the 21st century becomes the century of Asia.

Rahman, 2020). Then, via Myanmar, China may be able to accomplish its geostrategic and geo-economic objectives. As a result, since the Chinese Revolution on October 1, 1949, it has been vital to Myanmar's economic development based on bilateral relations. China is a business, investment and export-import partner of Myanmar. Between 2009 and 2019,<sup>166</sup> Myanmar exported \$5.71 million to China, and as of March 2020, China had invested 21 billion (DICA, 2020). A major turning point in the history of the two nations' relationship occurred on the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations when Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Myanmar and inked 33 bilateral commercial agreements spanning a variety of industries.

For geopolitical purposes, China strengthened its military ties with Myanmar and invested in all fields, including natural resources, industry, agriculture and infrastructure development, while the US shied away from international trade, especially in the face of economic sanctions from the European Union. A different means of communication is required to keep China's economy moving in light of the US-India alliance's increased monitoring in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. In particular, fuel oil is a significant economic component that China buys from several countries, including the Middle East and Africa. China receives fuel oil across the Strait of Malacca. But because it depends on the Malacca Strait for imports and exports, China faces strategic dangers. As a result, China can implement its expansive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) through Myanmar, which acts as its gateway into Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East. As part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor<sup>167</sup> (CMEC) will connect Kunming, the capital of Yunnan, the province bordering China, Mandalay, the central province of Myanmar, and Yangon in the south. It will also connect Kyaukpyu port in Rakhine State to the west. According to Frontier (2019), China has allocated US\$ 9 billion for the construction of Myanmar's railways, US\$ 1.68 billion for New Yangon Town, and US\$ 10 billion for the establishment of a port and

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<sup>166</sup> Rahman, Sayedur Md. (2020, September). China-Myanmar Bilateral Relations: Analytical study of some Geostrategic and Economic Issues, *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, pp. 324-343.

<sup>167</sup> Frontier Myanmar. (2019), <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en>

special economic zone. China will be able to continue importing and exporting fuel oil without hindrance from the US and India as a result, saving it from having to use the Malacca Strait.

### **5.1. Historical Background**

There have been relations between China and Myanmar since antiquity. This connection began when the Pagan Kingdom was founded in 489 BC. However, the Mongols' relations soured when the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368) took over. Although there were sporadic uprisings afterward, this relationship persisted until the arrival of Western imperialism. After the final Burmese king was overthrown in 1885, Myanmar was officially a British colony. 1911 saw the fall of Qing, the last Chinese king. 1948 saw the independence of Myanmar from British rule, and on October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong's Revolution in China resulted in the establishment of a socialist government. On June 8, 1950, diplomatic ties between China and Myanmar were established, with China being acknowledged as the nation that had adopted communism first. Sino-Myanmar relations were reaffirmed when the Yunnan-Burma border was opened, particularly during World War II, to help defend the Japanese from British aggression. During the Tibetan civil war of 1954, India and the US provided assistance to Tibet. In order to put an end to the war, a treaty was signed based on five guiding principles, which, on June 29, 1954, was included in the Sino-Myanmar Joint Declaration. During the 1955 Bandung, Indonesia, Non-Aligned Movement Conference, these policies were approved. The conference's main tenets were to:-

- Preserve territorial integrity and sovereignty based on mutual respect;
- Refrain from invading other states;
- Refrain from interfering in another state's domestic affairs;
- Guarantee equality and reciprocal benefits;
- Promote peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution.

Between 1950 and 1960, China and Burma had amicable relations, barring two

incidents: China's backing of the rebel Communist Party of Myanmar and Burma's impartial foreign policy amid the Sino-US crisis. General Ne Win imposed martial law, nationalised all private businesses in the state (except from agriculture), and assumed control in 1962 as a result of internal conflict and dissent in Myanmar. The nationalisation program's primary objective was to force immigrants from South Asia and China out of Myanmar. Due to this approach, millions of individuals have left the country; approximately one million of them were Sino-Burmese. During this period, the ties between China and Myanmar soured. Law and order dramatically worsened, particularly in 1967 during the clashes between the Chinese opposition and the pro-Chinese Communist Party of Burma (CPB) (Bert, 2004). The Chinese Communist Party began publicly sponsoring the Communist Party of Burma after this episode. This resulted in the communist insurgents' 1973 seizure of Shan, a province bordering China, which generated uneasiness in Myanmar<sup>168</sup> for a considerable amount of time (Bert, 2004). Following Deng Xiaoping's ascension to power, China ceased to back the communist rebels in Burma. It was suggested that the border rebel factions from Shan, Mong La, Kokang, and Kachin hold talks about a ceasefire with the Burmese military administration. The autonomy that the rebel tribes had received as part of the ceasefire in the border states of Shan and Kachin was finally incorporated into the 2008 constitution.

Pro-democracy and student movements in 1988 caused widespread violence across the nation. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) was established in order to bring order to this situation, and it subsequently gained authority in Myanmar. By this time, the Burma Communist Party (BCP), the principal rebel organization, had divided into four factions<sup>169</sup>.

In order to maintain control, the government, which was supported by the military, used force, resulting in numerous deaths and widespread arrests. President

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<sup>168</sup> Bert, W. (2004). Burma, China and the USA, *Pacific Affairs, University of British Columbia*, , 77(2), pp. 263-282.

<sup>169</sup> Lintner B. (2000). The Golden Triangle Opium Trade: An overview, *Asia Pacific Media Services*, [http://asiapacificms.com/papers/pdf/gt\\_opium\\_trade.pdf](http://asiapacificms.com/papers/pdf/gt_opium_trade.pdf)

Ne Win resigned in this circumstance and declared a democratic election. Aung San Suu Kyi won the election in 1990, but the military retained control of the state and reinstated martial law. Following this incident, diplomatic ties were severed between Myanmar and other Western nations, including the United States, which left Myanmar essentially cut off from the outside world. On this occasion, the promotion of border trade with Myanmar was initiated in order to build its own economic and geostrategic interests, and three trading posts were created along the border. China began to invest in Burma during this period in a number of sectors, including electricity, power plantations, infrastructure development, and the sale and training of military hardware (Zhou & Cuyvers, 2011). China's exclusive authority over Myanmar was diminished on March 23, 2011, with the establishment of President Thein Sein's semi-civilian government. Through a number of political avenues, Myanmar is actively trying to build diplomatic relations with the west. Subsequently, Chinese President Thein Sein visited the White House<sup>170</sup> in 2014, and US President Barack Obama made his first-ever visit to Myanmar (Weifeng, 2016). China-Myanmar mega projects continue to reduce costs, but the public's opposition<sup>171</sup> forces the abandonment of the Myitsone hydropower projects (Fuller, 2011).

In FY 2012–13, project costs were reduced by about \$1 billion. But in 2017, Myanmar's armed forces subjected the Rakhine State's Rohingya population to rape, torture, and genocide, forcing them to leave the nation. Additionally, Myanmar was subject to fresh international sanctions from the West due to the actions against Rohingya minorities. Because of this, Myanmar's reliance on China has increased, and trade relations between China and Myanmar have recently reached unprecedented levels. In order to increase bilateral trade, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Myanmar on January 18, 2020—nearly two decades later—and signed 33 agreements<sup>172</sup>.

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<sup>170</sup> Weifeng,Z. (2016). New Dynamics in sine Myanmar relations, *Global Asia*, 11(3), 2016, <https://www.globalasia.org>,

<sup>171</sup>Naravane, Gen MM, PVSM, AVSM, SM, VSM (ret'd). (2022, September 05). Personal Interview.

<sup>172</sup> South China Morning Post. (2020, January 18). Chinese President Xi Jinping wraps up Myanmar visit with string of infrastructure deals, including strategic Indian Ocean port,

Under the guise of electoral fraud in the 2020 elections, the military coup that abruptly ended a ten-year democratic process in Myanmar on February 1, 2021, shocked both the people of that nation and the world community. The Chinese Foreign Ministry (2021) urged all parties in Myanmar to "properly handle their differences under the constitutional and legal framework and maintain political and social stability" in response to the coup in the neighbouring country. Beijing ignores the fact that the military's declaration of a state of emergency was unconstitutional, as only the President is authorised to do so under the military's 2008 Constitution (Chapter 11), even as it calls on the parties to resolve the crisis within the framework of the constitution. Beijing prevented the UN Security Council (UNSC) from adopting a united statement denouncing the military of Myanmar on the second day of the coup. Furthermore, it declined to call the military's takeover of power a coup. Beijing is heavily invested in Myanmar. Due to its own interests, Myanmar has been a steadfast supporter of Beijing's grand strategy ever since Chinese President Xi Jinping launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013. The initiative aims to increase connectivity between China and Eurasia in order to construct an international order centred around China.

## **5.2. Relations between China and Myanmar in the Light of Geopolitical and Geostrategic Concerns**

Beijing was taken aback when the Myanmar government implemented significant political reforms that China had not expected. Nevertheless, due to centuries-old friendships, Myanmar still needs to prioritise its large neighbour. India's relations with Myanmar are currently picking up steam, primarily in an effort to weaken China's influence and break its hold on Myanmar - U Nyunt Maung Shein.<sup>173</sup>

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<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3046694/chinese-president-xi-jinping-wraps-myanmar-visit-string>

<sup>173</sup> U Nyunt Maung Shen. (2013, September 20). External Players and Their Impact on Domestic Policies, *Myanmar Institute of Strategic and Studies and international Studies*,

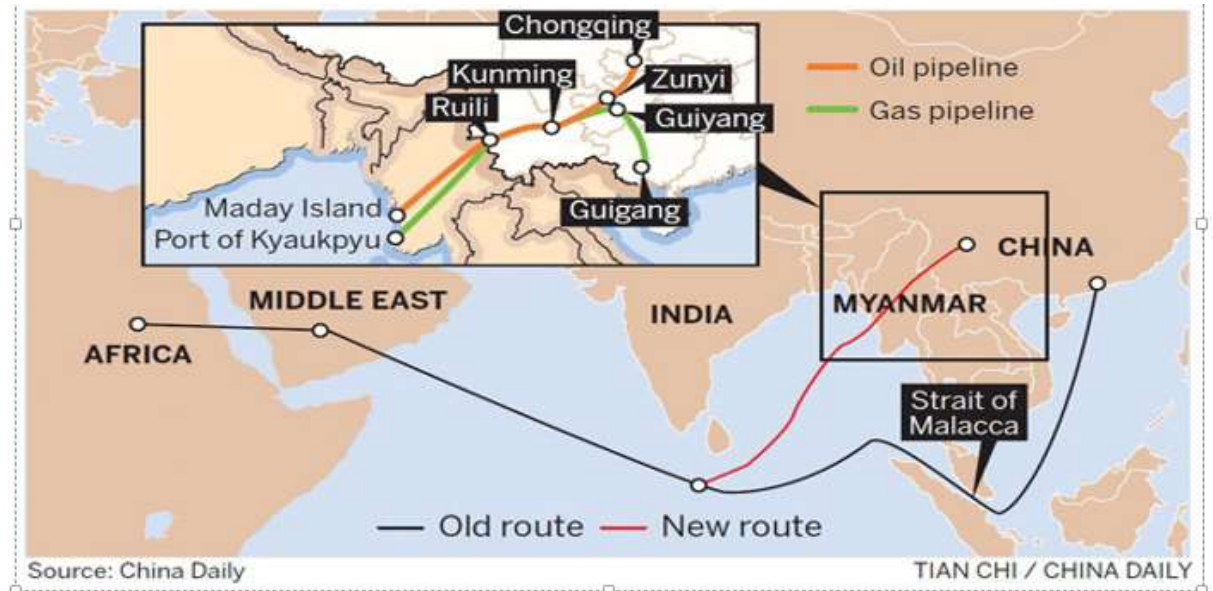
Adjacent Maintaining China's status as a global powerhouse and boosting economic growth depend on Myanmar both strategically and geopolitically. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China's luxury project, connects through Myanmar. Geographically, China and Myanmar border each other by around 2185 kilometres. In order to enhance commerce and achieve independence from China's most formidable foe, the US, South and Southeast Asian nations must keep positive relations with their neighbours, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam. China needs Myanmar to keep importing fuel oil from Middle Eastern and African countries and selling Chinese goods to other parts of the world for geopolitical reasons because throughout the past 20 years, 80–85% of China's trade has been carried out by sea. China uses the Malacca Strait for communication, but strategically speaking, it is risky. Because of the expanding influence of other adversary governments, such the United governments, China has long searched for alternatives to imports and exports in order to maintain normal economic operations, especially in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, China is implementing its different initiatives in Myanmar. A link road connecting Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province in southern China, with Kyaukphyu in the Rakhine state of Myanmar is planned. In order to build pipelines for natural gas and crude oil<sup>174</sup>, China and Myanmar came to an agreement in 2009 to invest US\$1.5 billion and US\$1 billion, respectively (Han, 2020). This will link China to the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, and Bay of Bengal, reducing the distance to about two thousand kilometres. Additionally, it will save about two weeks for the shipment of cargo. It will also decrease Western influence on the flow of different goods imports and exports.

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[http://www.myanmarisis.org/index.php/research-a-publication-of-misis#s5\\_scrolltotop](http://www.myanmarisis.org/index.php/research-a-publication-of-misis#s5_scrolltotop), accessed on November 29, 2013.

<sup>174</sup> Han,E. (2020). Myanmar's Internal Ethnic Conflicts and Their Implications for China's Regional Grand Strategy, *Asian Survey*, 60(3), pp. 466-489, <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2020.60.3.466>

Map 5.1 - China Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)



Source : <https://images.app.goo.gl/8o7qjUqTNk31feTJ8>

From a geostrategic standpoint, however, ties between China and Myanmar are as important for Myanmar as they are for China. Chinese investment has increased several hundred fold in distant Myanmar as a result of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Myanmar is important from a geopolitical standpoint not only for China but also for the US, India, Russia, and other Western countries. But the West wants to stand in the way of China's economic growth. In order to bolster American dominance throughout Southeast and South Asia, including the Indian Ocean, the United States and India have inked a military pact in response to China's worries and for this purpose. Furthermore, the United States of America keeps military outposts in Japan and other neighbouring countries. For these geopolitical considerations, China has chosen to use Myanmar as a substitute trading route. It was decided in March 2009 that a pipeline worth US \$1.04 billion and US \$1.5 billion<sup>175</sup> would transport gas and oil from Kunming, Myanmar, to Rakhine (Weifeng, 2016).

### 5.3. China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC)

<sup>175</sup> Oinam, Anuradha. (2023, April 08). China's Investments in the past-coup Myanmar: Assessment, *Centre for Land Warfare Studies*.

China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC): Trade ties with over 60 Asian, South Asian, African, Middle Eastern and European countries will establish a strategic and economic bond with China. Following the unveiling of the CMEC proposal by Chinese Foreign Ministers Wang Yi and Aung Sun Suu Kyi<sup>176</sup>, a 15-point Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in November 2017 (Ramachandran, 2019). By completing the project, China intends to increase its commercial and military power in the Indian Ocean, link the landlocked province of Yunnan to the Bay of Bengal, and significantly contribute to its economic growth and geopolitical cooperation. In 2013, pipelines for the transportation of gas were laid as part of the project, and in 2017, pipelines for the transportation of oil.

Map 5.2 - China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC)



Source : <https://images.app.goo.gl/6ksWzknNNZN357xN9>

<sup>176</sup> Ramachandran, S. (2020, April 13). The China-Myanmar Economic Corridor: Delays Ahead, *China Brief*, 20(7), Washington DC: The Jamestown Foundation, <https://jamestown.org/program/the-china-myanmar-economic-corridor-delays-ahead/>

Map 5.3 – China-Myanmar Gas and Oil Pipeline



Source : <https://images.app.goo.gl/2Tap3DgzYwb548KNA>

However, from a geopolitical standpoint, the project would lessen China's reliance on trade with neighbouring countries like the US and the South China Sea, as well as shield it from future attacks. Many in Myanmar believe the project will harm the nation's economy and result in infrastructure changes<sup>177</sup>, despite China's considerable strategic advantage (Ramachandran, 2020). Many think that the project will lead to more jobs and increased trade with China (Frontier Myanmar, September 26, 2018). However, because of the project's high cost and difficulty in repaying it down the road, the government of Myanmar is now very concerned about it. According to reports from Frontier Myanmar on March 8, 2019, the project's estimated costs are as follows: US\$1.68 billion for the New Yangon city project<sup>178</sup>; US\$9 billion for the Muse-Mandalay planned railway<sup>179</sup>; and US\$10 billion for the

<sup>177</sup> Luai, Lian, Salai, MLA and former Chief Minister, Chin State. (2022, October 29). Personal Interview.

<sup>178</sup> Frontier Myanmar. (2019, March 08), <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/>

<sup>179</sup>The Irrawaddy. (2019, May 14). China-Backed Muse-Mandalay Railway to Cost \$9 Billion, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/china-backed-muse-mandalay-railway-cost-9-billion.html>

Kyaukphyu port project (US\$ 2.7 billion for the SEZ and US\$ 7.3 billion for the port<sup>180</sup>) (Ramachandran, 2020). However, analysts predict that this significant Chinese investment will raise Myanmar's debt load and dependence on China, which may ultimately spell disaster for Sri Lanka<sup>181</sup>. These projects will also cause a great deal of economic activity, environmental catastrophes, the purchase of local land and population displacement. Due to the prohibition on fishing at sea, fishermen are also concerned about losing their means of subsistence<sup>182</sup>.

#### **5.4. China-Myanmar Border Trade Relations**

Many years ago, China, Myanmar and India were connected by the South-West Silk Road, which functioned as a trading and commercial route. For a very long time, China exported silk, porcelain, tea, and metals from Myanmar and imported coins, spices, wood and jade from its neighbours. However, as of late, the business model has shifted and China is now importing logs, sawed timber, agricultural products, minerals, textiles, motorcycle parts, and a plethora of equipment, mechanical and electrical products from Myanmar. Myanmar's exports to China reached US\$5.71 billion in 2019, according to the United Nations COMTRADE database on international commerce. According to Trading Economics' 2019 report, the United Nations COMTRADE database on international commerce, Myanmar's imports from China amounted to US\$6.45 billion.

In addition, because of internal mismanagement and its isolation from the outside world, Myanmar is among the poorest nations in South East Asia. The lacklustre infrastructure and communication system in the nation causes it to lag behind in foreign investment. Western economic sanctions were in effect until 2012, during which time China was the only nation to make significant investments in

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<sup>180</sup> Ramachandran, S. (2020, April 13). The China-Myanmar Economic Corridor: Delays Ahead, *China Brief*, 20(7), Washington DC: The Jamestown Foundation, <https://jamestown.org/program/the-china-myanmar-economic-corridor-delays-ahead/>

<sup>181</sup> Mizzima. (2020, March 07). Dangers of a Chinese debt trap for Myanmar. <http://mizzima.com/article/dangers-chinese-debt-trap-myanmar>

<sup>182</sup> Ibid

Myanmar. Recent increases in investments by China and India have led to a minor uptick in trade between Myanmar's imports and exports. Myanmar's primary exports are manufactured goods, minerals, forest products, marine products and agricultural and animal products. Additionally, the nation imports consumer goods, industrial raw materials, intermediate goods, and capital goods. However, the majority of trade between China and Myanmar occurs across the border. In the first ten months of the fiscal year 2019-2020, which began in October, trade over the border totalled US 8.6 billion, according to figures issued by Myanmar's Ministry of Commerce. In parallel, US \$ 2.7 billion was imported and US \$ 5.8 billion was exported from Myanmar. From 281 million in the fiscal year 2018–19 to \$8.3 billion in the current fiscal year, trade growth increased<sup>183</sup>. Trade between China and Myanmar is carried out near the border towns of Kengtung, Chinashwehaw, Lweje, Muse, and Kanpikete. Trade between Thailand and Myanmar occurs around the border regions of Tachilek, Myawady, Kawthoung, Myeik, Hteekhee, Mawtuang, and Maese. Trade between Bangladesh and Myanmar takes place near the border towns of Sittwe and Maungdaw. Trade between India and Myanmar occurs near the Tamu and Reed borders. The majority of Myanmar's border trade is with China. Because of the ongoing international economic sanctions, China has emerged as Myanmar's only ally since the country's establishment.

## **5.5 China's Geostrategic and Trade Interests in Myanmar**

Although friendly ties between China and Myanmar date back to pre-Christian times, diplomatic relations between the two nations were first established in 1950. Its growth has been rapid recently. "A good neighbour is better than a dwelling relative" is an old Chinese proverb<sup>184</sup>.

The South-West Silk Road served as a trade and commercial route connecting China, Myanmar, and India several centuries ago. For a very long time, China

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<sup>183</sup> Xinhua. (2020, July 20). Myanmar's border trade reaches over 8.6bn USD in first 10 months of FY 2019-20, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english2020-07/20/c\\_139227208.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english2020-07/20/c_139227208.htm)

<sup>184</sup> Luai, Lian, Salai, MLA and former Chief Minister, Chin State. (2022, October 29). Personal Interview.

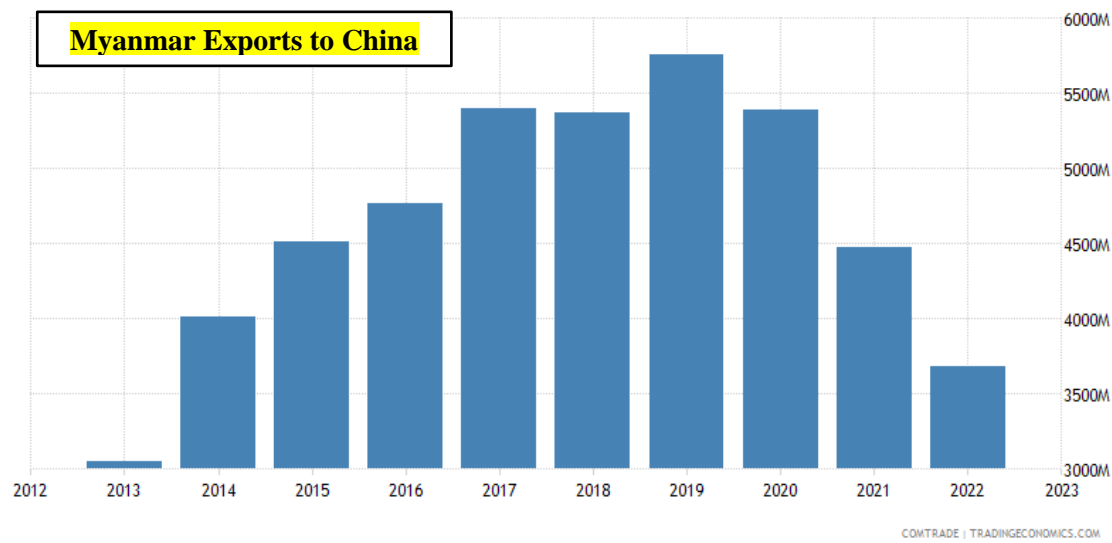
imported coins, spices, wood, and jade from its neighbours and exported silk, porcelain, tea, and metals from Myanmar. However, the business model has since changed, and China is now importing logs, sawed timber, agricultural products, minerals, and a vast amount of machinery, textiles, motorcycle parts, and electrical and mechanical products from Myanmar. In 2019, Myanmar's exports to China amounted to US\$5.71 billion, as per the United Nations COMTRADE database on global trade. The United Nations COMTRADE database on international trade (Trading Economics, 2019) states that Myanmar's imports from China totalled US\$6.45 billion in 2019.

In addition, because of internal mismanagement and its isolation from the outside world, Myanmar is among the poorest nations in South East Asia. The lacklustre infrastructure and communication system in the nation causes it to lag behind in foreign investment. Western economic sanctions were in effect until 2012, during which time China was the only nation to make significant investments in Myanmar. Recent increases in investments by China and India have led to a minor uptick in trade between Myanmar's imports and exports. Myanmar's primary exports are manufactured goods, minerals, forest products, marine products and agricultural and animal products. Additionally, the nation imports consumer goods, industrial raw materials, intermediate goods and capital goods (Hoque, 2016).

However, the majority of trade between China and Myanmar occurs across the border. According to data released by Myanmar's Ministry of Commerce, trade across the border reached US 8.6 billion in the first ten months of the fiscal year 2019-2020, which started in October. In parallel, US \$ 2.7 billion was imported and US \$ 5.8 billion was exported from Myanmar. From 281 million in the fiscal year 2018–19 to \$8.3 billion in the current fiscal year, trade growth increased (Xinhua, 2020). Trade between China and Myanmar is carried out near the border towns of Kengtung, Chinashwehaw, Lweje, Muse, and Kanpikete. The majority of Myanmar's border trade is with China. Because of the ongoing international economic sanctions, China has emerged as Myanmar's only ally since the country's establishment. Myanmar exported \$5.71 billion in goods to China in 2019, according to UN

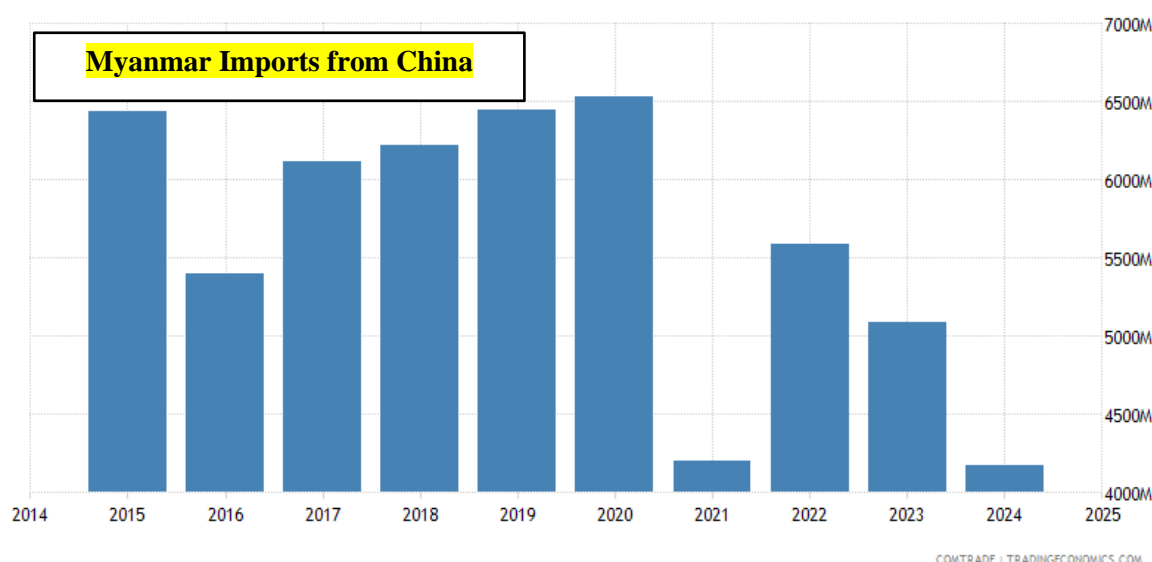
Comtrade (Trading Economics, 2019). Nonetheless, the trade deficit is one of the main barriers to trade in Myanmar. From October 1, 2019, to April 24, 2020, the first seven months of the 2019–2020 fiscal year saw a US\$ 1.2 billion trade deficit (Xinhua, 2020). To strengthen trade relations between China and Myanmar, a number of initiatives are being carried out by both nations. December 2019 saw the 18th China-Myanmar Border Economic Trade Fair. Over 500 booths showcasing over 2,000 Myanmar products were present at the China Import Expo last year, demonstrating the country's rapidly growing trade with Myanmar. The trade show also demonstrates the great potential for investment and trade, exports and imports, person-to-person interactions and cross-cultural interactions between the citizens of the two countries (Xinhua, 2020).

Figure 5.1 – Myanmar exports to China



Source : <https://images.app.goo.gl/yvsoNue85MOqpek9>

Figure 5.2 – Myanmar imports from China



Source : <https://images.app.goo.gl/FG1MjCwn2W44SEmF8>

The Greater Mekong Sub-regional Economic Cooperation was established in 1992 at China's initiative. The objective was to enhance trade, investment, transportation, telecommunications, and agriculture among the four Mekong River countries, including Myanmar, via mutual collaboration and understanding (Weifend, 2016).

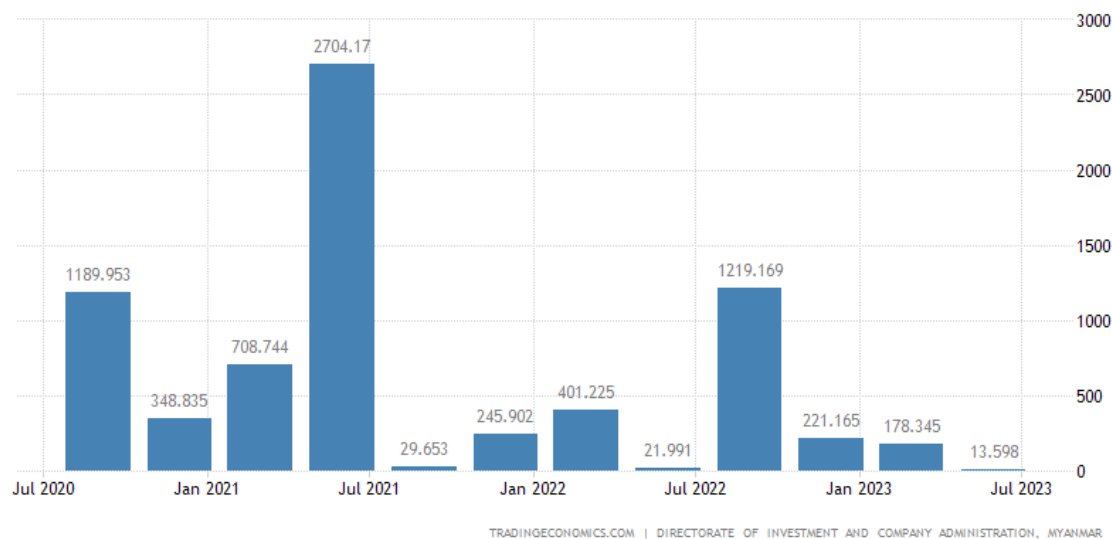
China is Myanmar's largest trading partner and has been one of the most dependable foreign investment sources over the past few decades. By December 2019, Chinese FDI made up 25% of total investments in Myanmar. As of June 30, 2020, China's investments in Myanmar<sup>185</sup> amounted to US \$ 21350.668 million, or 24.78% of total foreign investments made in the country (DICA, 2020). The graphs display authorised businesses and foreign direct investments in Myanmar.

In the second quarter of 2023, foreign direct investment in Myanmar rose by 13.60 USD million. In Myanmar, foreign direct investment experienced fluctuations between 2012 and 2023, with an average of 1206.84 USD million. The highest recorded amount was 4565.46 USD million in the first quarter of 2016 and the lowest

<sup>185</sup> DICA. (2020, July 20). Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (Myanmar), <https://www.dica.gov.mm/en/taxonomy/term/38>

recorded amount was 13.60 USD million in the second quarter of 2023<sup>186</sup>.

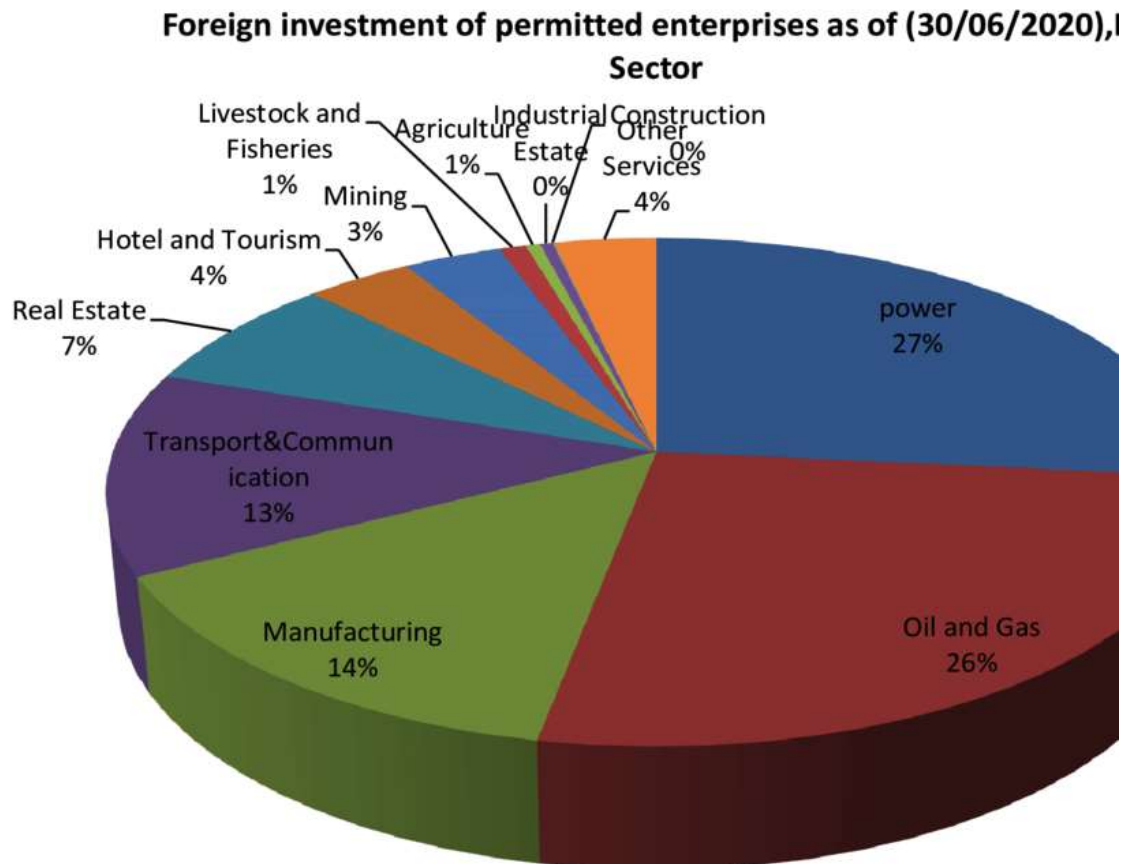
Figure 5.3 - Businesses and foreign direct investments in Myanmar



Source : <https://images.app.goo.gl/DaMK3H4kwY83iutX6>

<sup>186</sup> Ibid

Figure 5.4- Foreign investment of permitted enterprises in Myanmar

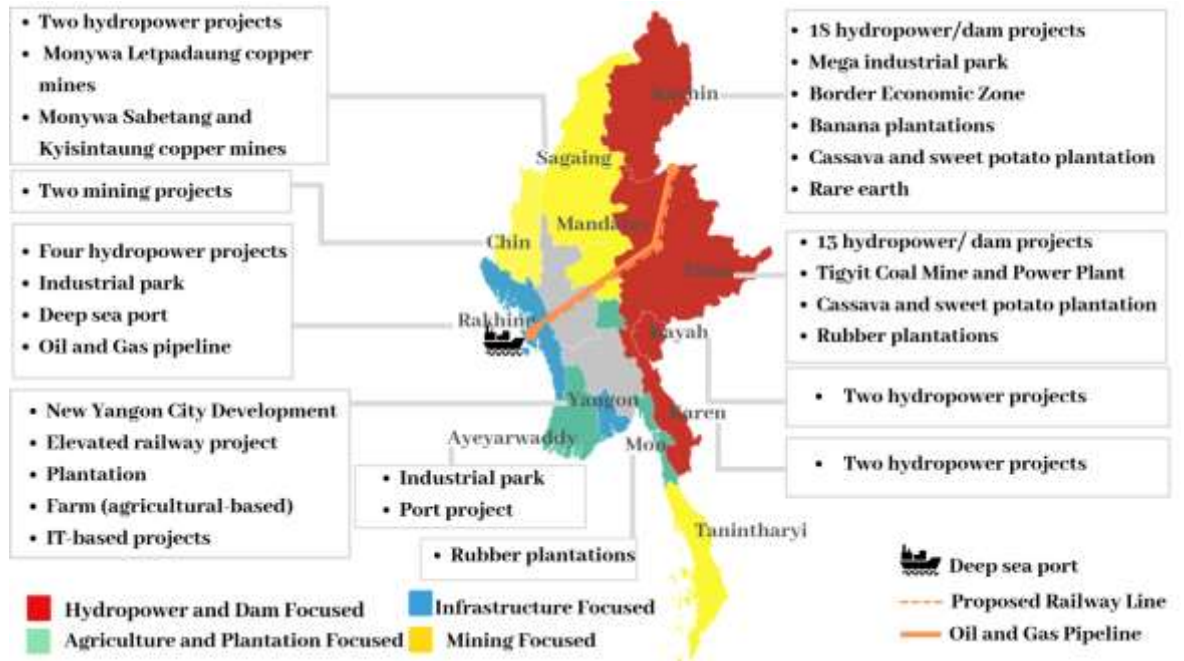


Source: Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, DICA (2020)

However, if we look back over the preceding few decades, we can see that Chinese investment in Myanmar peaked in FY 2010–11, right after President Thein Sein's victory. Myanmar has adopted a cautious stance toward Chinese investment ever then. As of present now, China has adjusted its investment approach in Myanmar. Building transmission lines, developing industrial businesses, and extracting and developing mineral resources have been the main areas of Chinese investment, the production and exploration of oil and gas, hydropower projects and other areas in recent years<sup>187</sup>. The following are the main Chinese-invested projects in Myanmar across a variety of fields:

<sup>187</sup>The Irrawaddy. (2019, May 14). China-Backed Muse-Mandalay Railway to Cost \$9 Billion, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/china-backed-muse-mandalay-railway-cost-9-billion.html>

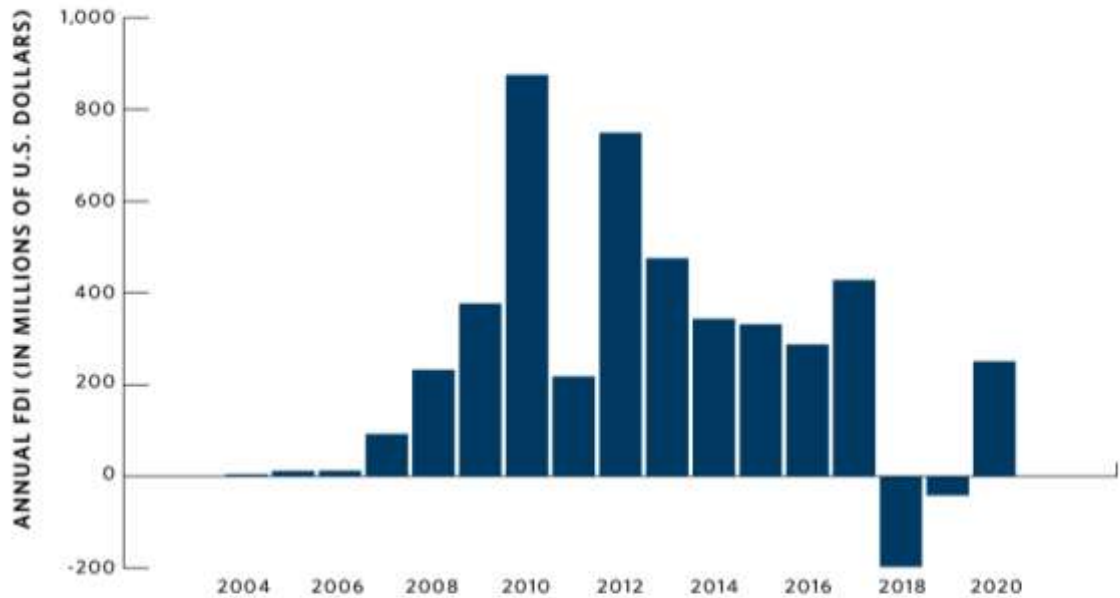
Map 5.4 - Main Chinese-invested projects in Myanmar across a variety of fields



Source : <https://images.app.goo.gl/uHz1Ntbs6RnAoBRr6>

Figure 5.5 - Annual Chinese Foreign Direct Investments in Myanmar

**Annual Chinese Foreign Direct Investment in Myanmar**



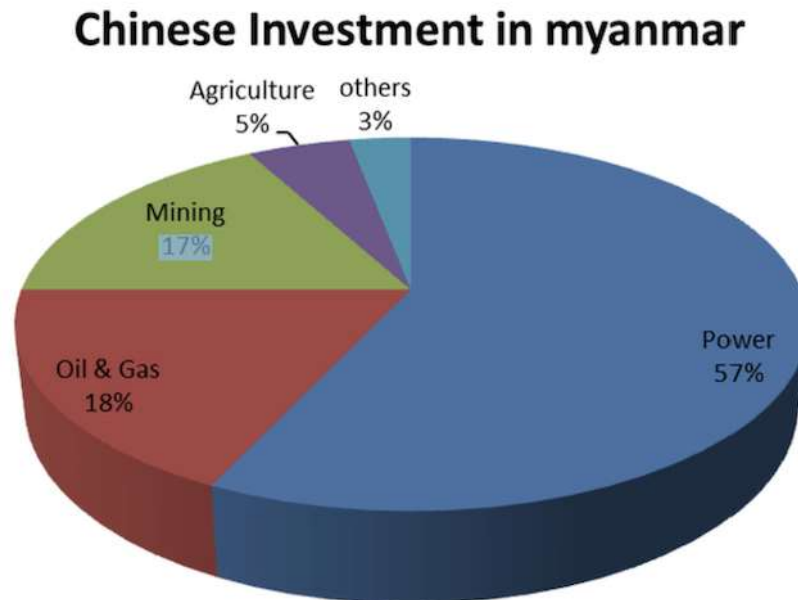
Source: CEIC, "China Premium Database," CEIC, 2004-2020, accessed July 8, 2021, <https://info.ceicdata.com/en-products-china-premium-database>.

Note: These annual values are calculated in millions of U.S. dollars based on data from the Chinese Ministry of Commerce.

China launched the "Go Global" policy in 2001 to incentivize local business owners to make foreign investments. Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) in Myanmar rose significantly between 2005 and 2010. China, which three years earlier had ranked third behind Thailand and Singapore, became Myanmar's biggest trading partner in the year 2011. However, Chinese investment was impeded in numerous areas, including the Letpadaung Copper Mine Project and the Myitsone Dam, following the 2011 government change. Chinese investment decreased to US\$ 217.8 million in 2011 from US\$ 875.6 million in the previous fiscal year. Chinese investors kept an eye on things until the 2015 election. The three main areas of Chinese investment in Myanmar are mining, oil and gas, and hydropower. According to the Myanmar Embassy, as of 2011, 63% of Chinese investments were in the electricity sector and 36% were in the oil and gas business. 99% of Chinese investment is

concentrated in these three industries<sup>188</sup>.

Figure 5.6 - Various Chinese investments in Myanmar



Source : <https://images.app.goo.gl/9Cz8nZkz734Z4ydA9>

## 5.6. Chinese Investment in Myanmar's Hydropower Sector

At least 45 Chinese multinational corporations (MNCs) are constructing transmission lines and substations in about 63 hydropower projects in Burma. The most well-known of them is the Tasang Dam (ERI, 2008), which generates 7100 (MW) of electricity on the banks of the Salween River. Chinese President Xi Jinping recently travelled to Myanmar on January 17–18, 2020, where he signed an agreement to spend US \$2.6 billion to construct an integrated LNG power plant. The US\$ 1 billion (1200 MW) Sinohydro dam in 2006, the Farsighted Group's 2400 MW project in April 2007, and the Sinohydro Company's 790 MW Yeywa dam in Mandalay province in 2000 are a few notable Chinese-invested projects in Myanmar. China also contributed to the Sinohydro-Kun, Kyauk, Nam Hkam, Paunglaung,

<sup>188</sup>Dunn, C., Ji, Lin., & Peng, K. (2016). *Chinese Investments in Myanmar: A Scoping Study*, China : Global Environmental Institute.

Tarpein I, Thapan seik, and Zawgyi Dam projects. In April 2008, Sinohydro, China Southern Power Grid Company, China Three Gorges Project Company, and Salween River signed agreements with Myanmar to develop these hydroelectric projects<sup>189</sup> (Earth Rights International (ERI), 2008).

Production of 1420 (MW) was initiated in 2004 by Yunnan Machinery & Equipment Import and Export Co (YMEC) in the Shan state's Shweli I, II, and III blocks, close to the Chinese border. Six dams in Kachin State, namely N'Mai Hka, Mali Hka, and Irrawaddy River, are being built by Chinese companies. A total of 13360 megawatts of electricity will be generated from these dams. One of the top Chinese investment firms in Myanmar, Yunnan Machinery & Equipment Import and Export Company (YMEC), has worked on over 25 projects since 1990. Among them, Hopin, Kunhein, Kunlon, Dattawgyaing, Chinshwehaw and Ching Hkram stand out. China is among the nations with limited energy resources, and it is concerned about its long-term energy requirements. China has thus started taking steps to develop a few power plants in Myanmar in order to fulfil its expanding need for electricity. Because of this, 85% of the output from Shweli I Dam was exported to China when it began operating in 2009. Similarly, US \$20 billion was set aside by the China Power Investment Corporation (CPI) for the development and implementation of projects along the Ayeyarwady River in Kachin State, Myanmar. China will receive the electricity generated by the plants. The power plantation projects being constructed in Myanmar's several states have some negative environmental repercussions, local population and economy. As a result, there is some social unrest and political instability in the area. Locals occasionally participate in protests against these Chinese projects by gathering in the streets. Consequently, on September 29, 2011, the announcement of the Myitsone project's closure<sup>190</sup> was made by President Thein Sein (Mizuno, 2016).

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<sup>189</sup>Earth Rights International. (ERI). (2008, September). China in Burma: the Increasing Investment of Chinese Multinational Corporations in Burma's Hydropower, Oil and Natural Gas, and Mining Sectors, <https://www.earthrights.org/sites/default/files/publications/China-in-Burma-update-2008-English.pdf>>

<sup>190</sup>Mizuno, A. (2016). Economic Relations between Myanmar and China, *The Myanmar Economy*, Tokyo: Springer, pp 195-224, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-4-431-55735-7\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-4-431-55735-7_8)

## **5.7. Chinese Investment in the Gas and Oil Sector in Myanmar**

The China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) began importing natural gas from the Middle East and providing Myanmar with its own supply in 2004, marking a significant milestone in the development of the China-Myanmar pipeline project. The entire 2520 km of this pipeline are located in China (1727 km) and Myanmar (793 km). Myanmar is currently considered the second most important place for Chinese investments in the Southeast Asian oil and gas industry, after Indonesia. Since its establishment in 2000, China has increased its investments in Myanmar, and one of the main drivers of the country's quickly expanding economy is the oil sector. A 2008 Earth Rights International report states that 21 onshore and offshore oil and natural gas projects in Myanmar are being undertaken by 16 Chinese companies, including Sinopec, CNOOC and CNPC. China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) and Sinopec are a few of these.<sup>191</sup>

The military government of Burma made the decision in August 2007 to market gas from the Shwe gas field to Petro-China in Arakan for less than other companies. A memorandum of understanding with Myanmar State Oil & Gas Enterprise (MOGE) covers five gas fields in Arakan. CNPC signed it. On the other hand, Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) for the production and exploration of gas for six Arkin blocks have been signed by companies affiliated with CNOOC. In 2006 and 2007, Sinopec and Petro-China both explored for gas off the coast of Arakan. Sinopec and CNPC started working on the pipeline and gas exploration. A 2380-kilometre gas pipeline has been constructed to connect Kunming, China, with the port of Kyaukphyu in the Arakan state. In addition to the gas pipeline, Sinopec has already secured an oil line contract worth US \$1 billion and CNPC and MOGE have inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the construction of Myanmar's crude oil terminal.

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<sup>191</sup>Earth Rights International. (ERI). (2008, September). China in Burma: the Increasing Investment of Chinese Multinational Corporations in Burma's Hydropower, Oil and Natural Gas, and Mining Sectors, <https://www.earthrights.org/sites/default/files/publications/China-in-Burma-update-2008-English.pdf>>

## **5.8. Chinese Investment in the Mining Industry in Myanmar**

Since the coalfields are situated in isolated regions and the military frequently restricts public access, it is challenging to evaluate the role that Chinese companies have played in the mining industry in Myanmar. In the states of Kachin and Shan, there are mining firms called Chinese Northern Star, Sea Sun Star, and the Standing Company Limited. Furthermore, over the previous five years, ten Chinese multinational corporations have been embroiled in six sizable minefields. China Nonferrous Metal Mining Company owns a significant portion of the Mandalay Division's Tagaung Taung Nickel Deposit after putting up US\$600 million to purchase 40 million nickel tons. The 2008 mine investment project was approved by China's National Reform and Development Council. China Development Bank and China Exim Bank provided funding for the project<sup>192</sup>.

Concurrently, the Ministry of Mining and Kingbao (Jinbao) Mining Company inked a contract for exploration work in the Letpadaung Bopper Deposit and Mwetaung Nickel Deposit in Chin state. An investment agreement has been signed between Shan Province's Namtu-Bawtwin Mineral Deposit and Myanmar's Ministry of Mines by Yunnan Machinery & Equipment Export and Import Company. Concurrently, the Letpadaungtaung Copper mine has received a US \$ 1.065 billion investment from the Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (UMEHL) and the Chinese state-owned China North Industries Corporation (NORINCO). The agreement was approved by the Myanmar Investment Commission in July of 2013. Though Wanbao will make 30% profit, its share is stated as 51%. Furthermore, the company invested US\$2 billion in social responsibility<sup>193</sup> and US\$1 billion in environmental protection (ERI, 2008).

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

## 5.9. Military and Strategic ties between China and Myanmar

As a result of global sanctions, Sino-Myanmar military relations improved following the 1988 student movement and the 1990s military takeover of Myanmar. The acquisition of naval ships, armoured cars, and jet fighters marked the start of the partnership. Following that, China and Myanmar agreed to work together to strengthen their military capabilities in the Indian Ocean. The amount Myanmar spent on the military varied in 2012 and 2013. Concurrently, defence expenditure rose from US\$ 3801 million in 2015 to US\$ 3268.6 million. However, in 2016 and 2017, it dropped to US \$3634.3 million and US \$ 2604.1 million, respectively. The National Defence and Security Council claims that the emergence of numerous rebel groups is one of the factors contributing to the rise in military spending in Myanmar (Pike, 2015). 2014 saw Myanmar dedicate 23.2% of its national budget to suppressing rebel organisations. China was the country from which 61% of Myanmar's weaponry were imported between 2014 and 2016<sup>194</sup>.

Furthermore, high-level exchanges between the PLA (People's Liberation Army) and the Tatmadaw, the two-armed forces, are crucial for military relations. During his tenure, the fifteen occasions that Army Chief Min Aung Hlaing visited China (The Diplomat, April 12, 2019). Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, the head of Myanmar's army, lauded bilateral relations with Beijing during his 2019 visit and expressed support for the Chinese BRI following the Rohingya crisis. President Xi Jinping of China promised security and development cooperation in return. The opportunity to train officers from Myanmar at the PLA's Defence College and Staff College is one of the main advantages of this collaboration. Three Chinese warships participated in the Chinese navy's first-ever joint exercises with Myanmar in 2017<sup>195</sup>. Recently three Chinese navy ships comprising a destroyer, frigate and a supply vessel carrying hundreds of sailors arrived at Thilawa Port on 27 Nov 23 ahead of

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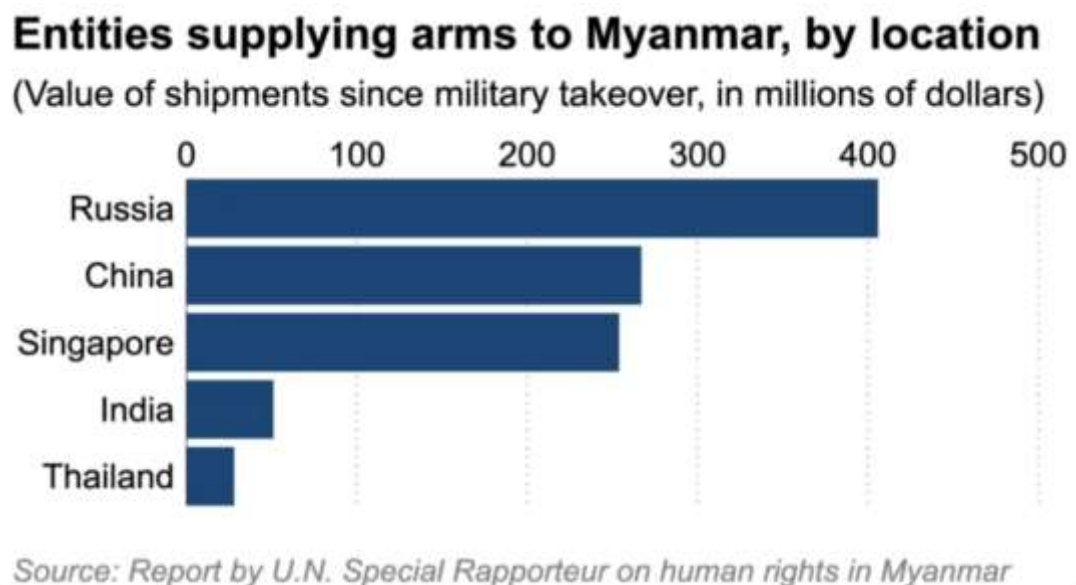
<sup>194</sup> Tourangbam, M., & Amin, P. (2019, May 07). China's Dynamic Grip on Myanmar, *The Diplomat*.

<sup>195</sup> Ernasari, C., & Perwita, A.A.B. (2018), SINO-Myanmar Defense Cooperation and China's efforts to bolster its sphere of influence in the Indian Ocean (2013-2017). *Jurnal Pertahanan: Media Informasi Tentang Kajian Dan Strategi Pertahanan Yang Mengedepankan Identitas, Nasionalisme & Integritas*, 4(3), pp 123-135. <https://doi.org/10.33172/jp.v4i3.290>

naval security exercises between Myanmar and China as per Junta information team.<sup>196</sup>

However, since 1989, one of Myanmar's primary suppliers of armaments has been China. Due in large part to Western sanctions, there has been a greater reliance on China, and traditional arms suppliers have been unwilling to provide Myanmar with weapons. An estimated \$4 billion worth of weaponry, including warships, small arms, combat aircraft, anti-aircraft guns, main battle tanks, armoured personnel carriers, etc., are believed to have come from China. 68% of Myanmar's armaments were imported from China between 2013 and 2017, according to SIPRI. These consist of unmanned drones, radar, surface-to-air missile systems, armoured cars and other military hardware. Additionally, Myanmar imports weaponry from Russia and India. In 2018, Seven SU-30 aircraft were part of an arms sale for about \$200 million that the Russian minister of defence signed. From 1990 until 2016, China was Myanmar's main supplier of armaments.<sup>197</sup> In addition, considering China's geographic proximity to Myanmar, the cost of transferring weapons is not too high.

Figure 5.7 - Entities supplying arms to Myanmar



<sup>196</sup> <https://myanmar-now.org/en/news/china-navy-ships-arrive-in-myanmar-for-joint-drills/>

<sup>197</sup> Asrar,S. (2017, September 16). Who is selling weapons to Myanmar?, *Al Jazeera*.

China views Myanmar's access to the Bay of Bengal and the larger Indian Ocean as its most strategic asset. China distributes oil and gas via pipelines from Myanmar to Yunnan province, partially reducing its concerns about its significant reliance on the small Malacca Straits. China will be able to move manufacturing from its coastal regions to its southwestern provinces if CMEC is successful in its attempt to escape the middle-income trap. Transporting commodities through Myanmar gives shorter routes to markets in South Asia, East Africa, West Asia, and Europe and exposes the Myanmar market to all Chinese goods and services while allowing China to efficiently import raw materials from Myanmar and beyond.

#### **5.10. China Stand and relations post Military Coup February 2021**

A military coup in February 2021 overthrew years of diplomatic efforts between China and Myanmar. By a wide margin, the people of Myanmar rejected the coup and asked that the military uphold the election results from November 2020 and bring democracy back to the nation. Disregarding popular demands, the military established the State Administration Council. Myanmar is currently experiencing a civil war as a result of the military's intransigence, with a wide range of civilian pro-democracy activists, militias, ethnic armed groups, and the National Unity Government opposing military authority.

China hedged its bets in the early days following the coup since it had made significant investments in ties with Aung San Suu Kyi's democratically elected administration. Two weeks after the military takeover, on February 15, China's envoy to Myanmar declared that social media reports of Chinese assistance in the military coup were "completely nonsense" and that the current political climate was "absolutely not what China wants to see".<sup>198</sup> But China obstructed a statement issued by the UN Security Council denouncing the coup, and on February 23, a Chinese

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<sup>198</sup> Millar, Timothy. (2023, February 01). The China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, 2 years after the coup, *The Diplomat*, <http://www.the-diplomat.com>

envoy requested that the military provide additional security for the pipelines carrying gas and oil as well as improved media coverage.

Tatmadaw prioritised seizing power inside Myanmar, but it also needed Chinese help for the coup. March 2021 saw the revocation of the CMEC Joint Committee's pledge to include the people of Myanmar in CMEC, since the military had complete control over the bureaucratic apparatus.

In the months after the coup, ties between China and the military regime improved. Wang Yi, China's then-foreign minister, met with his colleague from the junta in June 2021. China sent Myanmar's navy a rebuilt submarine in August. The unmistakable indication of things getting back to normal was Wang's April 2022 visit to Myanmar, when he declared that "no matter how the situation changes, China will support Myanmar<sup>199</sup>."

Prior to the coup, Myanmar's leaders were able to counterbalance Beijing's demands by pitting the interests of various foreign parties against one another and extending invitations to other investors to join in on projects. Following the coup, China now owns the majority of the cards and is able to decide which projects it undertakes and when, with the economy in ruins and foreign direct investment plunging. The only alternative left to the Myanmar military and the bureaucracy under its authority is to essentially follow orders.

Given China's ability to carry out projects mostly of its own choosing, it is obviously preferable to create a structure and strategic direction for the projects that have been approved and are currently in progress. One thing unites all of these projects: they are all situated in Myanmar's outside regions. These regions border China or are the calmest. These projects include the Kyaukphyu deep-sea port, special economic zone and power plant; two border trade zones (one approved, the other still in planning); the Mee Ling Gyaing LNG terminal in the Ayeyarwady

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid

Region on the Bay of Bengal; and potentially the New Yangon Development City, though this is still in the planning stages. Despite their disparate rates of progress, these projects are being worked on. The railway line that was supposed to connect Muse to Mandalay, associated road networks and several industrial zones that were supposed to be built alongside the lines of transit have all reached a standstill or been abandoned.

Even Nevertheless, more than ten years after the project was formally halted, the Myitsone Dam project in Kachin State is still unfinished and continues to negatively impact the displaced communities. There were worries that the dam project would resume in the early post-coup period. Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, the head of the armed forces and the chairman of the SAC, made scathing remarks about hydropower's importance to Myanmar's energy mix in the future as part of the military's charm offensive toward China. Though there is still doubt, China does not appear to have any plans to restart the project at least not now.

Because of the intricate political arrangement between the military, the Arakan Army, and the local ethnic armed group, Kyaukphyu has been relatively peaceful since the coup. A Chinese-backed modular 135 MW gas-fired power plant, erected totally after the coup, is essential to the deep-sea port and SEZ. It started up in October of last year. The project's completion shows that China remains dedicated to pursuing CMEC projects through to completion, provided local conditions permit.

Though at a slower pace, the deep-sea port at Kyaukphyu is making progress. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the port was contracted out to Myanmar Survey Research by China's state-owned business CITIC, which is in charge of the entire deep-sea port project. This project is still being worked on. Even though EIAs are mandated by Myanmar law, it's noteworthy that CITIC chose to undertake one before proceeding, given that the government plainly does not require them to, and none was completed for the Kyaukphyu power project.

Civil society organisations and the general public have not stood idly by while these massive infrastructure projects imperil their livelihoods, their land and their environment. The public has continued to be very dubious of these programs, despite the potential consequences of appearing to oppose anything that the military has approved. All communities would welcome good, well-paying jobs, but they are aware that the likelihood is far higher that they will not receive these benefits and will instead be left to deal with the bad effects.

Near the border, residents in Kachin State have resisted Chinese rare earth mining. Communities that were uprooted by the Myitsone Dam are still calling for the project's complete cancellation. In other places, people have attempted to use the legal system to get better results for their communities and for themselves. Communities in Kyaukphyu have been pressuring Chinese corporations to halt environmental harm caused by the Madaya Island oil terminal by invoking environmental legislation. Farmers and fishermen have participated in the EIA process and have protested when their concerns have been disregarded.

The political landscape of Myanmar is unstable. Currently, a number of legitimately popular forces resist military government. It remains to be seen if they can overcome the military or force a protracted standoff. In the short and medium term, the most likely consequence is further violence, oppression, economic collapse and anarchy, with no side being able to claim any kind of sustained victory.

Plan China appears to be apparent. Beijing wants to continue being the key actor, so that whichever coalition of political forces wins out in the end will owe something to Beijing. The Chinese government collaborates and works with numerous ethnic armed groups as well as other domestic forces, all the while maintaining its backing for the armed forces. Under CMEC, China will keep constructing vital infrastructure near Myanmar's borders. Regardless of the expense to the people of Myanmar, it will wait till the country is more stable before connecting it by road and rail.

### 5.11. China-Myanmar Relations' Restraints

One of the main obstacles to improving Sino-Myanmar relations is drug use. China is one of the main victims of the drug trade in Myanmar's border regions. Premier of the State Council Wen Jiabao discussed the proposal with Prime Minister of Myanmar Soe Win on February 14, 2006. He said that the local population's<sup>200</sup> health was seriously at risk due to the drug trade's spread in the border regions. China anticipates that a drug control agreement will be signed by the two nations. The second-largest producer of illicit opium in the world is Myanmar. The majority of the farming in the regions under rebel control is opium poppy production. In 2005, the value of opium output was US\$ 58 million, or 0.9% of Myanmar's GDP.<sup>201</sup> Another important supplier of heroin to China is Myanmar. This enters China through Kunming and enters the South China Sea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and various U.S. markets.

One of the nations in Southeast Asia with one of the lowest birth rates is Myanmar. It is also one of the HIV-affected nations with the greatest rate of growth in the world today. According to UNIDS estimates from 2006, 1.3% of people aged 15 to 49 were HIV positive (UNAIDS report, 2006). Drug addiction, HIV transmission from Myanmar to China, and humanitarian effects may somewhat impede China's economic activities in the area.

One of the primary issues preventing Chinese investment in Myanmar is the Rohingya situation. China has made the majority of its largest investments in Rakhine State. Stability is also necessary for Rakhine economically and strategically. China's trade has been hindered by the fighting between the ARSA and the military of Myanmar in Rakhine.

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<sup>200</sup> Taylor, R.H. (2008). Myanmar in 2007 : Growing Pressure for Change but the Regime Remains Obdurate, *Southeast Asian Affairs*, pp 247-273, <http://www.jstro.org/stable/27913362>

<sup>201</sup> United Nations, Report on Drugs and Crime. (2005). <http://www.unis.unvienna.org/units/pressrels/2005/unisnar923.html>

Ethnic violence in the provinces of Shan, Chin, and Rakhine is another barrier to Sino-Myanmar ties; yet, the majority of China's investment is concentrated in these regions. The Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and the Shan State Army (SSA) are in a never-ending battle for discipline. Conversely, the state of Chin is situated southeast of Bangladesh and on the eastern edge of south-eastern India. Guerrilla groups active in the area include the Naga National Council (NNC), the Chin National Army (CNA), and the Chin National Front (CNF). The security forces of Myanmar have historically engaged in conflicts with these groups, and since the coup, these conflicts have increased dramatically, posing a growing risk to Chinese interests.

#### **5.12. Future of China-Myanmar Bilateral Relations**

Myanmar is a crucial nation for China because of its geostrategic location; yet, China must assist Myanmar in overcoming its economic isolation. Myanmar attempted to implement a "Look Western Policy", particularly after the 2015 elections, but in the wake of the August 2017 Rohingya atrocity and in response to international condemnation, Myanmar has once more turned to China. After that, on January 17–18, 2020, the President of China paid a visit to Myanmar and made a commitment to strengthen ties between the two countries. They inked 33 agreements for economic development<sup>202</sup> and referred to one another as brothers. Natural resource reserves in Myanmar are enormous. China is eager to gain more leverage over these resources, particularly the Rakhine-Beijing link, which is critical to the economic development of both China and Myanmar. Myanmar may gain a lot from China's investment in the various projects if it takes advantage of this chance for cooperation between the two countries. It is widely held that Myanmar possesses an abundance of natural resources that might draw significant international investment, with China potentially playing a key role in the country's economic growth. Given its strategic location and abundant natural resources, Myanmar has the potential to

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<sup>202</sup>Shankar, Ravi (2020, August 11). Understanding 'Pauk Phaw': Can Myanmar Resist China's Debt Trap, *Bharat Shakti*, <http://www.bharatshakti.in>

transform its underdeveloped economy through trade, investment, and resource exploration in the Bay of Bengal, Rakhine and other parts of the country.

### **5.13. Conclusion**

It is good news for global politics that China is becoming a power to be reckoned with in the existing international system, both militarily and economically. One way to become a global "super power" is through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) program. China's indispensable geostrategic ally in carrying out this project is Myanmar. The pipeline carrying gas and oil, as well as the commercial corridor from Kunming, Yunnan Province, China, to Rakhine, are of utmost significance. The Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal play a major role in the importation of oil into Chinese territory, especially the province of Yunnan, from Middle Eastern and African nations. Due to Myanmar's geographic proximity to China, China uses its ports and highways for imports and exports. In this case, an alternate route across the Malacca Strait is provided by the Bay of Bengal and the ports of Myanmar. In order to develop its own geostrategic dominance in the region, China also has to maintain good relations with its neighbours, including Myanmar. It also wants peace and political stability in the region. Myanmar's protracted military rule causes it to lag economically behind other countries in the area. China is one of the main investment sectors for Chinese trade and investment, and it has been investing in Myanmar's oil, gas and natural resources. Conversely, Myanmar's agro-based industries in China have been relegated to importing timber, agricultural products, and marine seafood, resulting in a massive trade deficit. The ecology and way of life in Myanmar are now potentially threatened by a number of Chinese development initiatives. In these circumstances, Myanmar has the potential to become a new global economic partner if it can continue to build a mutually beneficial long-term partnership with China through balanced trade. When looking at a variety of aspects of Sino-Myanmar relations, it is clear that the two countries have very strong geopolitical and economic ties.

## **CHAPTER -6**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

Through trade and culture, the civilizations of Southeast Asia and India have been closely linked for over a millennium. India became a sectoral conversation partner in 1992 and a full dialogue partner in 1995 before joining the ASEAN Regional Forum in 1996. In an effort to strengthen its ties with the area, India has continuously sought to integrate its advantages in a variety of social, scientific, and economic domains into the relevant ASEAN procedures. The two countries have worked together to create India-ASEAN Vision 2020.

Along with being upset with China's strategic links to Pakistan, India has also been concerned about the growing Chinese influence in Southeast Asia. Due to its strategic location and abundance of natural resources, Myanmar is a vital nation, particularly for China and India. It is well known that whomever takes over Myanmar will have the ability to rule the Bay of Bengal, and China is making every effort to do just that. It had spent billions of dollars building the infrastructure to suit its requirements. It has started a number of infrastructure development projects, including as building ports and connecting the Mandalay Valley to Yunan province by roads and trains. Because of this, Myanmar plays a crucial strategic role for China in relation to its strings of pearls initiative, which was essentially an effort to create a strategic pivot in order to establish domination throughout the Indian subcontinent.

The arguments emphasised that India was primarily aroused and left uneasy by China's increasing influence in Myanmar. India's 'Look East' Policy was born out of this in the 1990s. While India's Myanmar policy previous to the 'Look East' movement concentrated mostly on problems of democracy and human rights, China had always seen Myanmar through a strategic lens. This resulted in a protracted decade of tense ties.

India's "Look East" policy is gaining traction again because of its goal of accelerating economic development through liberalisation and reforms. With the launch of the Look East Policy initiative by India, a new chapter in political, strategic

and economic cooperation between India and Southeast Asia was marked. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the nation's long-standing "Look East Policy" (LEP) would now be replaced with a more proactive "Act East" strategy during the November 2014 India-ASEAN conference in Myanmar. Act East is a more assertive foreign policy approach, predicated on the idea that India's geostrategic influence is determined by its economic performance. In an effort to deepen its economic ties with countries to the east, India is defining the "East" to encompass nations outside of Southeast Asia and is creating a strategic strategy for the Asia-Pacific area. India has not invaded Southeast Asia, fought wars with its neighbours, or provided funding for anti-government rebels. The "historical debt" that India owes to Southeast Asia stems from occasional irritation rather than invasion.

Myanmar's location at the meeting point of the Indian and Pacific oceans and atop the Malacca Straits is strategically significant. As is well known, the economies of the Asia-Pacific region—including those of India and Myanmar—continue to be significantly impacted by the stability of the Malacca Straits. China is constantly concerned about the presence of US naval forces in the area.

Even though India began cautiously participating in defence relations with Southeast Asian nations in the early 1990s, the signing of a bilateral defence cooperation agreement with Singapore in 2003 served as the impetus for robust security diplomacy in the region. In recent years, India has negotiated security cooperation agreements with Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and other countries in Southeast Asia. Approximately 97% of India's trade with other countries is carried out by sea. For this reason, India requires the security of the waterways bordering the ASEAN countries. It is in both of their interests to protect the Strait of Malacca while discussing security cooperation between India and ASEAN. As a result, the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean are connected by the Strait of Malacca. India's naval vessels had been making port calls in Myanmar on their route east for almost ten years. Myanmar participated in a combined naval drill with India in the Bay of Bengal at the beginning of 2012, which involved fourteen nations and was primarily focused on fighting terrorism and piracy. In March 2013, two Myanmar naval ships—a frigate and a corvette—arrived at the Indian port of

Visakhapatnam for the first time in decades. The purpose of these ships was to take part in a cooperative patrol in the southern Bay of Bengal. Following their participation in the naval exercise IN-MN CORPAT, the Myanmar naval ships King Sin Phyu Shin and Inlay arrived in Visakhapatnam on March 25, 2018, in preparation for their first-ever bilateral exercise between the Indian and Myanmar navy, which took place from March 25 to April 3, 2018. During the "Sea Phase" of the bilateral exercise, which took place from March 31 to April 3, 2018, the Indian navy's Sahyadri and Kamorta, as well as the IN submarine Sindhushastra, engaged in maritime drills with the Myanmar navy.

India-Myanmar bilateral relations appeared to be at a crossroads. The country's political transitions, along with an apparent desire to broaden its foreign policy, may present New Delhi with new avenues to pursue its interests and steer clear of the hazards and pitfalls that had dogged its policy towards Myanmar for many years. The pragmatic and nondogmatic foreign policy doctrine of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is grounded in an "enlightened national interest" and focuses on India's immediate neighbourhood, which includes Myanmar. Some analysts suggest that India should encourage Myanmar to reapply for membership and support such a bid even more vehement, as it had done effectively when Afghanistan became a full member of SAARC in 2007.

It is imperative to recognise the current state of political and economic affairs in order to effectively tackle the pressing issues of security and growth. Energy and food shortages, as well as poverty, pose a danger to social stability. Drugs, maritime piracy, and transnational crime are a few of the persistent issues that plague the region.

Asia is home to seven of the world's ten most populous countries, the biggest standing armies, four states that have declared they possess nuclear weapons, and numerous countries that manufacture and export missiles. The heterogeneous political and civilizational terrain of the continent contributes to additional volatility. In order to adapt to this shift and build a network of cooperative agreements that will steadily assist the change, the Asia-Pacific region needs to look beyond the box.

The previous 20 years have seen significant changes in the relationship between India and Myanmar, with a clear transition away from state-driven, security-centric, insurgency-focused, and narrowly defined relations towards market- and integration-driven, development-centric, resource-based general engagement. With the openness of Myanmar, increased political-economic changes within the nation, and development pressure from Northeast India, the roles of the market and citizens have been progressively expanding as the two economies establish mutuality of relationships.

The relationship between India and Myanmar has gained new impetus due to both sides' persistent growth pushes, which include market and state pressures, as well as the combined economic dynamism emerging in Myanmar's neighbourhood. Furthermore, the changing dynamics of power politics in the Indo-Pacific region and the opening up of Myanmar have given rise to new reasons for the expansion of India-Myanmar relations, including Myanmar's emergence as a crucial and autonomous player.

With its unique Asian ideals and democratic society, India possesses soft power that is highly relevant to Myanmar's efforts to establish a successful, progressive, and equal society. It ought to be fully utilised to advance a long-term, mutually beneficial partnership with Myanmar. India had a unique opportunity to advance its national interests by supporting a stable, neutral, and prosperous Myanmar, which would in turn safeguard Indian interests. India had to seize this opportunity.

Indian policymakers have started to give Myanmar a prominent place in the look east policy framework in recent times. Without reservation, the Indian Prime Minister said that Myanmar was important to India's Act East Policy and its partnership with Asian nations under the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI). Furthermore, Myanmar was a key participant in the Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) projects and a significant partner of India in the BIMSTEC. Due to its geographical location, Myanmar provided India with a land bridge to connect with the Southeast Asian continent. The North East area of India, which has remained underdeveloped due to poor connectivity, a lack of investments, and slow industrial growth, could benefit from its facilitation and expansion. Everyone believed that the

inadequate socioeconomic development in the Northeast of India had been the primary cause of the insurgency, leading to a sense of alienation among those who had turned to insurgency.

At the strategic level, the Indian strategic community had stopped referring to Myanmar as a "Satellite of China" in its statements, and there seemed to be less concern about the Chinese-operated electronic surveillance infrastructure in that country.

It appears that Myanmar extended an invitation to India to visit the frequently mentioned monitoring station located in the Coco islands. There were worries, meanwhile, that China might keep providing military support to Myanmar. It is true that China could provide a more substantial military aid package than India, so it was reasonable to argue that India did not need to use military coercion to overthrow the current government. Rather, India could look into engaging Myanmar in the maritime sphere and create a comprehensive plan that included capacity building to handle non-traditional security threats and challenges in the Bay of Bengal.

One of the most dramatic and unexpected developments in the history of contemporary Asia was the opening up of Myanmar. India's political shift presents a significant and exceptional chance to strengthen ties with its eastern neighbour. However, since the coup on February 21, it has experienced another setback. Due to its geographic location, Myanmar serves as India's economic entry point into ASEAN. Politically, North Korea and China are now the sole autocracies in Asia as Myanmar slowly but surely makes its path towards democracy through 2020. Beyond Myanmar's potential as a geostrategic buffer and economic opportunity, India saw in Myanmar the possibility of reviving our eastern ports and commercial activity in the Bay of Bengal, rekindling our Buddhist heritage, and repairing the neglect of our own northeast by connecting it with Myanmar on an infrastructural, commercial, and spiritual level. Additionally, it presented an opportunity for India's democratic and developmental model to gain traction and be replicated.

India must stick to its current course of offering opportunities for Myanmar officers and soldiers to train in India for a variety of military courses. As per previous offers, it must continue to support the Myanmar Army's capacity-building efforts through the supply of military weapons. Regular joint army and navy

exercises must be conducted as part of it. India and Myanmar need to work together to resolve issues that are important to both countries in the context of counterinsurgency across land borders.

The purpose of this research was to address the strategic significance of Myanmar for India as well as China's participation in the country and its ramifications. Due to its geostrategic location, Myanmar is strategically highly significant for India, and China is strongly involved in Myanmar because of the Malacca conundrum, as the research has clearly shown. China's involvement in Myanmar is both strategic and economic. Its goals are to expand its landlocked provinces of Yunnan and Sichuan in the southwest, obtain as many resources as possible from Myanmar to support its rapid economic growth, and gain access to the Indian Ocean through Myanmar to lessen its reliance on the Straits of Malacca for the transit of both exports and imports. India had not treated the Indo-Myanmar relationship with the necessary level of pragmatism until the 1990s, despite Myanmar being a strategically significant neighbour. But in Myanmar's strategic involvement during the last 20 years, pragmatism appears to have won out.

For India, it was crucial that rivalries and wars stay out of the eastern Indian Ocean, and that the Chinese Navy's outreach into the Bay of Bengal and China's growing economic influence stay to a minimum. Because of its advantageous location between these two powerful nations—India and China—Malaysia was one of the most significant countries in Southeast Asia. In order to promote trade between the landlocked regions of China's Yunnan and Zhigang provinces and India's Northeast regions, Myanmar may act as a bridge between the two countries.

For India, it was crucial that rivalries and wars stay out of the eastern Indian Ocean, and that the Chinese Navy's outreach into the Bay of Bengal and China's growing economic influence stay to a minimum. Because of its advantageous location between these two powerful nations—India and China—Malaysia was one of the most significant countries in Southeast Asia. In order to promote trade between the landlocked regions of China's Yunnan and Zhigang provinces and India's Northeast regions, Myanmar may act as a bridge between the two countries.

It was also evident that the nations of Asia, the Middle East, and East Africa will be greatly impacted by whoever controls the Indian Ocean. Despite China's

expected increase in naval presence in this region of the world, India had declared that the ocean must be peaceful and free from the influence and presence of rivalries between nations, particularly in the limited eastern part of the Indian Ocean. China's goal was to secure the safety of its fuel supplies and trade through the Straits of Malacca.

India's strategic objective of stopping China's navy from invading the Indian Ocean is likely to depend on China's influence over Myanmar being neutralised on both an economic and military level. Due to its geographical location, Myanmar was able to ensure that rivalries in the Indian Ocean were kept to a minimal when compared to other SEA nations.

Instead of pursuing a policy of conflict, it was in the best interests of both India and Myanmar to strengthen their cooperation for mutual gain. This would increase not only India's economic but also its military power in the Indian Ocean. By working together, it would be possible to better develop Myanmar's natural resources, which would help both of these nations' economies expand.

### **6.1. Recommendations and Suggestions**

The Indian government needs to take specific actions to strengthen and develop ties with Myanmar after considering the relationship between the two countries from an Indian perspective in the past and in the present, particularly in the context of a unipolar world. There are three significant yet crucial gaps in the two countries' relationship that require quick attention. These include border security and stability, connectivity to India's Northeast, and border trade, as they would significantly improve ties and foster trade between the two nations.

Aside from this, there were still a number of other areas and aspects that could be improved in order to strengthen and solidify ties, such as: terrorism, gun running, cross-border terrorism, security of island states, insurgency activity, drug smuggling; ethnic issues, illegal trade, diaspora, conflict resolution; economic and business ties, cross-cultural assimilation; banking and finance sector, power sector, trade and surface transport, flights, shipping; cooperation between academic institutions; opening of professional and technical institutions; early warning systems; health facilities, etc.

To allow its citizens to benefit from the shifting global landscape marked by progressively fewer trade barriers, India's northeastern area should be developed on pace with the rest of the nation. Different development projects should be carried out in a timely, well-coordinated, and appropriate manner. There are many prospects for tourism and business based on regional horticultural and tea goods thanks to the current government push for infrastructural development, particularly for the rail and road networks. As a result, people's perceptions of the North and East are shifting from one of a remote, challenging region to one of a thriving, dynamic, and rapidly rising economy.

As was previously mentioned, there were many obstacles in the way of both countries' goals being met. However, if both governments embraced inclusive participation to gain the respect and confidence of their respective minorities, it would undoubtedly help them carry out the cooperative projects in an efficient and effective manner, benefiting not only the two nations but the entire region of South and Southeast Asia.

India needs to support and encourage Myanmar's aspiration for the India-Myanmar-China triangle to rebalance. The Indian governments did not appear to have a long-term (20 years or more) strategy, according to a review of their approach to Myanmar. The next election appeared to be the end of everything." India needs to have a long-term view and build such strong ties to Myanmar's politics, economy, and society that it would be financially impossible for any future government in Naypyidaw to withdraw. This is only possible if India establishes itself as a reliable and serious partner that thinks strategically, invests with assurance and acts quickly without making any favouritism arrangements right away.

Bipartisan domestic support was necessary to create a long-term vision that was appropriate, especially considering the limited time frame that was available. Make extra steps to capitalise on the friendly relations that already exist, and Tatmadaw needs to be kept in the reform euphoria. It would maintain its leading position and fundamental function in Myanmar politics. It is also crucial to concentrate on the Myanmar Navy in order to safeguard its own interests in the Bay of Bengal.

To reach a critical mass for Indian interests, engage in diasporic engagement

with the growth of corporate interests. In order to strengthen its position, India should make use of its diaspora in the same way that the Chinese do, including the networks established by Meiteis in areas like Mandalay and Chettiar traders throughout Southeast Asia.

The outlook for Myanmar's future trends was rather obvious in that there are many areas in which India can provide support, knowledge, and locally-specific solutions that are better suited to the country's social and cultural context. India had to move forward with certain imperatives despite the current circumstances, and it could choose from a wide range of opportunities in the strategic space. In contrast, China was not bound by the negative constraints of the past and offered areas of cooperation, like the restoration of the democratic system, where the Chinese could not compete. Supported by Myanmar's fundamental wish to break free from China's stifling grip, it gives India a chance to reclaim the territory it has lost over the years. Thus, the initial hypothesis that "the rise of democracy in Myanmar will generate opportunities for India, to better secure its eastern frontiers, offset the strategic disadvantage resulting from deep Chinese inroads in Myanmar and in the process further its core national interest of facilitating national wide development, economic growth, and prosperity of the Indian populace," is amply borne out.

For Myanmar, it was a dramatic turnabout—from global outcast to trendy. Nevertheless, the military takeover in February 2021 and the nearly nationwide revolt against Tatmadaw that followed has stopped the progress of international assistance. The current state of affairs provides an opportunity for a more experienced diplomatic strategy to maintain a delicate balance, allowing India to capitalise on its advantage in Myanmar and address historical grievances.

Developing appropriate business plans could also aid in the development of our development cooperation initiatives. For instance, our company could investigate potential business partnerships that could benefit from some of the infrastructure developed by the Indian government, such as the Kaladan project in western Myanmar or the Kalay-Yargyi road project in the North-West, which would enable Moreh on our Manipur border to be connected to Mandalay and beyond by 2016 as part of the trilateral highway project involving India, Myanmar and Thailand. In a similar vein, our IT firms might focus on beneficial business spillovers to both

nations from the Myanmar Institute of Information Technology, which was being established in Mandalay as a centre of excellence with funding from the Indian government. All of these business ideas would surely require approval from the host nation, but if they were well-thought out and added value, they would be applauded.

Our administration, for its part, made an effort to lower the cost of conducting business with Myanmar. Signed during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Myanmar in May 2012, a more flexible bilateral aviation services agreement made it easier to encourage more direct flight connectivity between our metros and Yangon. In comparison to airlines from China, Singapore, and Thailand that fly more often each day and to more destinations in Myanmar, as well as airlines from Japan, the Republic of Korea, Qatar, and Taiwan who have regular flights to Yangon, the prior air connectivity was notably insufficient.

The Buddhist religious circuit and the NER should be extensively targeted for tourism promotion. To stay abreast of other nations presently entering Myanmar, Indian think tanks, trade associations, and civil society organisations should be urged to extend invitations to groupings of counterparts (including the "Sangha") from Myanmar and establish cooperative efforts.

More importantly, a direct shipping route that would allow our goods to travel to Myanmar in a matter of days rather than weeks, as they did in the colonial era, would undoubtedly be crucial in promoting more trade. To make the service feasible, the Shipping Corporation of India would have to take the lead in this situation and receive some preliminary government support.

Myanmar needs to revitalise its research and technology base, which had been severely damaged. A major contribution to capacity building has been made by the increased enrolment of students in engineering, medical and management schools. Additionally, Myanmar had expressed interest in launching nuclear reactors for scientific purposes as well as tiny satellites. These might be possible opportunities for long-term business relations development between ISRO and BARC.

Finance and banking were additional fields. In December 2012, United Bank of India established a representative office in Yangon. Subsequently, in 2016, State Bank of India opened a branch in the same city. It is imperative that other Indian

banks follow suit. Providing simple credit financing would also be very beneficial. Even if the EU and the US had taken action to lift or suspend the economic sanctions they had previously imposed, their recent reimposition did not completely result in the opening of credit letters denominated in US dollars with regard to Myanmar. These needed to be operationalized by our banks as soon as it was feasible.

Ultimately, our company needed to learn how to conduct business in Myanmar as well. Companies from China, Thailand, Korea, Japan, and Singapore frequently visit the nation. Many of them had developed a significant local presence through networking with local businesspeople in Mandalay, Yangon, and other economic hubs as well as maintaining frequent communication with government ministries in Naypyidaw, the new capital. Our trade and investment relationships must strengthen further in tandem with the growth of our development cooperation initiatives and political links in order for them to support one another.

The main migration regulation that governs India at the time is the Emigration Act of 1983, which alone is in charge of the security of unskilled and semi-skilled labourers. India and ASEAN do not yet have a clear migration policy or agreement. India must take all relevant factors into account while drafting its immigration laws.

- It is advised that the following actions be taken:
- Create an e-governance organisation in Myanmar to create a system of governance for taxation, public services, and staff training at the central bank.
- Educate regulators in banking, insurance, power, and telecommunications.
- Provide training to employees in the power industry via National Thermal Power Corporation and Power Grid Corporation.
- Establish IIM (Indian Institute of Management), IIIT (Indian Institute of Information Technology), and IIT (Indian Institute of Technology) in Myanmar to support the growth of top-notch students.

- For both factory and service jobs, sign an MOU with the National Skills Development Corporation.
- Every year, 5,000 students from private Indian universities are able to pursue studies in Indian universities, particularly in the fields of engineering, science, and medical.
- Private educational institutions like the NIITs can offer training in computer skills and the English language.
- Private sector training in skills at private sector institutes in India as part of the companies training process for employees.

The two nations are bound by a free trade agreement to permit a greater flow of products and services into their respective marketplaces. Both sides' border towns need to be improved, particularly for trade, with minimal tariffs for cross-border exchanges of goods. The border towns of Myanmar are currently more developed, with formal taxation and open trade being carried out. The two nations may also agree to a multilateral Investment Guarantee Treaty, and India and Myanmar ought to sign an Investment Protection Agreement.

India ought to give top priority to making it simple to open letters of credit in order to promote trade between the two nations. As previously suggested, India could endeavour to open the third border trade point with Pansat/Somra in Myanmar at Avakhung in the Phek district of Nagaland.

To move forward, the government of the Military Junta and the armed ethnic groups should put aside their disagreements and sign the nationwide ceasefire accord. Both nations ought to come to an agreement on a precise date for starting political talks to resolve their disagreements. As soon as the national ceasefire agreement is signed, both sides should begin a nationwide collaborative ceasefire monitoring programme.

Soon after the nationwide ceasefire agreement is reached, both sides should finish drawing the boundaries of the controlled territories. A set of communication

protocols that enable successful contact between liaison and field commanders should be incorporated into liaison efforts. To create a common ground among themselves that they can bring to the table in future union-level peace negotiations with government representatives, all ethnic armed organisations must cooperate with one another. It is their duty to see to it that the nation has early discussions that lead to real political dialogue.

In addition to the aforementioned, strengthening preventive measures during the peace process should involve the establishment of a conflict early warning system. Once the parties agree to sign the national ceasefire agreement, the international community should also develop a clear plan to help bolstering the implementation of the ceasefire and political discourse.

Minor issues in the area should be resolved right away in order to prevent rebellion, and open news releases should be made. It is important to create a political atmosphere of stability rather than one based on policy conflict. In order to prevent the economic downturn from affecting people's overall happiness, job opportunities should be provided and the poverty rate should be steadily reduced. It is important to build excellent administration to prevent issues arising from the rulers' biased behaviours. This approach, along with others, could be used to stop insurgency.

It is also important to attend to their health and education needs. That's when they lead prosperous lives, give their all to the government, and work together to rebuild the country after giving up their weapons. By following the aforementioned methods, they may evolve into a potent national force that would help create a developed, affluent country that is thriving under democracy.

Investors are deterred by Myanmar's private sector's lack of proficiency in international business practices and standards. Additionally, there is a deficiency in coordination between the public and private domains in Myanmar. Associations in the private sector are small and weak in number.

Cross-border infrastructure development is less feasible because of the political unrest and insurgency that exist in some areas of Myanmar and Northeast India. These factors also increase investment risks. One of the several security threats that Southeast Asia and India face is transnational terrorism. Ironically, terrorism

presents unique opportunities for them to work together. There are significant long-term ramifications for India from the persistent acts of terrorism in South and Southeast Asia.

Another area of concern is the security of the sea lanes of communication in relation to the important straits and waterways in Southeast Asia and the larger Indian Ocean region. Another related worry is the transportation and/or use of weapons by state and non-state actors. This area of collaboration is acknowledged in the ASEAN-India Joint Declaration for collaboration to combat International Terrorism.

India and Southeast Asia are highly skilled in responding to terrorist attacks. India's experience with dealing with linguistic, cultural, and religious minorities may help other countries in Southeast Asia face similar difficulties with policies of democratic tolerance and empowerment. In addition, India's nuclear capability and deterrent nuclear posture give ASEAN a way to balance off China's and North Korea's expanding military might while preserving regional security, peace and order.

Together with the growing population and accelerating rate of industrialisation, a steady and adequate supply of food and energy must be provided throughout the country or a region. Energy is a vital component of production processes that support economic progress. Energy security, or the continuous supply of energy in various forms in sufficient quantities at reasonable prices to allow economic growth, is therefore necessary. In order to address its energy needs, ASEAN places a high priority on sustainable growth, which cannot be entirely ensured by measures like gas extraction and pipeline construction in India. Nonetheless, Myanmar's economy gains a great deal from India's gas extraction from the country in one way or another. With Myanmar's help, India may overcome its issues with energy constraints. Consequently, the energy industry may be advantageous to both sides.

Establish direct flight connections between the major cities of India and Myanmar, as well as Mandalay and a few other major places in northeastern India. India and Myanmar's ports must to be well-connected. The Indian government is considering organising a meeting between port authorities and the shipping sectors of Myanmar and India. This would facilitate understanding of local needs and challenges as well as foster business relationships. In order to access inland regions of Southeast and South Asia and enable short-haul maritime transportation between the coasts of India and Myanmar, intermodal operations linking ports and lands would be necessary. Create a SEZ for Indian investors in Sittwe, Myanmar, and construct highways connecting it to important cities in Bangladesh, India, and Myanmar. Assure political, social, and economic stability in northeastern India and Myanmar. Stability in currency exchange rates determined by the market and the development of financial markets are crucial. Permit more Indian banks to conduct business in the larger cities of Myanmar and vice versa.

Exchange university facilities and think tanks with Myanmar, and effectively network corporate delegations to share Indian experiences with economic changes. Improve the institutional framework and business climate to support Indian investors in Myanmar and bolster the country's chambers of commerce. Reduce or eliminate tariffs on two-way commerce and gradually remove non-tariff barriers.

It is crucial that border crossing formalities and procedures are uniform and regulated. Increase the capacity of land customs stations with all the contemporary commercial infrastructure, especially Moreh and Champhai. Promote public-private collaboration in the development and administration of transnational infrastructure. Priority should also be given to capacity building and training in the transportation industry.

It is imperative to recognise the current state of political and economic affairs in order to effectively tackle the pressing issues of security and growth. With a population of 1.5 billion, India needs to be a major player in any regional process involving the Asia Pacific area. India has good and varied relations with all of the main countries in the area. The same might be said of India's relationships with its ASEAN-member countries in East Asia.

## **6.2. Defence Capacity Building.**

Another crucial aspect of bilateral relations is India and Myanmar's defence cooperation. Indian military chiefs had previously visited Myanmar and discussed matters of common interest. Indian naval chiefs have visited Myanmar, and the Indian Navy seems to have taken a very assertive stance. Indian naval vessels have also made frequent port calls to ports in Myanmar. Regarding naval gear, India declared in 2006 that it will be giving the Myanmar Navy two BN-2 "Defender Islander" maritime surveillance aircraft and deck-based air-defence weapons. Assistance in establishing a naval aviation training centre in Myanmar was planned. It is important to note that the UK, which was India's original supplier of BN-2 "Defender Islander" aircraft, reacted sharply to the decision to supply the aircraft. The UK had issued a warning, stating that it would no longer provide them with maintenance support or spare parts because it disagreed with the military government in the nation. India has since sent military hardware, notably naval vessels. In 2020, India gifted the Myanmar navy its first submarine, an assault vessel of the Kilo class named INS Sindhuvir, which has subsequently been upgraded and renovated by Hindustan Shipyard Limited. The warship INS Kripan was delivered on July 22, 2023. Furthermore, the Myanmar Navy had been a regular participant in the Milan meetings, which were hosted in the Bay of Bengal's Andaman & Nicobar Islands at Port Blair. At these gatherings, a senior naval officer, a naval delegation, or occasionally a naval ship represented Myanmar. Bilateral defence cooperation has also included military training on its agenda. Both armies have regularly interacted and conducted joint exercises up till 2020.

## **6.3. Maritime Security**

In the Bay of Bengal, India and Myanmar deal with a variety of marine security issues. These were essentially concerns of non-traditional security, or NTS, and they manifested as gun trafficking, terrorism, drug smuggling, illicit fishing, and human smuggling, among other things. It has been repeatedly brought up in various interactions that India and Myanmar must cooperate in security matters. This is essential for preserving peace along their shared land borders as well as for safeguarding maritime trade, which is expected to increase in the near future due to the opening of a sea route between Kolkata and Sittwe. On a different note, NTS

difficulties encompassed matters of climate change and the marine environment. The maritime and naval forces were at the forefront of responding to climate change-related calamities by offering rescue and relief operations.

- Fighting the Indian insurgents who had invaded Myanmar was a request that India made with great enthusiasm at every conference. The Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) is the main guerrilla force that operates along the frontier.
- The Naga Insurgent Group, or NSCN (IM).
- The Kaplan-led Naga Insurgent Group, or NSCN(K).
- United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA).
- The Naga National Council, or NNC.

Smaller groups include MNF, UNLP, NDFB and PREPKA in addition to these big ones. Bangladesh and Pakistan, both of which are Islamic, backed these organisations. Similarly, the rebel factions from Myanmar, ABSDF, NCGUB and CNA, the Chin group, sought safety in the northeastern part of India.

For security issues that aren't military in nature, comprehensive solutions are needed. Poverty and shortages of food and energy pose a danger to social stability. Population growth, the rapid spread of diseases like AIDS and TB, environmental degradation and cybercrime are all extremely worrisome issues. Drugs, maritime piracy and transnational crime are a few of the persistent issues that plague the region.

In conclusion, India is unable to compete with China in the construction of infrastructure, power plants and highways. India's dynamic private sector and democracy are its strongest assets. India needs to share her special qualities, which include her democratic principles, freedom of expression, rights for minorities and autonomous public institutions. If India keeps up this course of strategic engagement with Myanmar, it will not only surpass Chinese influence in that country but also be able to meet its interests in terms of the region's economic development and meet its energy needs while addressing its concerns about the insurgency in the northeast.

Relations between India and Myanmar were probably going to become better on their own. However, they might be strengthened and deepened in a much more

noticeable way and in a comparatively short amount of time with a deliberate and well-planned effort. It is hoped that both countries will invest the required amount in this crucial partnership, not just their governments but also their societies. There's no shortage of brilliant ideas. The public needs to be made more aware of the relationship's potential, the geopolitical stakes involved and the consequences of taking less-than-ideal action. Future developments should bring about a fresh source of synergy, drawn by a certain mutuality of interests, shared experiences, shared values and resolute leadership.

In conclusion, it is evident that relations between India and Myanmar have evolved to a point where they are practical, realistic and mindful of each other's needs. The President of Myanmar and the Prime Minister of India have discussed every topic that would give their relationship the necessary substance in areas where mutual gain is an obvious plus and allows Myanmar to take advantage of India's developmental accomplishments that align with its plans for socioeconomic development.

## **QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Lalrinmuani, Chin Affairs Minister, Kalay Township Constituency, Sagaing Region**

**Q1. How do you see the India-Myanmar Relations in light of old ethnic/cultural ties, long land and maritime boundary with each other?**

**Ans:** In viewing to the relations between India and Myanmar in light of old ethnic/cultural ties, there's always mutual relation and cooperation as well significantly since long time ago.

**Q2. What is your opinion on the large scale devp projects being undertaken by New Delhi in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Very undoubtedly some large scale development Projects Viz, Kaladan Multi Model Transit Transport (KMMTT). The construction of Zorinpui Highway from Paletwa to Mizorma State, India. The Moreh-Tamu-Kalay-Monywa Road Project, etc. being carried out by New Delhi is truly remarkable and when all these projects come into commission the outcome will bring out affluence on both the countries.

**Q3. It is a clear known fact from history that over dependency of the countries on China has been detrimental to them. In view of this, how important it becomes for Myanmar to have better relations with India to counterbalance the influence of China in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** The clause quoted in the paragraph is absolutely correct that our dependency of the country on China has been detrimental to them, Creating a counterbalance relation between the countries India and Myanmar is of paramount importance under a proper democratic form of government in order to counter China's influence in Myanmar.

**Q4. Despite close ties between two nations, Myanmar has lacked in its actions against the IIGs staying in Myanmar and therefore, it has led to some**

**amount of trust deficit between two nations. What are your views on this?**

**Ans:** It is believably noticed that Myanmar has lacked in its actions against the IIGs staying in Myanmar despite close ties between two nations. And this may lead to a trust deficit between two nations.

**Q5. Myanmar Auditor General Maw Than has warned the NLD Govt in June 2020 that 40% of the country's debt is from China, which comes at a much higher interest rates than other Financial Institutions and therefore, it is a debt trap and may lead to Sri Lanka like situation in future. What is your opinion on this statement?**

**Ans:** As clearly having seen the act and step taken by the poor governance of Myanmar, catering into the debt trap of China is quite very near and become Sri Lanka like situation is its near future for the price of each and everything surges up dramatically.

**Q6. What is the current situation of armed conflict in Myanmar and can Military be defeated by local militias in a conflict?**

**Ans:** The current situation of armed conflict in Myanmar has been surging immensely. It could confidentially be said that local militias can defeat the military coup for the local militias are in the right stand. Our and above most of the people supported the people army knowing that even from the side of military coup, local militias are being joined day by day in a large scale. Apart from that the people militias have becomes more and more powerful, meanwhile the military coup is declining miserably.

**Q7. What is your opinion on India's stand on the current situation in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** First and the foremost I would like to elaborate my heartfelt thanks to India government and its people for showing their sympathy and love upon the abandoned refugees people from Myanmar like us, At the same time, we the people of Myanmar earnestly requested India to look its stand in support of the people of Myanmar and

show its condemnation against the Military courageously. Being the Largest Democratic Country, India is indeed highly expected to stand in favour of democracy's sake.

**Q8. What according to you has led to the 01 Feb 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** To be precise indeed it is just because of being hungry for want of authority due to selfishness. The military leader Min Aung Hlaing and his group wanted to engulf the authority illegally and thus have monopolized the governance for their own welfare only capturing the innocent people rudely, no other reason else.

**Q9. What is the current state of humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and how NUG is trying to sp the local people in this crisis?**

**Ans:** The current state of humanitarian crisis is infact very, very worse. Due to this a huge number of innocent people of Myanmar go astray for their lives in searching for shelter and safety. And the senseless military coup burned hundreds of houses and caused lots of people homeless. And some were killed and some are in jails. Saying in short, the savagery of the military is inexpressible, Meanwhile, NUG is giving its full support to the people and struggle for that even as much as it can. At the same time the people of Myanmar also totally support the NUG in return.

**Q10. The armed revolution has hugely affected education of children. The Mil Junta is trying to open schools for education of children. However, the same has been opposed by NUG & PDFs. How do you see the whole crisis affecting the edn of children and way forward?**

**Ans:** In this case, it is of no doubt. The education has been spoiled abruptly. It is all because of the mischievous act of the Military Junta. Their motives are absolutely wrong. Although the military junta intended to open schools but it was of course strongly opposed due to their unacceptable actions.

**Q11. The NUG claims control of almost half of Myanmar right now leading to deterioration of civil adm in the areas. How do you see provn of basic facilities to the people and maint of law & order in these areas in absence of the required civil adm?**

**Ans:** The claims that the NUG has could be true because the Military Junta doesn't get any support from the people. Hence, deterioration of the Civil administration is a must. However, the provision of basic facilities of the people and maintenance of law and order in these areas is visibly affected.

**Q12. What are your views on the international sp for NUG vis-à-vis Mil Junta during the current crisis in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Almost all the countries of the world have come to notice the illegal and cruel act of the Military Junta, Min Aung Hlaing and his group very clearly except China and Russia with some inconspicuous countries. Having known the principle and aims and objectives of the democratic form of government, they basically condemn the Military Junta. This is because why NUG is acquiring support from almost all countries notably.

**Q13. How do you see regularisation in future of so many armed gps/militias born in Myanmar during this armed conflict?**

**Ans:** It could rightly be observed with a keen view regarding regularization of so many armed groups born in Myanmar in future. If and when the new-people government is formed through the guidance of NUG, everything will be arranged accordingly as far as possible, and that time is being awaited for anxiously.

**Q14. How do you visualise the conclusion of current conflict? Will it lead to a purely democratic govt or current dispensation may continue or will it be a collusion of NUG-Myanmar Military as it was earlier?**

**Ans:** According to my view point, the current conflict, on the other hand, will bring out a purely democratic form of government and that is what we the people of

Myanmar wanted too except by the Military Junta. Keeping our focus on the government and motives of the people by now. Possibility of occurrences of collusion of NUG is completely out of the question. It can clearly be seen that the Military Junta will last no longer and their days are numbered. And the people government ie, Democratic form of government will soon be formed and that is the ideas and expectation of the people of Myanmar.

**Q15. If democracy prevails in Myanmar in future, how do you see the role of current Myanmar Military?**

**Ans:** If the democracy prevails in Myanmar sooner or a little later, the fate of the military will really be very bad. They'll have to reap what they've sown. The torturers and killers of the people will have to be ruled upon and they'll be rewarded as deemed necessary. Good people will survive and bad will collapse.

**Salai Lian Luai, MLA/Formal Chief Minister**

**Q1. How do you see the India-Myanmar Relations in light of old ethnic/cultural ties, long land and maritime boundary with each other?**

**Ans.** Since ancient times, India-Myanmar relations have seen that all ethnic and cultural relations have been fine. In particular, people of the same ethnicity, religion, and culture are living side by side at the border of the two countries, and the relationship is good. In addition, there is no dispute over the territorial boundaries of land and water. In terms of land, there are no major border issues between the two countries, except for a small border dispute between Myanmar's Tamu District and India's Maureh. After working together to achieve independence, India and Myanmar have been living together in a friendly and good neighbourly manner even after independence.

**Q2. What is your opinion on the large scale devp projects being undertaken by New Delhi in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Among the large-scale development projects being carried out by New Delhi in Myanmar are the Sittwe deep sea port construction project in Rakhine state and the Kalatan vale project in Chin State. The construction of the Zorinpui Hightway from Paletwa to Mizoram State India, the Moreh-Tamu-Kalay-Monywa Highway Project, the Rihkhawdar-Tio River Crossing Concrete Bridge Project and the bridges connecting India to Myanmar have not yet been completed, so it is necessary to complete these projects in order to implement India's Look East Policy. In the past, with the help of the Indian government, at the border regions of India and Myanmar such as Raakhine State, Chin State and Naga Autonomous Regions; It is known that the construction of roads, bridges, schools and hospitals in cooperation with the development of the border region has effectively benefited the development of undeveloped rural areas.

**Q3. It is a clear known fact from history that over dependency of the countries on China has been detrimental to them. In view of this, how important it becomes for Myanmar to have better relations with India to**

**counterbalance the influence of China in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** It is clear from history that countries' dependence on China is detrimental to them. Because of this, it is well known that it is very important for Myanmar to have better relations with India to counter China's influence in Myanmar. As a communist country of China, there is a lot of economic investment in Myanmar. China cooperated with the Burmese military dictator and provided loans at high-interest rates for investment needs. They are always trying to control and influence the Burmese military dictator government, pretending to be benevolent and focusing on their own interests. Therefore, it is known that China helped and sold weapons and ammunition to the Myanmar military dictator. It has been thought that there is a great danger of threatening security to southeast Asian countries through Burma, and Japan and India through the Bay of Bengal. Therefore, it is only possible to build a better bilateral relationship with India if Myanmar can remove the military dictator who is cooperating with the Chinese communist government and build a federal democratic state.

**Q4. Despite close ties between two nations, Myanmar has lacked in its actions against the IIGs staying in Myanmar and therefore, it has led to some amount of trust deficit between two nations. What are your views on this?**

**Ans:** It might be true that some amount of trust between the two countries has been lost because Myanmar has taken weak measures against the IIGs living in Myanmar. However, in the case of a Kache rebel from the IIGS, only the military dictator is accepting and helping them. But it is totally unsupported and not accepted by MPs, PDFs and the local people of Myanmar. At this time, the dictator and Kache rebels are joining forces to attack the PDF. If there is a democratic government in Myanmar, there will be no IIGs in the country. At that time, I believe that India-Myanmar relations will be even more convenient than now.

**Q5. Myanmar Auditor General Maw Than has warned the NLD Govt in June 2020 that 40% of the country's debt is from China, which comes at a much higher interest rates than other Financial Institutions and therefore, it is a debt trap and may lead to Sri Lanka like situation in future. What is your opinion on this statement?**

**Ans:** It's almost sure that Myanmar's situation might lead to Sri Lanka's in the future. Because the prices of goods in Myanmar are increasing exponentially and the rate of inflation is also large. Not only has the price of the foreign currency, the US dollar risen, but it has reached a state of scarcity. There is a situation where foreign investment is completely cut off. Because of the war, the peasants could not farm and there was a shortage of rice and food. Due to the poor management of the military council, the business was lost heavily. Due to the international embargo, the price of all fuel and petrol has gone up, no imports from abroad have decreased, and the trade in goods has decreased. With the price of gold and silver all rising, and the high-interest rate loans being paid, it is almost certain that the military council government will soon become like Sri Lanka's country.

**Q6. What is the current situation of armed conflict in Myanmar and can Military be defeated by local militias in a conflict?**

**Ans:** People's armed forces will be able to resist the military army that I can definitely say. The strength of the military council; there are only about forty thousand soldiers who can fight. Besides that, the soldiers are falling and fleeing day by day and doing CDM. Therefore, it was seen that the veterans, fire brigades and the military party (Pyu Saw Htee) were forced to have military training. PDF and ERO have the full support of the entire public as well as the diplomatic support of major democratic countries.

**Q7. What is your opinion on India's stand on the current situation in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Regarding India's stance on Myanmar, we are especially grateful for the support and help for the people who fled the war, including MPs in Mizoram State,

Manipur State and Nagaland in India. India should also help the Burmese people in their military revolution. This is because if the Burmese military dictator continues to rule, it may cooperate with the Chinese Communist government and threaten India's future democratic system and the country's economic security. Therefore, India should cooperate and help in military and political matters until the establishment of a democratic state, which the entire people of Burma long for. If a democratic government is established in Myanmar, I hope that India and Burma's bilateral relations will be strengthened, with economic and political friendship and openness.

**Q8. What according to you has led to the 01 Feb 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** The military leader Min Aung Hlaing and his group want to control the political power and the country's economic resources for their selfish business. They seized power because they feared that the people would take back all the riches they had stolen from the state's wealth. In addition, many patriot leaders who rebelled against the military regime to perpetuate the military regime were arrested, tortured, imprisoned and killed and so, they were afraid that they would be prosecuted again for the crimes they have committed.

**Q9. What is the current state of humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and how NUG is trying to help the local people in this crisis?**

**Ans:** Due to the current military coup, there are 100,000 refugees from the eastern part of Myanmar in Thailand and over 40,000 from the western part of Myanmar in India. As the army burned and destroyed the villages, there are many homeless people and refugees among the locals. For this crisis, NUG is looking for funds in cooperation with domestic and foreign businessmen, UN and international countries, NGOs and Myanmar citizens abroad, and NUG is supporting as much as they can. Refugees in Thailand and India are being fed by donors from India and Thailand and also by foreign donors. I would like to appeal to the Government of India to cooperate with the UN and foreign countries to help as much as possible for the refugees in India.

**Q10. The armed revolution has hugely affected education of children. The Mil Junta is trying to open schools for education of children. However, the same has been opposed by NUG & PDFs. How do you see the whole crisis affecting the edn of children and way forward?**

**Ans:** It is true that the armed revolution has greatly affected children's education. It is true that the military is trying to open schools for children's education, but rather than wanting children to be literate, they want to deceive the international community into pretending that there is peace in Burma. In fact, 60 percent of teachers are doing CDM, and it is impossible for the military council to open schools that are up to the quality full level. It is not just the NUG and PDF that are protesting, but the whole people are trying to get the military regime to fail quickly in order to the whole crisis that affects the children's education and future as they have organized schools in PDF-controlled areas to attend only in those schools. Only when a government based on a democratic standard system emerges in Myanmar, can a standard education system for children be established.

**Q11. The NUG claims control of almost half of Myanmar right now leading to deterioration of civil adm in the areas. How do you see provn of basic facilities to the people and maint of law & order in these areas in absence of the required civil adm?**

**Ans:** It is true that NUG indeed controls almost half of Myanmar. In these areas, PDF, CDF, ERO and the local people in cooperation with the administration, judiciary and people's police organizations have been established and are working together for administration and law enforcement.

**Q12. What are your views on the international sp for NUG vis-à-vis Mil Junta during the current crisis in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** During the current crisis in Myanmar, the military coup group is supported by the communist dictators Russia and China, and most of the democratic countries, ASEAN countries and the UN are supporting the NUG government and the civil

people. In particular, China is encouraging and supporting the Burmese Military Council while convincing Southeast Asian Countries to gain its political influence. Russia is cooperating with Myanmar Military Council as a market for selling their military weapons. On the other hand, with the strengthening of the ideas that the Burmese military is losing to the opposition revolutionary groups and the world becoming more aware of the military council's oppression and killing of the people, some ASEAN countries and some world powers are becoming more conscious of the NUG and NUCC.

**Q13. How do you see regularisation in future of so many armed gps/militias born in Myanmar during this armed conflict?**

**Ans:** Armed groups and militia groups born in Myanmar during this armed conflict, to be normalized in the future, Myanmar must be established as a federal democracy, and the federal army must be built and placed under the civilian government. Similarly, the Federal State Army must be placed under the civilian government in the Federal States. PDFs, CDFs and armed organizations will be made to serve in organizations that want to serve in the Federal Army and the People's Police. Those who don't want to serve will also be allowed to continue their work in various government services departments and businesses, and those who want to study will also continue to study their education and it will return to normal in the future.

**Q14. How do you visualise the conclusion of current conflict? Will it lead to a purely democratic govt or current dispensation may continue or will it be a collusion of NUG-Myanmar Military as it was earlier?**

**Ans:** Regarding the current conflict conclusion, the military dictatorship will fall soon. On the front lines, 50 to 100 of military soldiers are being killed daily. The military government is spending too much finance on air strikes and people's trust on them is decreasing because of killing people in cold blood, burning houses, bombing villages, and the military army is increasingly hated by the people, and due to decreasing morale of the military respect to their leaders, many joined CDM almost every day. Under the leadership on NUG and CRPH, a truly democratic Union State can be built. The Myanmar Army will be abolished and replaced by the formation of

the Federal Army in the country.

**Q15. If democracy prevails in Myanmar in future, how do you see the role of current Myanmar Military?**

**Ans:** If democracy flourishes in the future, the current military Army will be abolished and military leaders who have arrested, tortured and killed the people to perpetuate the military dictatorship will be prosecuted for the crimes they have committed. Union Federal Army and People's Police Under the Federal State Government, state police forces must be formed, and they will be jointly formed by the current Tatmadaw and PDF forces. The Federal Army must be under the civilian government.

**U Ral Peng, MP, Matupi Township Constituency, Chin State**

**Q1. How do you see the India-Myanmar Relations in light of old ethnic/cultural ties, long land and maritime boundary with each other?**

**Ans:** Actually Myanmar wishes to have a better relationship with the democratic country of India as a neighbour as well as other neighbours. It is assumed India has less trust upon Myanmar.

**Q2. What is your opinion on the large scale devp projects being undertaken by New Delhi in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Investment of India in Myanmar is slower in compare with China. Myanmar people wish India to invest much more than current situation especially the projects which cross Chin State to centre of Myanmar such as road construction and Kaladan project implementation should be continued on to the accomplishment.

**Q3. It is a clear known fact from history that over dependency of the countries on China has been detrimental to them. In view of this, how important it becomes for Myanmar to have better relations with India to counterbalance the influence of China in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Myanmar is not over dependency on China. Only Military may be over dependency on China. In NLD government era, 50% of debt to China was able to reduce. To counterbalance the influence of China, India should initiate more investments in Rakhine, Chin State and Nagaland as prioritised areas.

**Q4. Despite close ties between two nations, Myanmar has lacked in its actions against the IIGs staying in Myanmar and therefore, it has led to some amount of trust deficit between two nations. What are your views on this?**

**Ans:** It is correct but only Military Junta has lacked in action against the IIGs. To my view, India should support Myanmar democratic revolutionary force in order to restore democracy in Myanmar, only then both democratic countries can go hand in

hand.

**Q5. Myanmar Auditor General Maw Than has warned the NLD Govt in June 2020 that 40% of the country's debt is from China, which comes at a much higher interest rates than other Financial Institutions and therefore, it is a debt trap and may lead to Sri Lanka like situation in future. What is your opinion on this statement?**

**Ans:** This statement is correct. Thus in the period of NLD government, to prevent Sri Lanka like situation, taking loans with low interest from other countries and reducing debt to China by repaying much as could as possible.

**Q6. What is the current situation of armed conflict in Myanmar and can Military be defeated by local militias in a conflict?**

**Ans:** Armed conflicts is increasing day by day and happening clashes elsewhere in the country in a current situation, even in Yangon and Mandalay region. Soon the military will be defeated.

**Q7. What is your opinion on India's stand on the current situation in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** To my view, India's stand in current Myanmar situation is inexplicit. Despite India is the largest democratic country in the world, it is assumed leaning more on Myanmar military Junta in the past. Current Military Junta is the world known in its brutality and atrocity practicing fascism. Thus India should have a relationship and cooperation only with NUG.

**Q8. What according to you has led to the 01 Feb 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** 2021 Feb 1 Military coup was occurred due to taking state power unconstitutionally for the sake of illegally self benefit seeking motives of the few Military leaders.

**Q9. What is the current state of humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and how NUG is trying to sp the local people in this crisis?**

**Ans:** Currently humanitarian relief is badly needed in Myanmar, over 18000 houses were being burnt, more than 1 millions IDP, NUG is supporting humanitarian crisis as could as possible. No support from Military Junta.

**Q10. The armed revolution has hugely affected education of children. The Mil Junta is trying to open schools for education of children. However, the same has been opposed by NUG & PDFs. How do you see the whole crisis affecting the edn of children and way forward?**

**Ans:** NUG is trying to open schools for the sake of children during revolutionary period. The schools open by Military Junta have no quality education.

**Q11. The NUG claims control of almost half of Myanmar right now leading to deterioration of civil adm in the areas. How do you see provn of basic facilities to the people and maint of law & order in these areas in absence of the required civil adm?**

**Ans:** The statement is not correct. In the control areas of NUG, there is a good local adm in a systematic way. Local adm as well as maintenance of law and order are deteriorating in Military junta's control area and burning houses and looting properties by the Military together with who supports them.

**Q12. What are your views on the international sp for NUG vis-à-vis Mil Junta during the current crisis in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** It is seen that gradually many of the International countries supports NUG nowadays. Russia and China support Military Junta for their financial benefits.

**Q13. How do you see regularisation in future of so many armed gps/militias born in Myanmar during this armed conflict?**

**Ans:** The current armed groups/militias will be negotiated and organized into a Federal Army of the Union, compensation will be paid to the armed personnel who does not want to join the federal army.

**Q14. How do you visualise the conclusion of current conflict? Will it lead to a purely democratic govt or current dispensation may continue or will it be a collusion of NUG-Myanmar Military as it was earlier?**

**Ans:** In this revolution, the NUG supported by the people will defeat the Military Junta. The NUCC is drafting the transitional constitution at present and NUCC and NUG will lead accordingly. I envisaged that Federal Democratic Union will be emerged and established Union Federal Army.

**Q15. If democracy prevails in Myanmar in future, how do you see the role of current Myanmar Military?**

**Ans:** In future, current Myanmar Military will be abolished, Federal army will be established by NUG in collaboration with all ethnic armed groups and armed CDMers who joined in the revolution.

**Daw Cho Cho Win, MP, Mawlaik Township Constituency, Sagaing Region**

**Q1. How do you see the India-Myanmar Relations in light of old ethnic/cultural ties, long land and maritime boundary with each other?**

**Ans:** Throughout the history of human being, people have been migrating to find a better place as families or as community. In this nature, people of India and people of Myanmar have the same sources and have unity both physically and mentally.

**Q2. What is your opinion on the large scale devp projects being undertaken by New Delhi in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** We invite and welcome international investments according to bilateral agreements for the sake of both countries. However, we don't want to promote investments that support chronic unhealthy dictatorship.

**Q3. It is a clear known fact from history that over dependency of the countries on China has been detrimental to them. In view of this, how important it becomes for Myanmar to have better relations with India to counterbalance the influence of China in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Dictators' effort is to oppress their people and to get any help from any foreign country regardless of the effect on their country and their neighbor countries. For Myanmar to have better relations with India to counterbalance the influence of China in Myanmar, the first this to do is to remove military junta and to help democratic government of the people of Myanmar.

**Q4. Despite close ties between two nations, Myanmar has lacked in its actions against the IIGs staying in Myanmar and therefore, it has led to some amount of trust deficit between two nations. What are your views on this?**

**Ans:** Those who are accepting and helping the IIGs are Myanmar military dictators.

According to 2008 constitutions, the security council of Myanmar is under the co

**Q5. Myanmar Auditor General Maw Than has warned the NLD Govt in June 2020 that 40% of the country's debt is from China, which comes at a much higher interest rates than other Financial Institutions and therefore, it is a debt trap and may lead to Sri Lanka like situation in future. What is your opinion on this statement?**

**Ans:** Selfish Military dictatorship is seeking for their perpetual benefit and pushing people of the country into poverty trap, lists of foreign debts in generation wise were prepared systematically during the NLD period by President U Win Myint and assessment was done and made repayment to prevent such debt trap.

**Q6. What is the current situation of armed conflict in Myanmar and can Military be defeated by local militias in a conflict?**

**Ans:** Once, both countries had revolved the never sunset empire to gain Independence. The whole people of the country are at the back of the defense force and NUG also has formed up the defense force systematically comprising with all categories of youths, it is not a Myanmar military of Myin Aung Hlaing who took power illegally. As the spring revolution is a revolution of dictatorship, the military will surely be defeated.

**Q7. What is your opinion on India's stand on the current situation in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** My conclusion is that India should look forward for long term benefit of generations. If the military junta gained, the influence of China would be growing and it would be a threat to India that India should stand firmly on its democratic pathway.

**Q8. What according to you has led to the 01 Feb 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** The corruption and misconduct for selfishness from 1988 to 2015 up to U Thein Sien's presidency era were well known in the five year period of NLD government. China could not manipulate as it wished, even able to identify a non-interference project between China and Myanmar Military dictatorship government. Due to selfishness of a handful military dictatorship has led to the military coup.

**Q9. What is the current state of humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and how NUG is trying to support the local people in this crisis?**

**Ans:** Burning villages, looting properties of the citizens, killing innocent people and raping women illegally and inhumanely made many people homeless. NUG is helping the humanitarian victims through its ministry as much as possible and also using means of people to people support themselves.

**Q10. The armed revolution has hugely affected education of children. The Military Junta is trying to open schools for education of children. However, the same has been opposed by NUG & PDFs. How do you see the whole crisis affecting the education of children and way forward?**

**Ans:** In 1988 even for (3) years and 1996 for (3) years, schools were closed by Military dictatorship. NUG's school opening also opposed by Military Junta moreover they arrested school teachers. To my view, following the federal education of NUG is better for the future of our children.

**Q11. The NUG claims control of almost half of Myanmar right now leading to deterioration of civil administration in the areas. How do you see provision of basic facilities to the people and maintenance of law & order in these areas in absence of the required civil administration?**

**Ans:** Almost all areas in the country, adm of Military Junta is deteriorating, just show adm are being seen. No law and order under military junta. Not in the control areas of NUG.

**Q12. What are your views on the international sp for NUG vis-à-vis Mil Junta during the current crisis in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** It is clearly known that NUG is supported by many countries in the UN conferences and convention in the previous year. Due to veto power in UNSC, Myanmar and other small countries suffer the problems unsolved. NUG is greatly expected and hope for the support of India.

**Q13. How do you see regularisation in future of so many armed gps/militias born in Myanmar during this armed conflict?**

**Ans:** The armed groups against Military Junta are systematically organized by NUG, some survived on the support of NUG and the support from the people that after the revolution, armed personnel will join to respective mother units/org. EAOs are also discussed with NUG for revolution measures.

**Q14. How do you visualise the conclusion of current conflict? Will it lead to a purely democratic govt or current dispensation may continue or will it be a collusion of NUG-Myanmar Military as it was earlier?**

**Ans:** It is envisaged that military junta will be defeated by the democracy revolution and NUG is aiming towards establishment of federal democratic country.

**Q15. If democracy prevails in Myanmar in future, how do you see the role of current Myanmar Military?**

**Ans:** Current terrorist Military of the SAC will proceed to as of the usual end way of terrorist.

**U Tial Ling, MP, Hakha Township Constituency, Chin State**

**Q1. How do you see the India-Myanmar Relations in light of old ethnic/cultural ties, long land and maritime boundary with each other?**

**Ans:** Since the time immemorial, there was a good relationship between India and Myanmar. In view of cultural perspective such as Buddhism, and Pali subject, as well as a long border of in land and water, the two countries tied with each other.

**Q2. What is your opinion on the large scale devp projects being undertaken by New Delhi in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** To my view, the large scale projects being implemented by New Delhi in Myanmar should be continued on and doing more investment so that there will be better, faster and smooth relationship.

**Q3. It is a clear known fact from history that over dependency of the countries on China has been detrimental to them. In view of this, how important it becomes for Myanmar to have better relations with India to counterbalance the influence of China in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Both historically and currently, Myanmar has a relationship with China as a neighbor in many sectors, while China is a communist country, people of Myanmar are struggling for restoration of democracy. India is applying a democratic system, thus Myanmar and India must promote our relationship to counterbalance the influence of China. This is seen essential.

**Q4. Despite close ties between two nations, Myanmar has lacked in its actions against the IIGs staying in Myanmar and therefore, it has led to some amount of trust deficit between two nations. What are your views on this?**

**Ans:** It is correct, we know that there is some IIGs in both India and Myanmar, to my view, this issue can be settled when both countries become democratic countries where there is a transparency.

**Q5. Myanmar Auditor General Maw Than has warned the NLD Govt in June 2020 that 40% of the country's debt is from China, which comes at a much higher interest rates than other Financial Institutions and therefore, it is a debt trap and may lead to Sri Lanka like situation in future. What is your opinion on this statement?**

**Ans:** This statement is correct. It was discussed thoroughly during NLD government and reduced some capacity such as Kyauhphe deep sea port project. etc.

**Q6. What is the current situation of armed conflict in Myanmar and can Military be defeated by local militias in a conflict?**

**Ans:** To be defeated with available current arms may not be easy, but by the morale of the people of the country, military will be defeated, it is strongly believed.

**Q7. What is your opinion on India's stand on the current situation in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** It is my opinion that India should cooperate more with the people of Myanmar led by NUG.

**Q8. What according to you has led to the 01 Feb 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Military coup was led by strong desire to get power by military leaders by any means.

**Q9. What is the current state of humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and how NUG is trying to sp the local people in this crisis?**

**Ans:** Currently humanitarian crisis is surging up. NUG also is trying to support the crisis with all efforts but can do very little.

**Q10. The armed revolution has hugely affected education of children. The Mil Junta is trying to open schools for education of children. However, the same has been opposed by NUG & PDFs. How do you see the whole crisis affecting the edn of children and way forward?**

**Ans:** The affect of education for children has been bad and critical since the period of Covid-19, to reach Children Oriented education level is very important. So long as there is a political oriented in Myanmar, the future of children in Myanmar is uncertain. It is my view.

**Q11. The NUG claims control of almost half of Myanmar right now leading to deterioration of civil adm in the areas. How do you see provn of basic facilities to the people and maint of law & order in these areas in absence of the required civil adm?**

**Ans:** In some control areas, they can initiate civil adm, form up local police for maintaining of law and order. People try to establish judiciary system in such control areas. It was learnt.

**Q12. What are your views on the international sp for NUG vis-à-vis Mil Junta during the current crisis in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Many countries support NUG by principle but practical support is still weak. Few countries support Military Junta but much supports were given to them practically. It was my conclusion and assumption.

**Q13. How do you see regularisation in future of so many armed gps/militias born in Myanmar during this armed conflict?**

**Ans:** During revolutionary period, sure there is a dispensation but in peaceful period, we hope that we can establish unity in future.

**Q14. How do you visualise the conclusion of current conflict? Will it lead to a purely democratic govt or current dispensation may continue or will it be a collusion of NUG-Myanmar Military as it was earlier?**

**Ans:** By negotiations and discussion, there can be established a united country which is a federal democratic country and will have a democratic federal army. It is my assumption.

**Q15. If democracy prevails in Myanmar in future, how do you see the role of current Myanmar Military?**

**Ans:** If democratic country is established, people will establish public admirable and reliable army.

**U Thang Tuan Pau, MLA No.1 Constituency**  
**Tedim Township, Chin State**

**Q1. How do you see the India-Myanmar Relations in light of old ethnic/cultural ties, long land and maritime boundary with each other?**

**Ans:** I felt not satisfactory the relationship between India and Myanmar as over (70) years Military dictatorship rule has opened front door and closed back door.

**Q2. What is your opinion on the large scale devp projects being undertaken by New Delhi in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Warmly welcome, the large scale projects being implemented by New Delhi such as Yaykyi road project, Kaladan project, car road and bridges construction through Mizoram to Rihkhawdar- Tedim should be continued on in collaboration with NUG. The projects implemented by Military Junta were very poor in quality, assessment of the project shall be done after revolution is finished. To collaborate with Military Junta for implementation of such large scale project, India may take high risk on financial losses and decline its dignity.

**Q3. It is a clear known fact from history that over dependency of the countries on China has been detrimental to them. In view of this, how important it becomes for Myanmar to have better relations with India to counterbalance the influence of China in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** It is correct. India should recognize NUG as a legitimate government. India is the largest Democratic Country and people of Myanmar are struggling for restoration of democracy. India should not be quiet and slow to help this situation since India is a neighbor country. To promote India-Myanmar relationship is essential, initiating many investments in Myanmar that will lead to smooth and faster relationship between the two countries in future and is crucial to counterbalance the influence of China.

**Q4. Despite close ties between two nations, Myanmar has lacked in its actions against the IIGs staying in Myanmar and therefore, it has led to some amount of trust deficit between two nations. What are your views on this?**

**Ans:** Not only trust deficit, but it can decline cooperation and good will relations. It seemed that they cooperated with them to be stronger and It can be a threat to peace of the people in both countries.

**Q5. Myanmar Auditor General Maw Than has warned the NLD Govt in June 2020 that 40% of the country's debt is from China, which comes at a much higher interest rates than other Financial Institutions and therefore, it is a debt trap and may lead to Sri Lanka like situation in future. What is your opinion on this statement?**

**Ans:** This statement is correct, my opinion is that Debt to China should be repaid and settled by taking loans with low interest from other countries or international monetary Organization and reducing expenditures of the country in order to avoid China's debt trap, Myanmar should not take any loans from China in future.

**Q6. What is the current situation of armed conflict in Myanmar and can Military be defeated by local militias in a conflict?**

**Ans:** Indigenous armed groups as well as Myanmar armed groups against Military council and fighting with Military elsewhere in the country. Although the arms of PDF are weaker, soldiers from the military side fell more in the fight every day. More than 10 thousand army personnel joined to CDM, Demoralized the military personnel. Military can not supply ration to their soldier sufficiently. The Country's economy is uncontrollable and collapsing, burnt houses in town and villages, killed innocent civilians including children brutally, threatening people to be fear by arresting and killing activists and politicians ruthlessly. These atrocity and brutality provoked and ignited people's indignant and hatred to military's dictatorship instead of being fear, thus many involved in revolution elsewhere of the country. Increasing

more and more numbers of resistance forces, more arms and more moral support day after day that it is sure, military will be defeated soon by the people's defense force.

**Q7. What is your opinion on India's stand on the current situation in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** The India Government's stand on the current situation of Myanmar is not satisfactory. The strong democratic country should not cooperate with Military Junta diplomatically as well as in economical measures. It is requested to recognize NUG as a legitimate government and support humanitarian relief. So that It will promote the relationship and foreign investment in future and India's influence will be advance and China's influence will be diminishing gradually.

**Q8. What according to you has led to the 01 Feb 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Aims to protect their owned illegal properties and richness received by Myint Aung Hlaing and few military leaders and their extreme power hunger has led to military coup.

**Q9. What is the current state of humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and how NUG is trying to sp the local people in this crisis?**

**Ans:** In related to humanitarian crisis of current situation in Myanmar, there are more than 10 thousands people moved to IDP, lost right to education by children, right to health services, lost job opportunity, lost human rights, become disabled by some, shortage of food, increased orphanage children, and homeless etc. NUG is supporting humanitarian reliefs as could as possible received from individuals donors form abroad and in country, and International organizations so far.

**Q10. The armed revolution has hugely affected education of children. The Mil Junta is trying to open schools for education of children. However, the same has been opposed by NUG & PDFs. How do you see the whole crisis affecting the edn of children and way forward?**

**Ans:** It is to be concluded that Military Junta has no pure empathy to the children for their education but just to show International that they can control the country peacefully in a twisted way by telling lie. For the extension of NUG's education and its effectiveness, NGOs, INGOs and International should support the NUG for funds, human resources, learning materials and teaching aids.

**Q11. The NUG claims control of almost half of Myanmar right now leading to deterioration of civil adm in the areas. How do you see provn of basic facilities to the people and maint of law & order in these areas in absence of the required civil adm?**

**Ans:** The statement on the adm is deteriorating in the control area of NUG is not agreed by me. In the control area, they formed up civilians' adm body, judiciary and police force that there will be law and order gradually.

**Q12. What are your views on the international sp for NUG vis-à-vis Mil Junta during the current crisis in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** More Internationals supports were received by the NUG than Military Junta.

**Q13. How do you see regularisation in future of so many armed gps/militias born in Myanmar during this armed conflict?**

**Ans:** The armed groups will be organized such as federal army, state police force etc by their interest, arm personnel will join to different org after revolution is finished.

**Q14. How do you visualise the conclusion of current conflict? Will it lead to a purely democratic govt or current dispensation may continue or will it be a collusion of NUG-Myanmar Military as it was earlier?**

**Ans:** I envisaged that a pure federal democratic government will be emerged.

**Q15. If democracy prevails in Myanmar in future, how do you see the role of current Myanmar Military?**

**Ans:** Military will be under civil government, can not be involved in politics according to the Federal constitution. To reorganize current military to be qualified for those who joined to the people, and exclude criminal military personnel.

**U Pyi Min, MP, Paletwa Township, Chin State**

**Q1. How do you see the India-Myanmar Relations in light of old ethnic/cultural ties, long land and maritime boundary with each other?**

**Ans:** We marked India is a good neighbor since we had struggled together for Independence.

**Q2. What is your opinion on the large scale devp projects being undertaken by New Delhi in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** The large volume of project being implemented by New Delhi in Myanmar such as Manipur-Tamu-Kalewah-Yakyi road to Myawadi-Mesauh-High way, Kaladan project which will benefit both countries for commercial purpose and need to continue on in collaboration with democratic forces of Myanmar for sustainability.

**Q3. It is a clear known fact from history that over dependency of the countries on China has been detrimental to them. In view of this, how important it becomes for Myanmar to have better relations with India to counterbalance the influence of China in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Though China is a communist country, they practiced open marked economy, China always tries to expand her influence in economy as well as dictatorship policy in Myanmar to sustain dictatorship under its influence. Thus to promote India's democratic economic policy is very important for Myanmar to counter balance the influence of China.

**Q4. Despite close ties between two nations, Myanmar has lacked in its actions against the IIGs staying in Myanmar and therefore, it has led to some amount of trust deficit between two nations. What are your views on this?**

**Ans:** Military deposed civilian Governments throughout generations in Myanmar

and always played balancing India and China in clever relationship. If democratically elected people's representatives can take the ruling power of the state, then such distrust will not be happened.

**Q5. Myanmar Auditor General Maw Than has warned the NLD Govt in June 2020 that 40% of the country's debt is from China, which comes at a much higher interest rates than other Financial Institutions and therefore, it is a debt trap and may lead to Sri Lanka like situation in future. What is your opinion on this statement?**

**Ans:** Military Junta played the economic and political of Myanmar only for their power sustainability as they like, they neglected the law, takes loans with high interest from China where they can get loan, they can not get any loan from other institutions. They also have old loans.

**Q6. What is the current situation of armed conflict in Myanmar and can Military be defeated by local militias in a conflict?**

**Ans:** To abolish any dictatorship is the only goal of the people and this armed conflict is the last time to abolish the dictatorship that the People's defence force will defeat the military Junta.

**Q7. What is your opinion on India's stand on the current situation in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** India dealt only with Military Junta for stability of its invested economy, It is assumed that India is not supporting people's government and democratic political system courageously.

**Q8. What according to you has led to the 01 Feb 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Military's Fear of ending in the involvement in politics and to protect illegally owned properties of military leaders throughout generations, Fear of the fall down of power from the political system constituted as they like by themselves and fear of the constitution to be replaced with democratic system. Actually not mentioning these factors in declaration, by lying, Military coup declared unfair votes in election without any reason which led to Coup unconstitutionally.

**Q9. What is the current state of humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and how NUG is trying to sp the local people in this crisis?**

**Ans:** Currently, daily living of the people, health, education conditions are very difficult and commodities price rates are fly rocketing, but NUG is seeing humanitarian supports from UN, Europe and Asean Countries, moreover negotiation with neighbouring countries for permission of cross border.

**Q10. The armed revolution has hugely affected education of children. The Mil Junta is trying to open schools for education of children. However, the same has been opposed by NUG & PDFs. How do you see the whole crisis affecting the edn of children and way forward?**

**Ans:** Military schools are like traditional education that NUG and PDF opposed their school opening. The schools opening by NUG and PDF are in line with democratic education indicators.

**Q11. The NUG claims control of almost half of Myanmar right now leading to deterioration of civil adm in the areas. How do you see provn of basic facilities to the people and maint of law & order in these areas in absence of the required civil adm?**

**Ans:** I do not agree with your statement on deteriorating of the local admin in control areas. It is learnt that people in the control areas are freedom and seen justice. It is assumed that the deterioration of local adm areas are where military junta' atrocity and brutal acts are in place.

**Q12. What are your views on the international sp for NUG vis-à-vis Mil Junta during the current crisis in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** NUG is supporting by western democratic countries, some of purely democratic Asean countries directly and indirectly. Only dictatorship with one party ruling countries, and country which often takes military coup, few self benefit seeking and exploiting the economy of the countries support military Junta.

**Q13. How do you see regularisation in future of so many armed gps/militias born in Myanmar during this armed conflict?**

**Ans:** NUG and armed groups are discussing about establishment of Federal Army, if minority rights for ethnic groups is in line with justice and equity, there will no more be armed conflicts.

**Q14. How do you visualise the conclusion of current conflict? Will it lead to a purely democratic govt or current dispensation may continue or will it be a collusion of NUG-Myanmar Military as it was earlier?**

**Ans:** Military will be soon defeated Politically, militarily and diplomatically in relations with internationals. Lower ranks among military will join PDF, it is continuously seen that military personnel joined to PDFs as CDMers.

**Q15. If democracy prevails in Myanmar in future, how do you see the role of current Myanmar Military?**

**Ans:** If democratic federal country is established, the current military will become civil servants under the Civil Democratic Federal Government.

**U Ngun Vung, MP, Hakha Township Constituency, Chin State**

**Q1. How do you see the India-Myanmar Relations in light of old ethnic/cultural ties, long land and maritime boundary with each other?**

**Ans:** Formerly the relationship between India-Myanmar was good, but due to the unfair attitude of Military Junta, it seemed declining. India should recognize NUG as legitimate Government because Military Junta is holding dictatorship policy and against democracy.

**Q2. What is your opinion on the large scale devp projects being undertaken by New Delhi in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** The projects being implemented by New Delhi are seen good and important. Should expand large amount of project is support to future democratic government establishment in Myanmar.

**Q3. It is a clear known fact from history that over dependency of the countries on China has been detrimental to them. In view of this, how important it becomes for Myanmar to have better relations with India to counterbalance the influence of China in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** To be able to avoid the influence of China, Indian government and NUG should establish stronger and better cooperation in areas of economic, military and politic areas.

**Q4. Despite close ties between two nations, Myanmar has lacked in its actions against the IIGs staying in Myanmar and therefore, it has led to some amount of trust deficit between two nations. What are your views on this?**

**Ans:** To my view, Military Junta is an organization which aims to sustain its dictatorship rule. This org is not trustworthy in cooperation on economic, military

and politic matters.

**Q5. Myanmar Auditor General Maw Than has warned the NLD Govt in June 2020 that 40% of the country's debt is from China, which comes at a much higher interest rates than other Financial Institutions and therefore, it is a debt trap and may lead to Sri Lanka like situation in future. What is your opinion on this statement?**

**Ans:** If pure democratic country is established, Myanmar can not be fallen like Sri Lanka. We need only good governance in Myanmar. Myanmar is rich in natural resources and a good place to make a living.

**Q6. What is the current situation of armed conflict in Myanmar and can Military be defeated by local militias in a conflict?**

**Ans:** Military Must be defeated. Because 90% of the people in the country support the revolutionary- resisting forces, no support is seen to Military dictatorship System.

**Q7. What is your opinion on India's stand on the current situation in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** My view is that India should not cooperate with Military Junta in current situation. If India cooperated with Military Junta, they will take advantage and open for China to influence economically, militarily and politically that it will be a threat to Indian Government.

**Q8. What according to you has led to the 01 Feb 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** When the military saw the people of the country did not support them, they wanted to protect their properties and riches owned through corrupted ways and wanted to rule the country with dictatorship that has led to Military Coup.

**Q9. What is the current state of humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and how NUG is trying to sp the local people in this crisis?**

**Ans:** NUG is negotiating with boarder countries for permission of cross boarders to be able to support humanitarian reliefs, for this, Indian Government should cooperate with NUG under humanitarian ground.

**Q10. The armed revolution has hugely affected education of children. The Mil Junta is trying to open schools for education of children. However, the same has been opposed by NUG & PDFs. How do you see the whole crisis affecting the edn of children and way forward?**

**Ans:** Military junta's education is merely and artificial and bogus education. The initiated education system of NUG is in line with democratic country and be able to solve the future of the children, it is my conclusion and assumption.

**Q11. The NUG claims control of almost half of Myanmar right now leading to deterioration of civil adm in the areas. How do you see provn of basic facilities to the people and maint of law & order in these areas in absence of the required civil adm?**

**Ans:** I envisaged that the administration and maintenance of law and order will gradually be improving and better in the control area of the NUG.

**Q12. What are your views on the international sp for NUG vis-à-vis Mil Junta during the current crisis in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** So far I know, NUG received more supports from International rather than Military Junta. Neighbors countries should accept negotiation of NUG for cross boarder so that more supports on humanitarian reliefs can reach to the needy people who are suffering humanitarian crisis.

**Q13. How do you see regularisation in future of so many armed gps/militias born in Myanmar during this armed conflict?**

**Ans:** The current revolutionary forces are composed with CDMers, students and departmental youths that when the revolution is finished, they will join to their respective mother units and the remaining will join the Federal Army.

**Q14. How do you visualise the conclusion of current conflict? Will it lead to a purely democratic govt or current dispensation may continue or will it be a collusion of NUG-Myanmar Military as it was earlier?**

**Ans:** The pure democratic country will be emerged. During transitional period, of course, there will be a negotiations and discussions to some extent.

**Q15. If democracy prevails in Myanmar in future, how do you see the role of current Myanmar Military?**

**Ans:** To my view, should no more be a terrorist military with dictatorship system. Military will be under civilian administration. To establish a federal army in line with the democratic norms that no more dictatorship.

**U Chan Ham, MLA, Thantlang Township Constituency, Chin State**

**Q1. How do you see the India-Myanmar Relations in light of old ethnic/cultural ties, long land and maritime boundary with each other?**

**Ans:** Though the boundary is demarcated as India and Myanmar, ethnically and relatively tied with each other that we have been exchanging inter-relationship economically, religiously and socially.

**Q2. What is your opinion on the large scale devp projects being undertaken by New Delhi in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** So far I know, the large amount project being implemented by New Delhi in Myanmar is Kyaukphyu-Kaladan Transit construction project. It is expected that It will benefit for both countries.

**Q3. It is a clear known fact from history that over dependency of the countries on China has been detrimental to them. In view of this, how important it becomes for Myanmar to have better relations with India to counterbalance the influence of China in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** As China is a communist country, Myanmar should cooperate and promote relationship with India which is the democratic country.

**Q4. Despite close ties between two nations, Myanmar has lacked in its actions against the IIGs staying in Myanmar and therefore, it has led to some amount of trust deficit between two nations. What are your views on this?**

**Ans:** To my conclusion and view, it is correct, both countries should collaborate and take each responsibility for the border security.

**Q5. Myanmar Auditor General Maw Than has warned the NLD Govt in June 2020 that 40% of the country's debt is from China, which comes at a much higher interest rates than other Financial Institutions and therefore, it is a debt trap and may lead to Sri Lanka like situation in future. What is your opinion on this statement?**

**Ans:** This statement is correct. My view on this is that a nation should spend the budget based on the nation's financial situation according to the financial rule by responsible personnel.

**Q6. What is the current situation of armed conflict in Myanmar and can Military be defeated by local militias in a conflict?**

**Ans:** To my view, since the people of Myanmar involve and support in this armed conflicts from the side of the people's resisting force, Myanmar military will be defeated.

**Q7. What is your opinion on India's stand on the current situation in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** India is the largest democratic country in the world that the burning desire of the people of Myanmar which is the restoration of democracy in Myanmar should be supported by India.

**Q8. What according to you has led to the 01 Feb 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** To my view, the Military coup happened due to the mind set of perpetuation of Military rule in Myanmar political power.

**Q9. What is the current state of humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and how NUG is trying to sp the local people in this crisis?**

**Ans:** Due to armed conflicts, humanitarian crisis is increasing day by day in elsewhere of the Myanmar, NUG is seeking for help and supports for humanitarian reliefs to democratic countries, individual donors and societies as they could.

**Q10. The armed revolution has hugely affected education of children. The Mil Junta is trying to open schools for education of children. However, the same has been opposed by NUG & PDFs. How do you see the whole crisis affecting the edn of children and way forward?**

**Ans:** To be restored democracy many lives and properties have been sacrificed and lost, affecting economic status and all other sectors including children's education. To be able to overcome all these affects is to eliminate military dictatorship, this is my view and conclusion.

**Q11. The NUG claims control of almost half of Myanmar right now leading to deterioration of civil adm in the areas. How do you see provn of basic facilities to the people and maint of law & order in these areas in absence of the required civil adm?**

**Ans:** To fulfill the basic facilities for adm and maintain law and order in the control areas of the NUG, the local people are managing by themselves in cooperation with NUG at present, but my personal view is that if there is the support from neighboring countries is available it would be helpful.

**Q12. What are your views on the international sp for NUG vis-à-vis Mil Junta during the current crisis in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** As the Military Junta is violating human rights and crimes against humanity to the guiltless civilians, it is seen that international paid more conscious to NUG

especially by democratic countries and some Asian countries.

**Q13. How do you see regularisation in future of so many armed gps/militias born in Myanmar during this armed conflict?**

**Ans:** To my view, current local defense forces should be regularized in federal army of the Union in future after federal democratic union is established. Base on their interest, some may join to federal police at different states and some may join to governmental departments as they choice.

**Q14. How do you visualise the conclusion of current conflict? Will it lead to a purely democratic govt or current dispensation may continue or will it be a collusion of NUG-Myanmar Military as it was earlier?**

**Ans:** I envisioned that the Federal democratic will emerge soon and form a federal army of the union and the federal army will safeguard the people and the nation.

**Q15. If democracy prevails in Myanmar in future, how do you see the role of current Myanmar Military?**

**Ans:** To my view, when federal democratic union is emerged, the current military will be abolished and formed up a federal army of the union, under civil federal government. Military will no more involve in politic. Federal army will be responsible for safeguarding and protection of the people and the nation.

**Daw Amar Kyi, MLA, No1 Monywa Constituency, Sagaing Region**

**Q1. How do you see the India-Myanmar Relations in light of old ethnic/cultural ties, long land and maritime boundary with each other?**

**Ans:** There was a regular and normal relationship between India and Myanmar.

**Q2. What is your opinion on the large scale devp projects being undertaken by New Delhi in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Hope, It will have good impacts for being implemented project by Delhi in Myanmar.

**Q3. It is a clear known fact from history that over dependency of the countries on China has been detrimental to them. In view of this, how important it becomes for Myanmar to have better relations with India to counterbalance the influence of China in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Indian Government should closely and practically deal the NUG's struggle of establishment of federal democracy in Myanmar.

**Q4. Despite close ties between two nations, Myanmar has lacked in its actions against the IIGs staying in Myanmar and therefore, it has led to some amount of trust deficit between two nations. What are your views on this?**

**Ans:** It is seen that it is the results of the manipulation and control by former Myanmar Military, currently called Military Council.

**Q5. Myanmar Auditor General Maw Than has warned the NLD Govt in June 2020 that 40% of the country's debt is from China, which comes at a much higher interest rates than other Financial Institutions and therefore, it is a debt trap and may lead to Sri Lanka like situation in future. What is your opinion on this statement?**

**Ans:** It is correct. In 2015 to 2020, the NLD Government had bore burden on such loan repayment with high interest and could invest less development for the country.

**Q6. What is the current situation of armed conflict in Myanmar and can Military be defeated by local militias in a conflict?**

**Ans:** Military Junta killed civilian in cold blood, bombing villages and killed people, looting food, cattle and burnt civilians with alive, raped women and killed them. Up to the success, we determined to revolve and fight the military Junta.

**Q7. What is your opinion on India's stand on the current situation in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Despite India is the largest democratic Country in the world, to my view, India seemed not much involve in the struggling and revolution of democracy in Myanmar.

**Q8. What according to you has led to the 01 Feb 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** The landslide victory of NLD in 2020 election was not accepted and recognized by Myin Aung Hlaing and he wanted to convene reelection as he likes, that has led to military coup.

**Q9. What is the current state of humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and how NUG is trying to sp the local people in this crisis?**

**Ans:** Guiltless people suffered the brutal crash unjustly by arresting and torturing, burning alive, sentence to death, bombing villages and killing civilians in cold blood, looting houses and properties with cattle, raped women and killed them. NUG

Government requested funds, creating new methods for fund raising and supporting victims in line with the principle “by the people and for the people”.

**Q10. The armed revolution has hugely affected education of children. The Mil Junta is trying to open schools for education of children. However, the same has been opposed by NUG & PDFs. How do you see the whole crisis affecting the edn of children and way forward?**

**Ans:** There was no peaceful education throughout Military rule. Education level also was declining and low. NUG is initiating federal democracy education system which is to implement peaceful education and high level education.

**Q11. The NUG claims control of almost half of Myanmar right now leading to deterioration of civil adm in the areas. How do you see provn of basic facilities to the people and maint of law & order in these areas in absence of the required civil adm?**

**Ans:** NUG Government systematically formed up People’s Adm Group, People’s defense Group and People’s security Group and linked with security and judiciary committee of the control areas.

**Q12. What are your views on the international sp for NUG vis-à-vis Mil Junta during the current crisis in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** The International supports received by the NUG were for some humanitarian reliefs and the statements they issued that they worried about Myanmar crisis. Practical support is not yet much.

**Q13. How do you see regularisation in future of so many armed gps/militias born in Myanmar during this armed conflict?**

**Ans:** No particular comment. It is seen good. Federal Army will be established and joined by many after revolution is finished.

**Q14. How do you visualise the conclusion of current conflict? Will it lead to a purely democratic govt or current dispensation may continue or will it be a collusion of NUG-Myanmar Military as it was earlier?**

**Ans:** Military will be defeated, People will win the revolution. Pure democratic government will emerge. NUG stands hands in hands with the people. According to the voice of the people, Myanmar Military will be abolished.

**Q15. If democracy prevails in Myanmar in future, how do you see the role of current Myanmar Military?**

**Ans:** No more dictatorship rule and dictatorship will be eliminated.

**U Sein Aung, MP (Upper House), Paletwa Township Constituency**  
**Chin State**

**Q1. How do you see the India-Myanmar Relations in light of old ethnic/cultural ties, long land and maritime boundary with each other?**

**Ans:** Since long times, the relationship between India-Myanmar has been fair. It is hope to have a better relation continuously since India is the largest democratic country in the world. But current stand is not satisfactory towards Myanmar democratic force.

**Q2. What is your opinion on the large scale devp projects being undertaken by New Delhi in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** To my view, this project is very important to complete soon as possible, the Kaladan Multi-model Transit Transport Project (KMMTT) is the big amount project implemented by Delhi in Myanmar where the project is crossing Paletwa Township, meanwhile AA and CDR are activating, now AA is fighting Military Junta, to continue on this project India should coordinate with NUG.

**Q3. It is a clear known fact from history that over dependency of the countries on China has been detrimental to them. In view of this, how important it becomes for Myanmar to have better relations with India to counterbalance the influence of China in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** To counterbalance the influence of China, Both Myanmar and India should promote better relationship. India should recognize NUG as a legitimate government in order to counter balance China's influence.

**Q4. Despite close ties between two nations, Myanmar has lacked in its actions against the IIGs staying in Myanmar and therefore, it has led to some amount of trust deficit between two nations. What are your views on this?**

**Ans:** According to 2008 constitution, all armed groups are under the control of Myanmar Military head, this case is depending on the will and action of Military.

**Q5. Myanmar Auditor General Maw Than has warned the NLD Govt in June 2020 that 40% of the country's debt is from China, which comes at a much higher interest rates than other Financial Institutions and therefore, it is a debt trap and may lead to Sri Lanka like situation in future. What is your opinion on this statement?**

**Ans:** The warning given by Auditing General U Maw Than was correct.

**Q6. What is the current situation of armed conflict in Myanmar and can Military be defeated by local militias in a conflict?**

**Ans:** It is sure to be defeated sooner or later as revolving to abolish dictatorship rule of military elsewhere in the country.

**Q7. What is your opinion on India's stand on the current situation in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** It is to be concluded that India's stand on Myanmar is not clear and explicit.

**Q8. What according to you has led to the 01 Feb 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** According to 2008 constitution, military had more roles or got upper hand in all sections, but they wanted full power, and they wanted to protect and control military owned companies, and personnel richness, such factors led to Military coup.

**Q9. What is the current state of humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and how NUG is trying to sp the local people in this crisis?**

**Ans:** Food items for Daily consumption, health services are really in difficult situation during this crisis. These are due to difficult accessibility and restrictedness of access in armed conflicts areas. However NUG is supporting humanitarian reliefs to the victims by their respective ministry.

**Q10. The armed revolution has hugely affected education of children. The Mil Junta is trying to open schools for education of children. However, the same has been opposed by NUG & PDFs. How do you see the whole crisis affecting the edn of children and way forward?**

**Ans:** The Children's education is important. To open schools is initiated by both Military Junta and PDF, Military Junta deprived PDF's school opening, so PDF in turn opposed the military Junta's school opening. It is my view and conclusion.

**Q11. The NUG claims control of almost half of Myanmar right now leading to deterioration of civil adm in the areas. How do you see provn of basic facilities to the people and maint of law & order in these areas in absence of the required civil adm?**

**Ans:** In the areas where NUG controls, there is effective local adm and maintain law and order.

**Q12. What are your views on the international sp for NUG vis-à-vis Mil Junta during the current crisis in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** More and more countries support NUG, some countries support NUG by verbal and some countries in action.

**Q13. How do you see regularisation in future of so many armed gps/militias born in Myanmar during this armed conflict?**

**Ans:** In this armed groups, included leaders of strikes, CDMers Youths and students.

After the revolution is finished, some will join Federal Army and some will join Federal Police, and some will join departmental services as staff.

**Q14. How do you visualise the conclusion of current conflict? Will it lead to a purely democratic govt or current dispensation may continue or will it be a collusion of NUG-Myanmar Military as it was earlier?**

**Ans:** At the end, revolution will sure be successful and emerged a democratic Government inevitably.

**Q15. If democracy prevails in Myanmar in future, how do you see the role of current Myanmar Military?**

**Ans:** The Army's main task in Union security and safeguarding of the nation. Therefore the army has no way to involved in politic in the democratic Government.

**Salai Myo Htike, MLA, No 2 Paletwa Constituency, Chin State**

**Q1. How do you see the India-Myanmar Relations in light of old ethnic/cultural ties, long land and maritime boundary with each other?**

**Ans:** I thought the relationship between India-Myanmar has been sound since before. It was observed that they had cooperated and collaborated in ethical, cultural exchanges since long back as good will of neighbourhood.

**Q2. What is your opinion on the large scale devp projects being undertaken by New Delhi in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** View as good for both countries, After completion of the projects implementation, local socio-economic will be quite improving.

**Q3. It is a clear known fact from history that over dependency of the countries on China has been detrimental to them. In view of this, how important it becomes for Myanmar to have better relations with India to counterbalance the influence of China in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** China's cooperation is only for self benefit. India has to recognize the democratic force of Myanmar and support them to restore full democracy in Myanmar. It is seen to cooperate with Military Junta can not reach to good relation, only to cooperate with democratic force can lead to counterbalance China's influence.

**Q4. Despite close ties between two nations, Myanmar has lacked in its actions against the IIGs staying in Myanmar and therefore, it has led to some amount of trust deficit between two nations. What are your views on this?**

**Ans:** As long as the rule of Military dictatorship exists, and no full democracy, military will adopt such armed groups. It is to conclude that only when people's

power is in the hands of the people fully then both countries can cooperate and act in accordance with the agreement and rules.

**Q5. Myanmar Auditor General Maw Than has warned the NLD Govt in June 2020 that 40% of the country's debt is from China, which comes at a much higher interest rates than other Financial Institutions and therefore, it is a debt trap and may lead to Sri Lanka like situation in future. What is your opinion on this statement?**

**Ans:** I assumed that China took advantage in cooperation with Military dictatorship which practiced close-door policy for its benefit. It is to be concluded that until and unless there is no democracy, no voice and no freedom of expression by the people, the negative impacts will remain.

**Q6. What is the current situation of armed conflict in Myanmar and can Military be defeated by local militias in a conflict?**

**Ans:** Current crisis in Myanmar is the fighting between terrorist Military coup and People's defence Force of seeking justice. If the democratic countries support the people's defence force, the military junta will be defeated within a short period and able to drive out terrorist Military from Myanmar Country.

**Q7. What is your opinion on India's stand on the current situation in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** It is to be assumed that Indian Government's stand is not satisfactory in current Myanmar situation. It seemed that India is keeping quite although she is the largest democratic Country in the world.

**Q8. What according to you has led to the 01 Feb 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** To my view, 2021 Feb 1 Military coup was the misconduct of 2008

Constitution by the Military of Myanmar, according to Military view, voting was miscalculated in the election process, Military's top leaders didn't want to take pension, and negligence of democratic principle of the people. All these factors led to military coup.

**Q9. What is the current state of humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and how NUG is trying to sp the local people in this crisis?**

**Ans:** There are humanitarian reliefs requirements in in-country and outside countries. NUG is supporting humanitarian reliefs to the victims as could as possible up to the present day but no sufficiently.

**Q10. The armed revolution has hugely affected education of children. The Mil Junta is trying to open schools for education of children. However, the same has been opposed by NUG & PDFs. How do you see the whole crisis affecting the edn of children and way forward?**

**Ans:** Until the end of revolution, the difficulty will continue on, The international supports is much required. So long as the UN and International leaders kept watching, this will affect continuously. To take action to Military Junta will solve this problem.

**Q11. The NUG claims control of almost half of Myanmar right now leading to deterioration of civil adm in the areas. How do you see provn of basic facilities to the people and maint of law & order in these areas in absence of the required civil adm?**

**Ans:** It is so say that cooperation with NUG and its guidelines by the local adm where NUG controls, following NUG guidelines have sound adm, better judiciary works and able to maintain law and order.

**Q12. What are your views on the international sp for NUG vis-à-vis Mil Junta during the current crisis in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** To my view, Internationals should recognize NUG as legitimate Government. Only then this crisis can be solved. No countries support Military Junta.

**Q13. How do you see regularisation in future of so many armed gps/militias born in Myanmar during this armed conflict?**

**Ans:** To my view, when democratic Union is established, armed personnel will join the Federal Army by their own choice, and no other armed groups will be formed in the country.

**Q14. How do you visualise the conclusion of current conflict? Will it lead to a purely democratic govt or current dispensation may continue or will it be a collusion of NUG-Myanmar Military as it was earlier?**

**Ans:** For this statement, I have no conclusion.

**Q15. If democracy prevails in Myanmar in future, how do you see the role of current Myanmar Military?**

**Ans:** To my view, when democratic Union is established, Federal Army will safeguard and protect the people and the country. No more current Military.

**U Ral Hnin, MLA, Falam Township, Chin State**

**Q1. How do you see the India-Myanmar Relations in light of old ethnic/cultural ties, long land and maritime boundary with each other?**

**Ans:** India-Myanmar relations should be continuously carried on as previously. To my view, the relationship between India and Myanmar is always harmony.

**Q2. What is your opinion on the large scale devp projects being undertaken by New Delhi in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Large amount of project being implemented by New Delhi in Myanmar such as Kaladan Multi Model Transit Transport construction, Zorinpui High way from Paletwa to Mizoram state, Sittwe sea port project and Tanu-Kale-Monywa Asean High way project are essential and should be continued on, it will benefit for both countries.

**Q3. It is a clear known fact from history that over dependency of the countries on China has been detrimental to them. In view of this, how important it becomes for Myanmar to have better relations with India to counterbalance the influence of China in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** It is true and correct. To establish better Relationship with India is a must to counter balance the influence of China.

**Q4. Despite close ties between two nations, Myanmar has lacked in its actions against the IIGs staying in Myanmar and therefore, it has led to some amount of trust deficit between two nations. What are your views on this?**

**Ans:** So far I know, Military and India have agreement in previous time, I am not sure whether it is correct or not.

**Q5. Myanmar Auditor General Maw Than has warned the NLD Govt in June 2020 that 40% of the country's debt is from China, which comes at a much higher interest rates than other Financial Institutions and therefore, it is a debt trap and may lead to Sri Lanka like situation in future. What is your opinion on this statement?**

**Ans:** It is correct. During Thein Sein's presidency, he forced farmers to take loan with 4% interest that made farmers fell in to debt trap. Military viewed that when country people are poor it is easy to rule, it was their tactic.

**Q6. What is the current situation of armed conflict in Myanmar and can Military be defeated by local militias in a conflict?**

**Ans:** Everywhere there is an armed conflict in Myanmar more or less. Military Junta will be defeated. As Vietnam, all people against military junta, we must defeat them. They will not be able to collect soldiers. Only they have arms. Since they have less and less soldiers day after day, it is sure the people will win the revolution.

**Q7. What is your opinion on India's stand on the current situation in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** India's stand on Myanmar current situation is dissatisfactory. It is assumed that India is slow to hand to Myanmar crisis.

**Q8. What according to you has led to the 01 Feb 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Small parties who were defeated in the general election persuaded and provoked Senior General Myin Aung Hlaing to take over the state power, Myint Aung Hlaing, he himself had a burning desire to be the president, strong selfishness to protect his properties, properties of old leaders who were veterans, cronies and perpetual control and mad in exploitation of natural resources, for all these multiple

unfair attitudes led him to take over the state power by violating constitutional law.

**Q9. What is the current state of humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and how NUG is trying to sp the local people in this crisis?**

**Ans:** NUG is supporting current humanitarian related crisis from the budget they received from Burma bill and sale funds as could as possible to those of the fire victims, houses destroyed, shot dead by military etc.

**Q10. The armed revolution has hugely affected education of children. The Mil Junta is trying to open schools for education of children. However, the same has been opposed by NUG & PDFs. How do you see the whole crisis affecting the edn of children and way forward?**

**Ans:** It is assumed that military's education is not a purely sympathetic, just to pass the grade in name sake, organizing them to respect monarchy, neglect democracy education, leading to unqualified education, spoiling the country. Meanwhile they send their children to abroad for their study.

**Q11. The NUG claims control of almost half of Myanmar right now leading to deterioration of civil adm in the areas. How do you see provn of basic facilities to the people and maint of law & order in these areas in absence of the required civil adm?**

**Ans:** So far I know, civilian administration is applied in such NUG's control areas, and for judicial affairs, finding learned and educated persons as possible as they could, it is seen very successful.

**Q12. What are your views on the international sp for NUG vis-à-vis Mil Junta during the current crisis in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** It is to be assumed that all Democratic countries and some Asean countries give

more supports to NUG rather than Military Junta, no country support Military Junta except China and Russia for own benefit.

**Q13. How do you see regularisation in future of so many armed gps/militias born in Myanmar during this armed conflict?**

**Ans:** It is believed that many of the revolutionist will turn to civilian by their own choice after revolution is finished. Some will join Federal Army of the Federal Union and standard Army of the Federal Union established by Federal Union Government, and some will join to Federal Police in respective federal states/ Units.

**Q14. How do you visualise the conclusion of current conflict? Will it lead to a purely democratic govt or current dispensation may continue or will it be a collusion of NUG-Myanmar Military as it was earlier?**

**Ans:** It is believed that armed conflicts soon will finish. It will not be happened as previously ruled by the army. There will be the only Federal Army of the Union and they will safeguard and protect the people and the country.

**Q15. If democracy prevails in Myanmar in future, how do you see the role of current Myanmar Military?**

**Ans:** The current Military will be abolished as soon as revolution is finished.

**He Dun, MP (Upper House), Falam Township Constituency, Chin State**

**Q1. How do you see the India-Myanmar Relations in light of old ethnic/cultural ties, long land and maritime boundary with each other?**

**Ans:** To my view, India-Myanmar Relation has been sound and smooth since British rule to the present time as both countries have similar ethnic/ cultural ties and perspectives.

**Q2. What is your opinion on the large scale devp projects being undertaken by New Delhi in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** The large scale development projects being undertaken by New Delhi in Myanmar should be continued on to the accomplishments as these projects are crucial and beneficial to the community living in both countries, such as Kaladan Multi Model Transit Transport, Zorinpui high way construction from Paletwa to Mizoram state, Tamu-Kale-Monywa Road project are paramount important for both countries. It is essential to promote better cooperation between the two countries, so that both India and Myanmar will benefit commercially, socially and politically throughout generations.

**Q3. It is a clear known fact from history that over dependency of the countries on China has been detrimental to them. In view of this, how important it becomes for Myanmar to have better relations with India to counterbalance the influence of China in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** I strongly agree with you. Myanmar must have a better relations with India is essential and paramount important to counterbalance the influence of China in Myanmar in all sectors and for all corners, that is, in all economical, social and political dimensions and for future development and prosperity of both countries.

**Q4. Despite close ties between two nations, Myanmar has lacked in its actions against the IIGs staying in Myanmar and therefore, it has led to some amount of trust deficit between two nations. What are your views on this?**

**Ans:** To my view, it seemed correct, Myanmar Military Junta has no firm stand on agreement, no faithfulness to others seeking only for their betterment and benefit so far I know.

**Q5. Myanmar Auditor General Maw Than has warned the NLD Govt in June 2020 that 40% of the country's debt is from China, which comes at a much higher interest rates than other Financial Institutions and therefore, it is a debt trap and may lead to Sri Lanka like situation in future. What is your opinion on this statement?**

**Ans:** Sure, I fully agreed with this statement, Myanmar can plunge into a debt trap unless in timely find the remedy and solution as the NLD government had initiated to prevent China's debt trap by taking loans from other countries and financial org such as IMF and Japan with low interests and repaid loans immediately about 50% to China in its era as could as possible. To counterbalance China's influence, the promotion of India-Myanmar relationship is inevitable and essential.

**Q6. What is the current situation of armed conflict in Myanmar and can Military be defeated by local militias in a conflict?**

**Ans:** Currently the armed conflicts occur elsewhere in Myanmar, more severely in Chin state, Sagaing region, Magwe region, Kachin, kayah and Karen state, now in Rakhine as well, Hope the Military will be defeated soon by the resistant forces, because most people in Myanmar approximately around 70% support resistant forces for most people of Myanmar viewed that the military leaders unjustly and unconstitutionally took the state power, but local resistant forces and militias together with the people are standing on justice and fighting for justice.

**Q7. What is your opinion on India's stand on the current situation in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** I felt that India is handling cleverly the current situation in Myanmar with neutral policy anyhow it is seen flexible. We highly expected India Govt to recognize NUG as a legitimate Govt of Myanmar officially in order to restore democracy in Myanmar soonest possible because India is the largest democracy country in the world.

**Q8. What according to you has led to the 01 Feb 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** To my view, the 01 Feb 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar has been rooted since 1962 of General Ne Win's policy of Military dictatorship. Seeing the landslide victory of NLD in the general multi party election in 2015 and 2020 respectively, 25% of military participation in their 2008 Constitution doesn't work, so the military had no other mean except to over throw the winner unconstitutionally. Power mad (Maniac) and no rule of law, want to protect illegal owned properties, hungry in power, this every mind set of dictatorship has led to the military coup in Myanmar.

**Q9. What is the current state of humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and how NUG is trying to sp the local people in this crisis?**

**Ans:** Currently humanitarian crisis is surging up day after day due to occurrences of armed conflicts elsewhere in country, thus according to media, even in Mizoram alone there is over 40 thousand refugees and in Thailand more than 100 thousands refugees approximately, IDPs in elsewhere of Myanmar more than 13 thousands camps with (1.3 million) people. To support local people in this crisis, NUG is seeking individual, humanitarian supports org, donor countries for support and helping them as could as possible, moreover trying to negotiate India and Thailand Govt for permission of cross boarder for humanitarian crisis since International

supports vs Military Junta is totally ineffective, even the military junta disrespected Asea's 5 point consensus which included humanitarian assistance to crisis.

**Q10. The armed revolution has hugely affected education of children. The Mil Junta is trying to open schools for education of children. However, the same has been opposed by NUG & PDFs. How do you see the whole crisis affecting the edn of children and way forward?**

**Ans:** To my view, the military junta's education is merely name sake, no quality, just to show international that the country is stable and may have other ulterior motive for victimization of children while schooling to divert problems to NUG & PDFs. Whilst NUG and PDF provided home base, on line and regular education in line with federal education levels which is the students centered.

**Q11. The NUG claims control of almost half of Myanmar right now leading to deterioration of civil adm in the areas. How do you see provn of basic facilities to the people and maint of law & order in these areas in absence of the required civil adm?**

**Ans:** NUG encouraged formation of local adm and provided on line short training on administration procedures, providing small amount of funds to those areas for basic facilities, and to maintain law and order, local adm established judiciary team with reliable judges and persons. The argument of local adm is deteriorating in the control areas of the NUG in not correct in the practical field conversely the adm of Military areas are actually deteriorating.

**Q12. What are your views on the international sp for NUG vis-à-vis Mil Junta during the current crisis in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** So far we learnt, international support such as WFP support on humanitarian reliefs to Mindat Township, Chin State control by Mil Junta were not reached to the victims, seen not effective, even Mil Junta disrespects Asean's 5 points consensus that included humanitarian supports in Myanmar. At the mean time, NUG is seeking

international supports for humanitarian reliefs and helping to the victims through local adm formed by NUG as could as possible, moreover NUG is trying to negotiate with India and Thailand Govts for permission on cross boarder in order to supports Myanmar crisis effectively. Expecting to permit cross boarder by Indian Govt which would help NUG' work tremendously on humanitarian reliefs program.

**Q13. How do you see regularisation in future of so many armed gps/militias born in Myanmar during this armed conflict?**

**Ans:** To my view, even in this armed conflicts or interim period, NUG/NUCC has a plan to establish Federal Army in Myanmar which would be the only armed institution to safeguard the people and the country and gradually reduce armed gps/militias by open dialogue and awareness advocacy within revolutionary and interim period. To establish a Federal Army only in Myanmar and federal police force in each federal state/Units. Current Armed groups will join into each institution of federal army or federal police force based on their interest.

**Q14. How do you visualise the conclusion of current conflict? Will it lead to a purely democratic govt or current dispensation may continue or will it be a collusion of NUG-Myanmar Military as it was earlier?**

**Ans:** Hope the armed conflicts will not last long for the PDFs are supported by most people of the country, visualising a purely democratic govt be able to form up but may take a little time for negotiation and constitutional drafting and sufficient consensus process, no more Myanmar Military as earlier which was the root cause of disunity and discrimination, because a federal Armed group will be under Civil Govt and no more involvement in politics proven by constitution.

**Q15. If democracy prevails in Myanmar in future, how do you see the role of current Myanmar Military?**

**Ans:** If democracy prevails in Myanmar in future, as mentioned above, soon to be

formed a federal army only in Myanmar, current Myanmar Military will be abolished as soon as defeated by local armed groups/militias and good soldiers from military also will join to the federal army based on their interest.

**Dr Ngai Tam Maung, Member of Amyotha Hluttaw (House of Nationalities),  
Mindat Constituency**

**Q1. How do you see the India-Myanmar Relations in light of old ethnic/cultural ties, long land and maritime boundary with each other?**

**Ans:** Naturally, geographically, anthropologically, historically, and even politically, the people of India and the people of Myanmar are brothers and sisters, and good neighbors. However, only Democratic government of Myanmar will be the most promising path to stable India-Myanmar Relations, which are vital for peace and security of the region.

**Q2. What is your opinion on the large scale devp projects being undertaken by New Delhi in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** As mentioned in above, India and Myanmar are good neighbors. And Myanmar, as a developing country, has to call international investments. At the same time, our economic interest is woven together with our political interest. According to current situations in Myanmar, New Delhi needs to make sure that these projects do not support directly or indirectly the military junta that is torturing the country, Myanmar. If the projects do not support the military junta directly or indirectly, we are happy for the large scale devp projects being undertaken by New Delhi in Myanmar.

**Q3. It is a clear known fact from history that over dependency of the countries on China has been detrimental to them. In view of this, how important it becomes for Myanmar to have better relations with India to counterbalance the influence of China in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** We know that it is very important for Myanmar to build better relations with India to counterbalance the influence of China in Myanmar. However, the success of building good relations comes from both side, especially from the stronger side. Both

Myanmar and India have to build good relations together.

**Q4. Despite close ties between two nations, Myanmar has lacked in its actions against the IIGs staying in Myanmar and therefore, it has led to some amount of trust deficit between two nations. What are your views on this?**

**Ans:** To get the right answer not just for this question but also for India-Myanmar relations, we have firstly to make clear that the actions of an institution, Myanmar military, are not the actions of Myanmar. This institution, after misusing the country for its own interest for many years and is now fighting its own people. This kind of institution will never be able to build trust between two nations. Therefore, the right answer to build trust between India and Myanmar for India-Myanmar relations is to build relationship between two democratic governments elected by respective people.

**Q5. Myanmar Auditor General Maw Than has warned the NLD Govt in June 2020 that 40% of the country's debt is from China, which comes at a much higher interest rates than other Financial Institutions and therefore, it is a debt trap and may lead to Sri Lanka like situation in future. What is your opinion on this statement?**

**Ans:** As member of parliament, we also are responsible for the country's debt even though borrowing party of these debts is military leaders who didn't have legitimate to represent the nation. At the same time, we are responsible also for avoiding a debt trap. We have to learn lessons from the suspension of the Myitsone hydropower dam project. In the political and economic transition to a new system of civilian government in the future, the people of Myanmar will become decision makers and any country that borrows money to these illegitimate political actors focusing only on getting higher interest rates will face greater competition in bidding for projects in Myanmar and may become frustrated. And another lesson we have to learn is the visit of Chinese space-satellite tracker vessel Yuan Wang 5 to Sri Lanka's

Hambantota port on August 11. India should help Myanmar to be able to avoid China's debt trap so as Chinese space-satellite tracker vessel will not visit Kyaudaw, Rakai State.

**Q6. What is the current situation of armed conflict in Myanmar and can Military be defeated by local militias in a conflict?**

**Ans:** The military junta is attacking not just People Defence Forces but also civilian and civilian infrastructure from both the air and the ground. The military junta is committing massive human rights violations daily across the country and it affects civilians. Therefore, the people of Myanmar have been standing firm in denying the military junta and calling for international support. Unwavering determination of the people of Myanmar is to uproot military dictators from the political soil of Myanmar.

Since the first day of the coup, Feb 1 of 2021, the military junta has been defeated politically. Until today, the military junta does not have international recognition. Both the UN and ASEAN have refused to recognize the military junta as the official government of Myanmar. And the military junta has become weaker and weaker and lost territory month by month to People Defence Forces (PDFs) and Ethnic Revolution Organizations (EROs). On another hand, with the full support of people, PDFs (CDFs in Chin State) and EROs become stronger and stronger and can enlarge their territory step by step to implement our shared goal of founding a Federal Democratic Union.

**Q7. What is your opinion on India's stand on the current situation in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** I feel the government of India fears that the acceptance of Myanmar's pro-democracy forces might cause tensions with the military junta and affect India's security and economic interests. Actually, India's relationship with the military junta not only undermines our pursuit of a peaceful federal democracy, but it also affects security and economic interests of India because the conflict in the Myanmar-India border areas undermines India's security and geostrategic economic projects planned

through Myanmar. The military junta now has lost territorial control in a certain degree and is preoccupied with peoples' national uprising, and offers virtually nothing to India. As the largest democracy in the world, India should not maintain a relationship with the military junta that is killing the people of Myanmar and burning their houses.

**Q8. What according to you has led to the 01 Feb 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Under the administration of NLD government, Myanmar's democratic transition was obviously in progress but not according to the 2008 Constitution in which the military made sure to safeguard its own role and supremacy in national affairs but according to the will of the people of Myanmar. Therefore, the NLD see the results of the 2020 election as a mandate for its plan of constitutional reform and of founding a federal democratic union according to the will of the people of Myanmar. On another hand, Min Aung Hlaing and some military leaders see the results of the 2020 election as a threat that will undermine the military's role and supremacy in national affairs so that they will lose their opportunity to abuse their powers for their own benefits. Therefore, the military coup was happened in Myanmar on 01 Feb 2021.

**Q9. What is the current state of humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and how NUG is trying to sp the local people in this crisis?**

**Ans:** According to Annual Report on the Activities of Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management of the National unity Government, MoHADMD of NUG has been implementing the following humanitarian activities in accordance with the policies, strategies and action plans spending the total budget of (2.73) billion MMK from 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021 to 10<sup>th</sup> April 2022;

Sr. No	Activities	MMK(Million)
1	Internally displaced population and Armed conflict affected population	1334.20
2	Food security for local communities and local defence force	803.90
3	Families with the fallen heroes and the injured	113.72
4	Civil Servants who joined Civil Disobedience Movement	228.99
5	Vulnerable people and their families	82.39
6	Political prisoner and their family members	44.25
7	Natural Disaster affected communities	10.62
8	General Support for humanitarian measures	113.49

Of all the support delivered, the highest amount, almost half of the funding has been spent on the humanitarian delivery for internally displaced people. And despite hardships, Ministry of humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management of NUG provided 100.38 million kyats worth of humanitarian aid to people in need across the country who have been suffering due to inhumane acts of military terrorists during April 2022.

**Q10. The armed revolution has hugely affected education of children. The Mil Junta is trying to open schools for education of children. However, the same has been opposed by NUG & PDFs. How do you see the whole crisis affecting the edn of children and way forward?**

**Ans:** To see the right view, we need to look it from the right perspective. This revolution is started by generation Z who are the youngest generation in Myanmar who have been rejecting the military junta paying any price, even their lives. And the most of their teacher have joined Civilian Disobedience Movement (CDM). The military junta is trying to open schools not for the sack of children but for the sack of themselves. As in the case of debt trap, we should not see only the bait, we need to see the trap.

In Mindat Township, my constituency, the military junta is trying to open only 5% of schools of Mindat Township. The military junta is trying to block transporting stationary for children including test books when the Mindat Township People's Administration Team tries to open 95% of schools of Mindat Township. However, NUG and CDF (local PDF) find the way to transport stationary and text books for children. Now, Mindat Township- PAT has opened 169 schools for 11341 students and 300 teachers who joined CDM and 877 volunteers, totally 1315 teachers are teaching children. This evidence shows us that NUG and PDFs are trying to open schools for children and that NUG and PDFs do not oppose to open schools but they oppose only the military junta and its actions.

# of school	KG		G1		G2		G3		G4		G5		G6		G7	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
169 Schools	1027	1030	879	827	615	603	560	601	749	687	503	511	406	373	431	400

G8		G9		Total
Male	Female	Male	Female	
308	300	195	206	11341

CDM Staff*		Volunteers		Total
Male	Female	Male	Female	
147	153	299	578	1315

**Q11. The NUG claims control of almost half of Myanmar right now leading to deterioration of civil adm in the areas. How do you see provn of basic facilities to the people and maint of law & order in these areas in absence of the required civil adm?**

**Ans:** I think Mindat Township, my constituency, is good example for the answer of

this question. Mindat Township People's Administration Team which is formed on 23 February 2021 is under the administration of NUG since it is formed on 16 April 2021. NUG provided us with humanitarian assistances, medicines and now also the budget for education, etc. 95% of Mindat Township is under the administration of Mindat Township-PAT. There are (9) departments in Mindat Township-PAT including judicial department. Currently, NUG does not have Agriculture Ministry but Mindat Township-PAT has Agriculture Department and Animal Husbandry Department which are responsible for food security of the township. Our civilian administration is not deteriorating but getting stronger and become more systematic month by month though sometime soldier of military junta invaded our territory and destroyed some of our houses.

And there are townships which are under systematic administration of EROs (Ethnic Revolution Organizations). NUG is also trying to support nascent local administration efforts in areas controlled by the resistance. However, it does not mean that NUG can support effectively, NUG itself needs much more support and funding.

**Q12. What are your views on the international sp for NUG vis-à-vis Mil Junta during the current crisis in Myanmar?**

**Ans:** Although we can say that the international response to the current crisis in Myanmar is inadequate, it is obvious that the international supports for NUG is much stronger than supports for military junta. Until today, the military junta does not have international recognition. Both the UN and ASEAN have refused to recognize the military junta as the official government of Myanmar.

**Q13. How do you see regularisation in future of so many armed gps/militias born in Myanmar during this armed conflict?**

**Ans:** We all know that our clear goal and healthy principles always help us to go on the right track. The common goal of all armed groups born in this armed conflict is to uproot military dictators' supremacy from the soil of national affairs. And one of our

shared political ideologies is “the supremacy of civilian authority”. We, the people of Myanmar, experienced bitterly the supremacy of military authority.

It is sure that to regularize many armed groups will not be an easy work. We will need time, discussions, negotiations and even compromising. However, regularization armed groups will be guided by our common goal and our shared political ideologies.

**Q14. How do you visualise the conclusion of current conflict? Will it lead to a purely democratic govt or current dispensation may continue or will it be a collusion of NUG-Myanmar Military as it was earlier?**

**Ans:** In his testimony to the international parliamentary inquiry on Myanmar, Scot Marciel who was the United States Ambassador to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, to Indonesia and to Myanmar said, “The international community needs to rethink its approach, starting with the understanding that Myanmar is not facing a conflict between two legitimate political actors, but rather a national resistance or revolution against an institution that has brutalized that country for decades for its own benefit and that is now waging war against its own population. To be fair, some governments understand that, as evidenced by a senior U.S. State Department official’s recent comment that the military were basically “thugs” with no support”.

I strongly believe that the future of Myanmar is on the band of the people of Myanmar. The shared goal of the people of Myanmar is to found a Federal Democratic Union. Therefore, this revolution will lead to a Federal Democratic Union.

**Q15. If democracy prevails in Myanmar in future, how do you see the role of current Myanmar Military?**

**Ans:** After the revolution, the people of Myanmar will decide the role of current Myanmar military. Therefore, it will depend on how Myanmar military has been treating the people of Myanmar.

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2. Daw Cho Cho Win, MP, Mawlaik Township Constituency, Sagaing Region.
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4. He Dun, MP (Upper House), Falam Township Constituency, Chin State
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For example, Indonesia in 1945, Vietnam in 1945, Philippines in 1946, Myanmar in 1948, Laos in 1949 and Cambodia in 1953.

For instance, Indonesia, which has the largest Muslim population in the world, has as its national bird the fabled bird from Buddhist and Hindu mythology known as Garuda. In addition to the popular Garuda airlines, Indonesia's prime airline carrier, Garuda is represented in an impressive ornate statue in the Prambanan Temple, and also made its way into the Wayang, or the traditional puppet culture of Java. The Garuda makes its pervasive presence felt in Thailand as well, a predominantly Buddhist country, where it is more mythically represented with a human torso and red feathers.

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The present domestic situation in Myanmar does not pose a threat to international or regional peace and security” and “similar problems exists in many other countries as well”.

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## **Publications**

1. Digvijay Singh. (2024). **India-Myanmar-China Conundrum : Marriage of Convenience?.** *The Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS)*, New Delhi.

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**ABSTRACT**

**INDIA-MYANMAR RELATIONS: A STUDY OF ITS  
STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS**

**AN ABSTRACT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF  
PHILOSOPHY**

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**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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**INDIA-MYANMAR RELATIONS: A STUDY OF ITS STRATEGIC  
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**BY**

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**In partial fulfilment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of  
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## **INDIA-MYANMAR RELATIONS: A STUDY OF ITS STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS**

### **ABSTRACT**

India and Myanmar were historically part of the extended British Empire in Asia. Since the two countries became independent after the end of World War II, relations between them have by and large been friendly. At the outset, Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru and U Nu worked closely with each other in the area of economic development. India even provided some military assistance to Myanmar, and both were active members of the Non- Aligned Movement. However, relations between the two became strained in 1962. India strongly opposed the imposition of military dictatorship in Myanmar by General Ne Win and supported the pro-democracy forces. The Ne Win regime adopted an anti-Soviet stance at a time when relations between India and the Soviet Union were burgeoning, refused to join the Commonwealth of Nations and withdrew from the Non-Aligned Movement in 1979.

Relations between India and Myanmar did improve from 1988 onward, however, although some tensions remained. India continued to sympathize with prodemocracy groups and awarded the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding to Aung San Suu Kyi in 1993, by which time she had already become *persona non grata* to the Myanmar government. The isolationist strategy adopted by the State Law and Order Restoration Council further hampered the renewal of full relations between the two countries. After 1993, however, India's policy toward Myanmar was reviewed and India adopted a more pragmatic and less moralistic stance. This purposeful shift from an idealistic foreign policy to one that was firmly anchored in realpolitik has been the driving force behind the improvement of relations between the two countries. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's focus on the Southeast Asian nations reflected India's growing interest in its regional neighbourhood.

Former Indian foreign secretary Shyam Saran explains India's quest to reach out to its Asian neighbours in these words: Proximity is the most difficult and testing among the diplomatic challenges a country faces. We have, therefore, committed ourselves to giving the highest priority to closer political, economic and other ties with our neighbours in South Asia. Geography imparts a unique position to India in the geo-politics of the Asian Continent, with our footprint reaching well beyond South Asia and our interests straddling across different sub-categories of Asia-be it East Asia, West Asia, Central Asia, South Asia or South-East Asia.

India's Look East policy was targeted at opening markets in Southeast Asia, and cooperation with Myanmar was important for its implementation. That Bangladesh was a recalcitrant partner in this endeavour further highlighted the importance of Myanmar. Without this shift in policy, the growth of several of India's northeastern states would have been hindered by the attendant risk of fuelling insurgencies.

India's interest in Myanmar and the Look East policy also reflect growing international interest in Asia as an engine of economic growth in the twenty-first century. Myanmar supports India's quest for a place in the sun and is comfortable with India's increasing engagement with its immediate and extended neighbourhood. For the Myanmar government, the additional purpose of addressing problems in the northeastern states comes as a welcome part of the deal. Moreover, India's move to engage Myanmar closely reflects its growing concern over Myanmar's jettisoning its policy of neutrality toward India and China and gradually tilting towards China.

### **India-Myanmar: Complex but Compulsive Dependency**

India and Myanmar are neighbouring each other and have a traditional, close and longstanding relationship. Through many ups and downs in history, the political, cultural, religious and social relations between India and Myanmar are the

basis for bilateral relations in modern times. On January 4, 1948, India and Myanmar officially established diplomatic ties, opening a new era in the history of bilateral relations. Then, on July 7, 1951, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar Sao Hkun Hkio and Indian Ambassador in Myanmar M.A Rauf had signed the Treaty of Friendship in Yangon (Myanmar) which is a historical landmark taking friendly relations between India and Myanmar to a new level. Warmth in bilateral relations is reflected in the statement of Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru:<sup>2</sup> “We are in frequent touch with the Government of Burma on many matters.

For India-Myanmar relations, if the period 1948-1962 showed the friendly and close relationship, the years 1962-1991 were the period when the relationship between two countries was reduced and almost “freeze”. The event that marked India-Myanmar relations turning the other way was the military coup led by General Ne Win to overthrow the civilian government of U Nu, ushering in the period when the army took power in Myanmar in March, 1962. Under the rule of the Ne Win government, Myanmar had implemented domestic and foreign policies that were not conducive to this bilateral relation. On the domestic side, Ne Win’s government had ordered the expulsion of the Indian diaspora community from Myanmar in order to quickly abolish the role and status of the Indian business class.

During the period of General Ne Win's reign (1962 - 1988), India generally maintained a neutral relationship with little regard for Myanmar. At that time, the Indian leaders considered that the first priority was the commitment to “democratic values”, while the “security concerns” were considered secondary in India's foreign policy with Myanmar. The attitudes and policies of the Indian government to the Myanmar government on democracy had brought relations between two countries to the lowest point during 1988 due to the fierce reaction from India against Myanmar government’s action to suppress the protesters, including many of Indian descent. After the “August 8, 1988” event, China became the close ally and had an important voice for Myanmar. By the end of the 1990s, China had also emerged as Myanmar’s principal aid provider and economic partner.

In the opposite side, along with the actions to suppress the democracy movement, the denial of the parliamentary election results in 1990 of the Myanmar military government also made the international community strongly condemn this government, including India. Therefore, strategically, due to the combination of the isolation of the United States and Western countries from Myanmar, India's policy in the period of 1988-1991 has contributed in bringing Myanmar closer to China. Since 1988, China became the only country with close ties with Myanmar's military government. "The Burmese regularly affirm their appreciation of Chinese friendship and the Chinese in turn continue to provide key diplomatic support".

The increasingly close relationship between Myanmar and China is an expensive lesson for India in terms of national strategy and interests. This has forced India to recalculate its foreign policy towards neighbouring Myanmar since the early 1990s.

Since 1992, in the field of politics and diplomacy, the relationship between two countries have gradually improved and developed through regular exchanges and contacts in high-level relations, through which many important documents have been signed.

In 2014, when Prime Minister Modi took over the office, India's Act East Policy (AEP) was unveiled at the 12th ASEAN - India Summit, held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. In his Opening Statement at the 12th ASEAN-India Summit, Prime Minister Modi said: "A new era of economic development, industrialisation and trade has begun in India. Externally, India's "Look East Policy" has become "Act East Policy".

## **Statement of the Problem**

When a country reassesses the critical strategic decisions, it is facing as India currently does, the importance and potential path dependency of such decisions can often create a temptation to put off making a final determination. An additional difficulty in the case of India is the country's slow pace for deliberating and deciding on matters of grand strategy. Still, it would be unwise to put off making a decision for a couple of reasons. New Delhi has a limited window of opportunity as India's strategic choices may narrow over time. If New Delhi does not choose, it risks having the choice made for it by others. Whatever decision India makes must be deliberate, not one that is forced on it by others because New Delhi has refused to make a choice itself.

A second reason for decisiveness is that strategic capabilities have long lead times and cannot be built up quickly. This is true for all of India's choices. The domestic military capacity building, for example, cannot be done in a hurry. After all, it takes time to determine what kind of military forces and equipment India needs, to buy or build these assets, and to deploy them. Likewise, building strategic alignments also requires time. Expecting India to find a suitable strategic partner after a crisis has already developed would be risky: potential partners may not be available when New Delhi needs them. And even if there were willing partners in such a situation, it might not be possible for them to deliver help quickly enough to make a difference. The longer India waits to decide, the harder these decisions become. It is even possible that some choices may no longer be available. Indian decision-makers must also resist the temptation to postpone critical short and medium-term strategic decisions in the hope that long-term ~~comi~~ economic development will suffice to address the challenges.

For any state, security has to be the pre-eminent concern because without it no other national objectives can be pursued, including economic development. India is a powerful state that dominates South Asia, a condition that has given New Delhi a large margin for error and has historically encouraged Indian decision-makers to

take a much more relaxed attitude toward its security than is healthy. But China's rise is significantly reducing India's margin for error, and Indian policymakers need to recognize this changed reality. For all these reasons, India cannot afford to wait. A number of external and internal factors point to Myanmar's strategic importance for India.

Myanmar is located at the junction of East, South, and Southeast Asia and functions as a land bridge to Southeast and East Asia. For the government of Myanmar, a policy of engagement with India not only helps balance its excessive dependence on China but also helps to boost its "international image and legitimacy".

Myanmar is the second-largest of India's neighbours and the largest on its eastern flank. The two countries share a land border of 1,643 kilometres, almost all of it unfenced, along which India's Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram states border Myanmar's Kachin, Sagaing and Chin states. Multiple insurgent groups operate in the northeastern states of India and they are known to operate from bases in Myanmar. Such groups can be successfully tackled only on a bilateral basis.

Myanmar is a key player in the Bay of Bengal littoral region and shares a maritime boundary with India. Given the increasing significance that India now ascribes to its own centrality in the northern Indian Ocean region, Myanmar now shares in that importance. An unfriendly Myanmar could host a rival naval presence in the Bay of Bengal and complicate Indian security.

Myanmar shares 2,185-kilometres border with China, which is located next to the disputed section of the India-China border. Myanmar is said to have the tenth-largest gas reserves in the world, estimated at 90 trillion cubic feet. It is in India's interest to gain from its proximity in the use of these resources. India can provide help by way of investment and technology for exploration as well as production.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since February 2021 when the military seized control of the country in a coup and detained Aung San Suu Kyi and other leaders of her National League for Democracy (NLD). India had been categorical from the very beginning that the gains made by Myanmar over the last decades on the path towards democracy should not be undermined. But for India, challenges emanating from Myanmar and adjoining areas do not cease depending upon the complexion of the government. And direct engagement with the State Administration Council (SAC) and other stakeholders can no longer be put on hold. The deadly attack on an Assam Rifles convoy in November 2021 near the Myanmar border in Manipur was a reminder about the proclivity of China for creating trouble in the Northeast, especially at a time when border tensions along the LAC remain high.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also had an impact because of the porous border between India and Myanmar. For India, a humanitarian crisis as a result of the pandemic-induced economic crisis in Myanmar would be a lose-lose situation and it should be prevented with the utmost urgency.

India, as the only major democratic country bordering Myanmar, should insist on demonstrable progress on the road to democratic transition, but being a neighbour, it is also aware that Myanmar has never responded well to international pressures. The role of Myanmar's army would be key to the unfolding of any democratic transition there, so an active engagement would be needed. Even as it continues to call for a restoration of the democratic process, both bilaterally and at various multilateral fora, New Delhi has to engage with the army in Myanmar to address Indian concerns as well as to make it a stakeholder that can deliver on the democratic front, including the release of political prisoners. Marginalising the army will only push it into China's arms, which only has its economic and defence interests to secure from Naypyidaw.

Ever since the coup, China's economic grip over Myanmar has only become tighter with a special focus on projects critical for the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor. While the West continues to condemn and sanction, China is investing and

pulling Myanmar into its orbit. The US has continued to use the overused threat of ever more sanctions, though to little avail. Myanmar's army seems to have ceased bothering about the rhetoric from the West. It is the neighbouring countries that have to shape the behaviour of the military junta in a constructive manner. It is not surprising that countries like Japan, South Korea and most ASEAN members have all moved forward with engaging the military junta in Myanmar. It is, therefore, imperative that New Delhi too reaches out and shapes its own trajectory in Myanmar.

### **Review of the Literature**

Studies relating to India-Myanmar strategic relationship, significance and future road map have been undertaken by many scholars. Therefore, a review of some of the relevant literature is presented as under:

Bertil Lintner (2012), in his book "Great Game East" contextualized the expression "Great Game" for Asia, existing at the crossroads of the Indian Subcontinent, China and Southeast Asia. The overall theme of the book is to examine Sino-Indian rivalries in Tibet, North-East India, Myanmar and the Indian Ocean region. The author has explained minute details and accounts of the local narratives of people, non-state actors, spies and agents, journalists and authors and most importantly, government officials and authorities in North-East India, Myanmar and China.

Thant Myint U's (2012) work on "Where China meets India" highlights the way in which Myanmar and its strategic importance will play a key role in developing India's economy and the emerging relation between India and China. China and India have always been separated not only by the Himalayas, but also by the impenetrable jungle and remote areas that once stretched across Burma. Now this frontier is vanishing – forests cut down, dirt roads replaced by superhighways – leaving China and India closer together than at any time in history. This basic shift

in geography is as profound as the opening of the Suez Canal and is taking place just as the centre of the world's economy moves to the East. Nehginpao Kipgen (2016) in "Democratisation of Myanmar" studied the process of democratic transition in Myanmar. He outlines the factors that contributed to the political transition in the country and the circumstances that led to transition from five-decade military rule to democracy. How political groups especially National League for Democracy and the military that had been hostile to the idea and practice of democracy came to work together, paving the way for the political change after protracted struggle. His research also explores the geostrategic and economic reasons for the extended military rule where it's two giant neighbours, India and China play a key role.

In the book written by Peter Popham (2016), "The lady and the Generals", the author brings out the vulnerability of Burma to developments beyond its borders. The Burmese have, with time, grown to be much braver to fight against all odds and greater resistance to discover new destiny for themselves and the nation. Myanmar is the in-between country. Its size imposing, larger than France, a little smaller than Texas, with a population of approximately 53 million, but because it is squashed between India and China, it seems by contrast a diminutive land and its default posture is defensive.

Rajiv Bhatia (2017) in his book "India-Myanmar Relations: Changing Contours" provides a comprehensive evaluation of India's multi-faceted relations with Myanmar. It unravels the mysteries of the complex polity of Myanmar as it undergoes transition through democracy after long military rule. It traces the trajectory of India-Myanmar associations from ancient times to the present day and offers a fascinating story in the backdrop of the region's geopolitics.

Abhijit Dutta (2018) in his work, "Myanmar in the World" explores the breadth of the country and the span of its history and gives a real intimate picture of the many ways Myanmar has changed and improved its relationship with India. The author explains what lies beyond the beauty, the fear thriving in people's hearts,

the religious divide, the issues they face in day to day lives along with the cracks in the huge structure called Myanmar. Press and media, as always, have played a major role in bringing the world closer and to quite an extent is creating a gap too.

In his work “Myanmar’s Enemy Within”, Francis Wade (2019) explores the manipulations of identities by an anxious ruling elite which laid the foundations for mass violence. It explores who gets to define a nation. Why, at a time when the majority of citizens in Myanmar had begun to experience freedoms unseen for half a century, did much lauded civilian leaders become complicit. It is essential to understand the ethnic cleansing genocide that today threatens Myanmar’s Rohingya population and with it Myanmar’s tenuous path in achieving democracy and good relations with its neighbours.

Thant Myint U (2019) in his work, “The hidden History of Burma” gives a vital background to understand the ethnic crisis, its impact on India coupled with complexities of modern South East Asia. The case for peace in Myanmar has been a tiring and relentless one. The biggest myth of all is that Burma was set to have a bright future during the dawn of its independence from the British Empire however the reality is far more complex.

The colonial legacy of the state’s institutions and its impact on the plethora of ethnic groups across Myanmar periphery would continue to haunt its present-day problems. Most notably among these, are the Rohingya crisis and Burma’s half-century struggle for democracy.

The colonial era’s martial race policy stands at the forefront of these problems. Despite the great academic legacy left behind by the colonial era, the state was considerably weak at the time when General Aung San founded the nation. This meant that whatever great that was embedded within Burma was either purged or became stale during years of poverty. India and China, the strategic neighbours of Myanmar, loom large alongside Burma’s internal fault lines of

ethnicity.

Jaideep Chanda (2020) in his book “Irrawaddy Imperatives”, reviews the India-Myanmar strategy and provides the necessary background with historical perspective to make sense of this complex country. Myanmar has a chequered history of long military rule raging ethnic insurgencies and flashes of democracy. The people are Buddhists, peace loving and their ethnic linkage with Chins of Mizoram is an important facet of India-Myanmar relations. The India-Myanmar relations are beyond the narrow confines of border management and need a fresh approach in terms of 'Myanmar Consciousness' in Indian strategic thought and scholarship.

Veteran journalist and Myanmar watcher Bertil Lintner's (2021) “The Wa of Myanmar and China's Quest for Global Dominance”, captures the complexity of China's historical relations with the Wa and thereby provides valuable perspective on the decades-long struggle between Myanmar's most powerful ethnic armed group and the national armed forces. As Lintner illustrates in impressive detail, that conflict has disparate historical roots linking anti-Communist Kuomintang militias and the once-formidable Burmese Communist Party (BCP).

A brief review of the literature on the subject provides the extent of importance that the strategic thinkers and foreign policy makers need to attach to Indian-Myanmar relations. However, the works done on the subject suffer from the lacuna of comprehensive strategic implication of the relations between the two neighbours, India and Myanmar for China's overbearing presence in Myanmar. This research work intends to examine and analyse the strategic implication of India-Myanmar relations in South East Asia in general and Myanmar in particular.

### **Identification of Gaps**

The importance of Myanmar, the only land bridge to South-East Asia for India and an open border of 1643 Km with strategically important North East States can be aptly comprehend with the emphasis placed on 'Act-East' policy of the

Indian Government, However the volatile security situation in Myanmar and ever increasing footprint of China need deep and precise diplomatic manoeuvre to counter developing threats of refugee influx, narco-terrorism and Chinese inroads through Myanmar. The review of available literature falls short on the accounts of the road ahead for countering increasing Chinese influence in Myanmar and Indian strategy of positive engagement of Myanmar in prevailing situation. This thesis focuses on the gaps and brings out the methodology to address the lacuna and fill up the vacuum, adversely affecting the strategic ties between India and Myanmar.

### **Scope of the Study**

The scope of this research is to study the historical perspectives of India-Myanmar strategic significance and relationship, the development of India's security policy and diplomacy in contemporary period. The study examined the strategies adopted by the claimant states as a move to uphold their respective interests, the nature and scope of the conflict of interests and the prevalent security and diplomatic dilemmas. Lastly, the study focused on the rising interests and involvements of the external big powers in Myanmar to shape the security and political framework of the region and its implications on India-Myanmar strategic relationship.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the proposed research are as follows:

1. To examine the power politics in South East Asia & challenges for India.
2. To study the historical developments of India-Myanmar strategic relationship.

3. To analyse the significance and scope of strategic alliance/ relations.
4. To examine the involvement of China in Myanmar.

### **Research Questions**

The proposed research probed the following research questions in detail:

1. Why there is a big power politics in South East Asia and challenges for India?
2. What are the factors contributing to the historical developments of India- Myanmar strategic relationship?
3. What is the significance and scope of India-Myanmar strategic alliance?
4. For India, What are the implications of involvement of China in Myanmar?

### **Hypothesis**

Rising interests and involvement of the external big powers like China in Myanmar to shape its security and political framework will have serious implications on India-Myanmar strategic relationship.

### **Methodology**

The proposed study is historical and analytical in nature. The study have used both primary and secondary sources of data collection. Qualitative method was used to analyse the data collected from various sources.

Primary data was collected from Annual Reports of Ministry of Defence, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and Government Archives. The retired and serving officials of Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Defence and MPs and MLAs of NLD government taken shelter in India were interviewed. For that purpose, a structured questionnaire was prepared. Besides these, relevant websites of governments of India, China, Myanmar and ASEAN countries were accessed.

Secondary data was collected from books, journals, magazines, newspapers, seminar papers, websites, electronic books, Working Papers, Indian Defence Review, subject related associations and agencies reports, publications of Indian Defence and Strategic Analyses etc.

## **Chapterisation**

### **CHAPTER I: Introduction.**

The first chapter examined the theoretical background and prospective of India- Myanmar relationship. In addition, it covered the Statement of the research problem, Review of literature, Objectives of the study, Research questions, methodology, Chapterisation scheme and limitations of the study.

India and Myanmar were historically part of the extended British Empire in Asia. Since the two countries became independent after the ending of World War II, relations between them have by and large been friendly. At the outset Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru and U Nu worked closely with each other in the area of economic development. India even provided some military assistance to Myanmar, and both were active members of the Non- Aligned Movement. However, relations between the two became strained in 1962. India strongly opposed the imposition of

military dictatorship in Myanmar by General Ne Win and supported the pro-democracy forces. The Ne Win regime adopted an anti-Soviet stance at a time when relations between India and the Soviet Union were burgeoning, refused to join the Commonwealth of Nations, and withdrew from the Non-Aligned Movement in 1979.

## **CHAPTER II: Big power politics in South East Asia and challenges for India**

This chapter examined the role, interests and policies adopted by major external powers in South East Asia with special reference to China. Southeast Asia is a subregion on the Asian continent. The word "Southeast Asia" is not that old. German authors from the late 19th century occasionally used the phrase. It gained popularity when the British, under the command of Lord Louis Mountbatten, founded Southeast Asia Military Command during World War II, based in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. In terms of geography, the area is presently situated south of China, east of India, west of New Guinea, and north of Australia. There are two distinct geographical sub-regions within Southeast Asia the mainland and the maritime Southeast Nations. In terms of policy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is interested in promoting economic programs with Southeast Asian countries to attract investment, especially in the fields of infrastructure and commercial locations in area. The Indian Government wants to take more practical actions in strengthening relations with ASEAN countries. This can be seen as an Indian step in strengthening strategic relations and expanding economic relations with Southeast Asian countries. With the first steps of "Act East", Southeast Asia region still plays an important role in India's foreign strategy. This creates favourable conditions for India - ASEAN relations in general and India - Myanmar relations in particular to be strengthened and developed in the following years.

### **CHAPTER III: Historical background and development of India- Myanmar strategic Relationship.**

This chapter explored the historical perspectives and development of India-Myanmar strategic relationship and how it graduated progressively in the contemporary period. It can be said that India's practical diplomacy with Myanmar since 1992 is a “parallel two- way policy” combining “India's political and spiritual support for democratic forces” with “a commitment to the Myanmar military government to improve and enhance relations between the two governments”, thereby helping India strengthen relations with Myanmar- a neighbouring country with an important strategic position - from the field of politics to bilateral economic and trade cooperation and security – defence ties. This flexibility has allowed India to support, encourage and stay in touch with the democracy movement, while continuing to strengthen ties with Myanmar's military government.

In the field of investment, a series of Indian projects investing in Myanmar and joint cooperation projects between the two countries have been implemented. India's first important project with Myanmar is the Tamu - Kalewa - Kalembo highway 160km from Moreh, Manipur state to Mandalay, worth 1 billion Rupee, fully funded by the Indian government. This is an Indian initiative that will not only boost trade, but also would strengthen the friendship of the people of the two countries. In 2002, India and Myanmar also reached a consensus on the approval of the Kaladan multimode transit and transshipment project linking the Sittwe port with Mizoram. In addition, with its outstanding advantages, India has helped Myanmar to modernize satellite communication centres and implement information technology projects.

India and Myanmar both agreed to set up four more points (Lungwa, Bihang, Sapi and Zokawathar) in the border area to facilitate the coordination between both countries. Both countries are expected to continue fencing 14 km near the international border in Moreh area.

India's relationship with Myanmar has been complex. This can be best understood by appreciating Indian perspective on Myanmar society, nation, and state. The portrayal of the country has been attempted by those Indians who studied it, lived, and worked in it or had an opportunity to interact with its people. Scholars, pilgrims, and monks have provided account of their travel and experiences since ancient times. The melting pot of Myanmar has witnessed a perineal inflow of socio-cultural influences that has moulded its society, with prominently noticeable impact in border regions. This influence extends right up to hinterlands. Human migration comprising of movement of people from Tibet and South China, inflows from the west and east are reflected in the beliefs, culture, arts, costumes, cuisines and way of life in the Burmese society. The nation is not a mere reflection of Chinese, Indian and Thai cultures but has developed a unique and independent style by absorbing external influences.

#### **CHAPTER IV: Significance and scope of the strategic alliance.**

This chapter analysed the significance and strategic importance of South East Asia and the need for strengthening ties with Myanmar to take forward India's Act East policy.

India's close civilizational links with Southeast Asia go back over a millennium. Historically, both have been linked by culture and commerce. India, China and regional maritime centres like Singapore played leading roles in the flourishing trade of Asia, shaping the historical development of this region. The cross-fertilization of human experiences and the spiritual interaction between India and East Asia has left an indelible mark on the regional art, architecture, language and culture.

It is a fundamental fact of geography that India is in the immediate neighbourhood of ASEAN. India shares land and maritime borders with Myanmar, Indonesia and Thailand. India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal are closer to some ASEAN states than to the Indian mainland. The vital commercial

sea-lanes between West Asia and Southeast Asia straddle the Indian mainland and its island territories.

India has also been observing with concern that China's influence in Southeast Asia has grown. China's strategic links with Pakistan also irks India because of China's indirect interference in South Asia. Myanmar became a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1997. India came to share a 1,643 kilometres contiguous border with ASEAN. In this context, India's engagement with the ASEAN states has assumed a different strategic perspective. India's renewed interest in its "Look East" policy is related to its desire to accelerate its economic development further through reforms and liberalization.

The new dynamic in Southeast Asia presents India with a rare opportunity for expanding defence cooperation. For the first time since the end of the Second World War, when the Indian armies played a decisive role in bringing it to an end in Southeast Asia, Delhi is in a position to contribute effectively to the evolution of security politics in the region.

## **CHAPTER V: Implications of the Involvement of China.**

This chapter has taken into account various implications of external alliances (China), policies and activities. India, Myanmar and China are three countries that have had a neighbouring relationship from history to the present day. The relationship between these countries has become increasingly important especially since the end of Cold War to the beginning of the twenty-first century. The India - China competition along with the strategic importance of Myanmar's geopolitical position has made the triangular relations of three countries more closely linked, attracting the interest of the international community. In the process of implementing foreign policy towards Myanmar, India cannot help but pay attention to the impact of the Chinese factor.

This is a factor that has a regular and continuous impact on India-Myanmar relations. If India - Myanmar relationship has fluctuated in recent decades, China-Myanmar relation has become intimate and close. The decline in relations between India and Myanmar from 1962 to 1992, especially in the years 1988 - 1992, contributed to pushing Myanmar closer to China.

## **CHAPTER VI: Summary and Conclusion.**

The last chapter have summarised the thesis. It has laid out the findings of the study and certain suggestions to the problem of the study.

The Indian government needs to take specific actions to strengthen and develop ties with Myanmar after considering the relationship between the two countries from an Indian perspective in the past and in the present, particularly in the context of a unipolar world. There are three significant yet crucial gaps in the two countries' relationship that require quick attention. These include border security and stability, connectivity to India's Northeast, and border trade, as they would significantly improve ties and foster trade between the two nations.

Aside from this, there were still a number of other areas and aspects that could be improved in order to strengthen and solidify ties, such as: terrorism, gun running, cross-border terrorism, security of island states, insurgency activity, drug smuggling; ethnic issues, illegal trade, diaspora, conflict resolution; economic and business ties, cross-cultural assimilation; banking and finance sector, power sector, trade and surface transport, flights, shipping; cooperation between academic institutions; opening of professional and technical institutions; early warning systems; health facilities, etc.

To allow its citizens to benefit from the shifting global landscape marked by progressively fewer trade barriers, India's northeastern area should be developed on

pace with the rest of the nation. Different development projects should be carried out in a timely, well-coordinated, and appropriate manner. There are many prospects for tourism and business based on regional horticultural and tea goods thanks to the current government push for infrastructural development, particularly for the rail and road networks. As a result, people's perceptions of the North and East are shifting from one of a remote, challenging region to one of a thriving, dynamic, and rapidly rising economy.

In conclusion, India is unable to compete with China in the construction of infrastructure, power plants, and highways. India's dynamic private sector and democracy are its strongest assets. India needs to share her special qualities, which include her democratic principles, freedom of expression, rights for minorities, and autonomous public institutions. If India keeps up this course of strategic engagement with Myanmar, it will not only surpass Chinese influence in that country but also be able to meet its interests in terms of the region's economic development and meet its energy needs while addressing its concerns about the insurgency in the northeast.

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For example, Indonesia in 1945, Vietnam in 1945, Philippines in 1946, Myanmar in 1948, Laos in 1949 and Cambodia in 1953.

For instance, Indonesia, which has the largest Muslim population in the world, has as its national bird the fabled bird from Buddhist and Hindu mythology known as Garuda. In addition to the popular Garuda airlines, Indonesia's prime airline carrier, Garuda is represented in an impressive ornate statue in the Prambanan Temple, and also made its way into the Wayang, or the traditional puppet culture of Java. The Garuda makes its pervasive presence felt in Thailand as well, a predominantly Buddhist country, where it is more mythically represented with a human torso and red feathers.

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The 'Domino Theory' was used by successive United States administrations during

the Cold War to clarify the need for American intervention around the world and to contain the Communist influence. According to the theory, if one state in a region came under the influence of communism, then the surrounding countries would follow in a domino effect.

The present domestic situation in Myanmar does not pose a threat to international or regional peace and security” and “similar problems exist in many other countries as well”.

United Nations. (2005). Report on Drugs and Crime.

Vietnam News Agency. (2006). India connects the bridge with Myanmar. Special References.

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

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

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