

Chapter 4

CHINA FACTOR AND INDO-MYANMAR RELATIONS

Myanmar has two great and powerful neighbours, India to northwest and China to the northeast. It has Bangladesh to West, Laos to the East and Thailand to South East. Myanmar's long cost line with good harbors allows it to dominate the Bay of Bengal. Myanmar Shares 2171 kilometers long border with China while with India it shares 1640 kilometers of border. India got independence on 15th August, 1947 and Myanmar got independence on 4th January 1948.¹ Both began their journey as independent nations more or less at the same time. Close contacts marked the bilateral relation in the result of post-independence era. Indian Prime Minister Pandit Nehru and Burmese Prime Minister U Nu were good Friends. On the other side China is also important neighbor for Myanmar. The people of two countries have enjoyed friendly relations for a very long time and have respect the amity of each other.² Exchange of goodwill visits by the leaders of the two nations has covered the way for deeper bilateral relations and closer cooperation in various fields. It is nearly 60 years ago that the Myanmar and China has established diplomatic relations. During that period, bilateral friendship and cooperation were able to be promoted. There are also prospects of enhancing economic cooperation between the two nations.³ Since the World War II, Myanmar better known the world over as Burma, had never attracted so much international attention as now. Actually, there are reasons both global and local for this development. The rise of China as a major global economic power and the unlocking of India's potential to grow as yet another global economic power are redefining international relationships in South and Southeast Asia.⁴

Myanmar is now viewed as a critical area of interest to China and India. Myanmar sits at an important geostrategic location that connects the Indian subcontinent with China and the Indochina peninsula. The land has witnessed many military invasions since antiquity, such as by the Indian, Chinese, Thai, British, and Japanese.⁵ Myanmar geographic location, sandwiched between its giant neighbours Indian and China, led it to adopt a realist paradigm and pursue an independent foreign policy. Since 1988, however, Myanmar's strategic importance to china has been on the rise once again, as it plays a greater role as China's land bridge to the Indian Ocean and in its energy security and expansion of trade and exports.⁶ The rivalry between China and India poses significant challenges for the regional security of Southeast Asia, and particularly for the security of Burma. Within the context of their rivalry, China and India compete over oil and gas resources in Burma. They seek not only to establish energy security for their own countries, but to reaffirm an economic and political presence in the region.⁷ China also faced a democracy situation in 1989, with the uprising in

Tiananmen Square. India avoided expressing any support to the cause of democracy, though it was doing so in Myanmar and Nepal almost at the same time. The principal reason behind this Indian silence was the prospects of improving relations with China. India's support to cause of democracy in China would have adversely affected the nascent understanding for improving bilateral relations.⁸

Myanmar is very crucial for China. While Myanmar is a gateway to Southeast Asia for India, it is also a gateway to South Asia for China. Besides, Myanmar is also considered a window to the Indian Ocean for China and its islands from one "pearl" of its so-called 'string of pearls' strategy. However, here the question arises is China's growing influence over Myanmar a zero-sum game for India? India is worried that its own strategic interests in developing a relationship with Myanmar might be threatened by China.⁹

China: A Deciding Factor between India and Myanmar relations:-

In the case of India and Myanmar, these two countries share a 1,640 km long unfenced border. Myanmar has a long coastline of 2,276 km that shares certain part of the Bay of Bengal, in particular the surrounding areas of the Coco Islands and the Andaman Sea, which is very important to India's strategic consideration. Historically, India and Myanmar were part of the British Empire, Burma being the largest province in British India.¹⁰ In 1937, Burma became an independent unit within the empire, and there were 300,000 to 400,000 Indians who had migrated there. Many of the tribes in India's northeastern region are ethnically linked to tribes on the Myanmar side of the border. Currently, at least five major militant groups from India's northeast, where numerous tribal and ethnic groups are fighting for greater autonomy and fuelling violent insurgencies, have training camps in the dense jungles of Sagaing in northern Myanmar.¹¹

The northeast areas of these provinces are 255,000 square kilometers constituting about eight percent of the total area of India. India-Myanmar relations were close during the first years after independence, and both Nehru and U Nu were leaders in the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement. Both countries signed a Treaty of Friendship, which was to remain in force "for ever thereafter" if neither side gave notice of its desire to terminate it six months before its expiry after five years.¹² However, after the 1962 coup, relations came to a standstill. India ignored its eastern neighbor due to the undemocratic regime that had taken over the assets of Indians living in Myanmar. This policy continued under the governments led by Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi despite a move toward realist policies vis-à-vis other neighboring states such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.¹³

China has always been a key factor in the newly emerging India – Myanmar relations. In the context of larger China – Myanmar relations, Myanmar's increasing dependency on China in economic terms as well as for military armaments has been a matter of concern for

India. Increasing ties between Myanmar and China is perceived as detrimental for India's interests in the long run. Myanmar's relation with China was never cordial before 1989 because of Beijing's strong involvements against anti – Yangon activities.¹⁴ It was in the aftermath of 1988 uprising, with the increasing international isolation and with no country to turn in meeting its military requirements, Myanmar gradually move closer to China. Eventually, China changed from being an enemy to a benefactor. Thus, the long years of Myanmar bashing and indifference India created a big vacuum, which was gradually filled up by China, much to the chagrin of New Delhi.¹⁵ China's policy towards Myanmar needs to be understood in this context. The primary motivating factor behind China's policy to strengthen economic, political and military ties with Myanmar is undoubtedly its perceived necessity to tap the latter's rich oil and gas potentials. Also, Beijing's energy security requirements are compelling it to build pipelines from Myanmar to China's bordering Yunnan province, as an alternative to the shipping of resources through piracy prone Malacca Straits through which 80 percent of China's energy imports presently pass. It is not surprising therefore that China is actively wooing Myanmar with regular and substantial economic assistance and blocking sanctions against Myanmar in the United Nations(UN) on the human rights issue.¹⁶

One clear objective of India's policy towards Myanmar since the early 1990s, as stated before, has been to limit Myanmar's diplomatic dependence on China. Facing a stringent set of international sanctions over a sustained period of time, Myanmar's ruling regime had only a few diplomatic options.¹⁷ It only became a member of Association of Southeast Asian Nations(ASEAN) in 1997 and despite its membership; Myanmar has been subject to strident criticism from the European Union and the United States. India's decision to engage the ruling regime in the early 1990's was meant to provide Myanmar with wider diplomatic options besides China. Despite such aims on the part of India (and ASEAN), China's influence and presence in Myanmar has been steadily growing.¹⁸

Myanmar's close economic and military relations with China are a cause of concern to India to the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea through Myanmar. China provides almost 80 per cent of defence equipment to Myanmar. China has also established its naval listening and weather posts on Myanmar's Coco Island, which also perturbs India.¹⁹ As regards economic cooperation, China is cooperating with Myanmar in various fields, including trade, commerce, and electricity supply. China also provides aid for various developmental projects.²⁰ Myanmar's relations with China and its overall implications on India's national interests can be analyzed mainly from two angles strategic considerations and economic compulsions. It will show how, over the last few years, the competitive agendas of these two countries over the natural resources in Burma, has strengthened the military junta in the country. In particular, it will detail how, with the revenues from selling its energy resources,

the government of Burma is able to operate with relative autonomy and impunity in formulating authoritarian domestic policies and pursuing foreign policy.²¹

China-India's Strategic and Energy rivalry in Myanmar:-

Myanmar's geographic location largely lies between China and India. Several of India's northeastern states, afflicted with more or less separatist insurgencies, share a border extending over 1,643 kilometers with Myanmar. The borders are impossible to patrol closely and thus porous, with population, insurgents, and local trade spilling across in both directions. To the north, China's long border with the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh is a source of tension. As China claims the entire state as its own.²² Myanmar can connect China with parts of India's northeast beyond Arunachal Pradesh. Myanmar also offers China geographical access to Bangladesh.

Positive developments in bilateral relations have occurred in all areas since the mid-1990s, especially under the two coalition governments led by prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee(1998-2004).²³ Myanmar's cooperation is critical for maintaining peace and security in India's Northeast Region, since many insurgent groups operating here seek sanctuary in Myanmar. Myanmar can be of help in the development of the Northeast region. Of late, India's look east policy has gathered momentum. Myanmar has assumed additional importance as the unavoidable geographical link for greater overland connectivity between India and ASEAN.²⁴ China and India are openly competing for Myanmar's favour for strengthening their strategic interests in the north east areas of Indian Ocean. China wishes to protect its southern flank from possible future Indian threats and requires access to the sea for transportation of goods from its land-locked southern provinces. At the same time, India is looking an inland transportation route for the land locked states of the northeastern region through the KaladanRiver that flows from Myanmar into Mizoram and further southwards into the Bay of Bengal.²⁵ Besides, India fears encirclement by China due to its influence with Myanmar and Pakistan. This strategic competition also worries the members of ASEAN, who are much concerned that a weak and vulnerable country like Myanmar will fall into Beijing's orbit and become a Chinese pawn in the region. Myanmar is being further strengthened with the supply of arms, logistic equipment and infrastructure development that is primarily meant for military purposes.²⁶

For both strategic and economic reasons, Myanmar's military junta has since the early1990s pursued an "open-door" economic policy, embarking upon an ambitious program of building roads, bridges, dams, hydroelectric schemes, and import-substituting state-owned industries. Only Thailand and China came to Myanmar's aid during this period.²⁷ A delegation led by then State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) number two leader

and chief of army Lt. General Than Shwe to China in October 1989 was a watershed for Myanmar-China co-operation under the junta. China was involved in establishing state-owned enterprises in fields such as sugar plants, textile factories, plywood plants, rice mills and other industrial factories. China also provided coastal liners, irrigation pumps, construction materials, and satellite ground station.²⁸

The Indian government was particularly worried about the China-Myanmar Strategic links and the prospects of the Chinese navy gaining a foothold in the Bay of Bengal. Myanmar's location is central to strengthening India's Look-East policy. The main objectives of the Look East Policy are to resource India's energy and counterbalancing China's influence in Southeast Asia. India's growing interest in Myanmar could be seen in the shift in its low-key policies in the 1980s and the early 1990s - from an emphasis on human rights and democracy to an emphasis on a pragmatic strategic policy toward Rangoon.²⁹

As two big developing countries, energy issue has become more serious for China and India. India's The Gas Authority of India, Limited. (GAIL) and Oil and Natural Gas Company Videsh, India (ONGC Videsh). Are currently engaged in gas extraction work in Rakhine State in Bay of Bengal. The two public sector companies also own equities of 10 per cent and 20 per cent respectively in the field. With increasing competition from China in this sector India is planning to lay a 1400 km. gas pipeline from Myanmar's Sittwe area to Gaya in Bihar State of India through the North East, particularly Mizoram and Assam- thus skirting Bangladesh.³⁰ According to Defence Ministry reports, Petro China, "is constructing is four billion cubic meter gas depot at Hutubi in the border province of Xinjiang to make the most of gas piped from Myanmar." In contrast, as former Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran notes, "The problem with India's energy interests in Myanmar is that even if it develops A1 to A7 energy blocks or any other offshore Bay of Bengal blocks, how will be it be transported back to India? At present, we only hold a 30 per cent stake in A1 and A3 blocks, and that too we are forced to sell to China because of the absence of a proper pipeline between India and Myanmar." This showed India's lack of preparedness on trade routes.³¹ In fact, the immense potential of inland waterway arrangements as an efficient means of transport also remains largely unexploited. Currently, the emphasis seems to be solely on the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Project, which envisages connectivity between Indian ports on the east and the Sittwe Port in Myanmar. This provides an alternate route for transporting goods to North East India, and will thus boost trade ties. This is an important project, considering the pressure on the Siliguri Corridor and Bangladesh's continued refusal to allow transit rights through its territory to the North-East.³²

India is already watching nervously as China pushes ahead with the re-building of the historic "Stillwell Road" 61 kms of the stretch lies in India 1,033km falls in Myanmar and

632 km in China. Naturally, relentless Chinese efforts resulted in the contract being awarded to a Chinese construction company, which has already begun work on the 194 mile stretch from Myitkyina in Myanmar to the Pangsau Pass in Arunachal Pradesh, close to the Indian border. India has not begun to build its side of the road.³³ Opinion stands divided. Indian businessmen strongly feel that this road, which is now almost unusable and prone to interdiction by insurgents, could be the key for the economic success of the North East. Rebuilding it will help re-establish the region's trade ties with western China and South East Asia. The government, in contrast, sees this as a risky investment, given security concerns about China's territorial claims to Arunachal Pradesh as well as the challenge of battling insurgent groups currently operating in the region.³⁴

To improve connective with Myanmar, India has taken up a number of road and port construction projects. A proposal to build a rail link from Jiribaum in Assam to Hanoi in Vietnam through Myanmar is also on the cards.³⁵ But now it is time for Myanmar, under the new government, to indicate to the world the scope of attractive complete governance at home as well as the real relief of its Asia policy, especially whether it will be based on an adjusted balance. Besides, Myanmar's friends would hope that it raises the profile of its public diplomacy in a critical capital such as New Delhi. In short, the Myanmar and India relations will be molded, to a considerable extent, by Myanmar in the new era, and the two countries drawing right lessons from the past.

Economic rivalry both countries:

Myanmar's border trade with Thailand in the east and China to the north with that of India in its west. The issues of greater connectivity and communications development along with cooperation with cultural underground groups including political parties is a keen aspect in Myanmar's border trade with China in Shan and Kachin state and with Thailand in Karen state.³⁶ Myanmar presently maintains cease-fire agreements with at least 18 insurgent groups especially in the north. A large number of people cross over to work in the industrial hubs of China. Chinese currency is widely acceptable within the border states of Myanmar. China has also achieved a high degree of cooperation with cultural groups in the Northern states. China's positive power and peace on its border with Myanmar has stabilized trade.³⁷ A soft visa policy (for Kachins to work in China), and in education, currency along with an open border policy has benefitted both sides. Active conflict zones have been transformed into commercial hubs. There is greater company to company trade between the two countries and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce plays an important role in the bi-lateral trade. It also allows China to assert more influence in Myanmar. China aims at exploring the rich natural

resource base including gas reserves in Myanmar. However, their attempt at land grab in the north has worried the Myanmar government. A large quantity of jade and ruby are exported to China.³⁸ A similar story of infrastructural development has transformed the economic conditions in Myanmar's border with Thailand. However Myanmar's trade with India continues to be driven by large company agreements compared to China's realistic economic policies involving the people at large.³⁹ Since 1988, China has provided Myanmar with considerable amount of aid and preferential loans and cancelled numerous debts. Statistics showed that by 2005, China's total aid to Myanmar reached about US\$100 million. From 1991 to 2005, the Bank of China and China Import-Export Bank provided Myanmar with seller's credits worth over US\$1 billion.⁴⁰

In 2006, China provided another US\$85 million of loans to Myanmar for purchasing two new oil-drillers. By the end of 2002, Chinese construction companies had invested over 800 projects worth US\$2 billion in Myanmar. By the end of 2005, this amount increased to US\$2 billion with a fulfilled turnover of US\$2.2 billion. In the present time China is the single largest market with a dominant share of 96 percent of Myanmar's total exports in 2010. As regards pearls and precious stones, China is the largest market, accounting for as much as 86 percent of Myanmar's total imports in 2010.⁴¹ As Myanmar and China are neighboring countries and it have very good relationship and cooperation in all area of the trade, economic and social sector. The bilateral trade including oversea trade and border trade between Myanmar and China reached over 5 billion US\$ in 2011-2012 fiscal years in which the border trade value was over 2.9 billion US\$.⁴²

But the Chinese have failed to earn the goodwill of the people in Myanmar. There is also a growing anti-Chinese sentiment in the Myanmar army as well. The people of the country felt a sense of victory when the government cancelled a \$3.6 billion dam project in 2011 in which the Chinese were interested. The Chinese were getting their own labour force from China and this made to people of Myanmar unhappy. China's accomplishment in Myanmar dwarf anything India has done, even though India is in a perfect position to serve as an alternative to Myanmar without causing Beijing alarm.⁴³ India's trade with Myanmar is growing at a fast clip. Agreements between India and Myanmar has been signed for the development of Sittwe port, rail link and trans-Asia highway. There is a general degree of doubt in India on securing energy cooperation with Myanmar. There is a lack of coordination in issues relating to routes, etc. India should be more active in tapping into the gas reserves in Myanmar. Perhaps India needs to emulate China's open border policy to enhance trans-border influence.⁴⁴ It is fourth largest trading partner with its investment reaching \$35.08 million last year. In 2006-07, China-Myanmar trade was \$1.145 billion as against India's

figure of \$341.40 million in 2004-05.⁴⁵ India is taking steps such as extending airlines, land and sea routes to strengthen trade links with Myanmar. It is also cooperating with Myanmar in areas like agriculture, telecommunications, and oil and gas sectors etc. India's trade relations with Myanmar has witnessed a robust trend in recent years, with India's total trade with Myanmar having risen from US\$ 408 mn in 2001 to US\$ 1.06 billion in 2010, underlined by both rise in India's exports to and India's Imports from Myanmar.⁴⁶ India generally maintains a trade deficit with Myanmar, which has increased from US\$ 293 mn in 2001 to US\$ 974 mn in 2009, and stood at US\$ 520 mn in 2010 Myanmar's total export in 2010. Bilateral trade between the two countries was a mere \$1.35 billion in 2010-11. India mainly imports Pulses from Myanmar and exports items such as pharmaceuticals. While India accounts for 13.1 per cent of Myanmar's exports, its share in Myanmar's stood at 3 per cent. On other hand, China accounts for the largest share of Myanmar's imports at 38.7 per cent. Sino Myanmar trade is \$3.5 billion. It looks even worse when one looks at investment. China invests about 50 times more than India does.⁴⁷

It is a saying that China is both Myanmar's most influential foreign partner and the most nervous. No country is as deeply entrenched in the economy of Myanmar as China while being so wary of the political reforms that is under way. The pro-reform campaigners fear that China has the potentials to destroy the reform process. This poses a challenge for India. Beijing's concerns are geopolitical. It fears that a democratic Myanmar will gravitate towards the US become a democratic thorn in china's southern side.⁴⁸ But china's economic hold on Myanmar goes back. Factories came up all across Myanmar's eastern border especially near the Shan state areas. The cities like Mandalay and across Myanmar, Chin's economic presence is irresistible. Understandably, China's unease heightens when democracies such as India, US and Japan informally discuss deepening economic ties with Myanmar. In particular, there are great potentials for India's economic presence to grow bigger in Myanmar.⁴⁹

Security Aspect and Chinese influence:

Recent years China has been the main factor of influence over India's security diplomacy with Myanmar. China and India are fast economic country in the world. Comparatively, China has more powerful in terms of economy and military. As a result of might, the regional environment is more shaped by china. India has established security cooperation with Myanmar with its own logic and limitations.⁵⁰ While there is an undeniable element of rivalry between India and China, their competition in Myanmar has never been symmetric. The geopolitical implications of Chinese strategic nexus with Burma were not lost on Burma's immediate neighbors. From India's perspective, it was not the Burmese military build-up in

its which caused concern, but the supplier. Given India's long adversarial relationship with China, anything that promotes China's interests in its immediate neighborhood or expands China's influence worries India.⁵¹ While seeking economic and political engagement with India, Beijing has continued its policy of strategic containment and encirclement of India by forming a ring of regional strategic alliances with India's neighbors. The growing military relationship between Beijing and Rangoon not only marked the end of Burma's traditional nonaligned orientation.⁵² It also forced New Delhi for the first time, to pay close attention to events across its eastern frontier with Myanmar. China growing influence and presence over northern Myanmar could enable it to outflank India in Arunachal Pradesh, which it regards Chinese territory. It could also facilitate greater Chinese support for insurgent groups in India's turbulent northeastern states.⁵³

India is worried about China's strategic attempts to use Myanmar as an access to India's northeastern states. India believes that its closer relationship with the Junta will help to balance Chinese influence. This was the security challenge to India. India wants to balance Chinese influence. India thinks that by distancing itself from the military regime in Myanmar, it is pushing Myanmar closer to the Chinese, which primarily threatens India's interests.⁵⁴ As its international isolation comes to an end, Myanmar is diversifying its great power relations, and it no longer has to rely on the goodwill of China and India or seek to play one against the other. Myanmar's strategic importance between two countries is very important and crucial for them. Myanmar is the source of this advantage and it uses its strategic power to gain economic growth to tolerate its political system. There is going to be a tough time for India in Myanmar. The changes which are taking place in Myanmar, support Indian policy for future bilateral ties.

Wider Implications: US, China and Myanmar:

In real estate three things determine value: location, location, and location. The same can be said of Myanmar. It is strategically situated below China, between the emerging mega-nations of Asia India and China. Myanmar has become increasingly reliant on China for weapons, official development assistance, and foreign direct investment. If Myanmar were to become a full-fledged client state of China, this would change the regional strategic balance. To avoid over dependence on any one nation. Myanmar officials over the past year have articulated a more Omni-directional foreign policy that is equally friendly toward ASEAN, China, India, Japan, and the United States.⁵⁵ In adjusting its policy toward Burma, the United States must face reality with clear vision. Among other things, this vision must recognize that the United States' ability to solve Burma's problems. To influence the course of the country's governance is extremely limited, as nearly 20 years' experience with a harsh punitive policy

of isolation.⁵⁶ The sanctions have demonstrated. U.S. influence in Burma is unlikely to outweigh that of increasingly powerful Asian neighbors. Therefore, the United States' priority must be to clarify its fundamental objectives in Burma and the basic means at its disposal for promoting those objectives. Moreover, Burma is not likely to rank very high on the list of U.S. foreign policy priorities in the foreseeable future. So resources to address U.S. goals in Burma will be limited, compared to priority countries and regions⁵⁷.

One clear objective of India's policy towards Myanmar since the early 1990s, as stated before, has been to limit Myanmar's diplomatic dependence on China. Facing a stringent set of international sanctions over a sustained period of time, Myanmar's ruling regime had only a few diplomatic options. It only became a member of ASEAN in 1997 and despite its membership. India's decision to engage the ruling regime in the early 1990's was meant to provide Myanmar with wider diplomatic options besides China.⁵⁸ ASEAN's decision to make Myanmar a member was informed by a similar imperative to limit the possibility of Myanmar becoming a satellite state of China in much the same way North Korea has been for some time. Despite such aims on the part of India (and ASEAN), China's influence and presence in Myanmar has been steadily growing.⁵⁹ While it is difficult to ascertain with certainty the one single reason for Myanmar's seeming political transition, from India's perspective, the ramifications of recent developments in Myanmar are largely positive. One major consequence of Myanmar's apparent political transition is the cautious, but unambiguous thawing of relations between the US and Myanmar. President Obama's declared 'pivot' towards Asia, drawing Myanmar out of its dependent relationship with China has become an important foreign policy goal.⁶⁰

For India, this is a very positive development. As much as India has tried to engage the military regime since the 1990's to limit Chinese influence, both diplomatic and economic, it appreciates that it has not made enough headway credible challenge to China in the case of Myanmar.⁶¹ The US will present a much more formidable challenge to growing Chinese influence in Myanmar and has the potential to push Myanmar to play a more even-handed role in Asian affairs, especially in relation to the competitive aspects of the India-China relationship in the near future. This however hinges crucially on the evolving complexion of Myanmar's transition and the extent to which AngSuuKyi and her party are allowed to play an increasingly important role in Myanmar's nascent democracy.⁶² Burmese military leader Than Shwe proposed to a United Nations representative that he would meet with opposition leader AungSannSuuKyi if she would cease encouraging confrontation with the government and foreign economic sanctions. The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) appears unaffected by sanctions imposed by the United States and other Western nations. Western

sanctions are uneven with U.S. sanctions being the heaviest.⁶³ Burma has been able to expand exports of a variety of commodities, including growing earnings from natural gas production. China and India have signed deals with the SPDC for substantial purchases of natural gas. Burma also reportedly earns between \$1 billion and \$2 billion annually from exports of illegal drugs, heroin and methamphetamines. Associations of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have grown more critical of the SPDC, but they continue to oppose sanctions.⁶⁴ Chinese diplomatic support of the SPDC and military and economic aid is very important: \$2 billion in military aid since the early 1990s, \$200 million annually in economic aid, substantial foreign investment including new investment in natural gas, and a huge influx of China.⁶⁵

For more than 20 years, the United States pursued a hard line policy toward Burma that was bound to fail. Indeed, in many ways it was counter-productive. Despite constant pressure from the US and its allies, between 1988 and 2010 Burma's armed forces consolidated their grip on the country. Ostracized by the West, Burma turned to China and other countries for arms, trade and diplomatic support.⁶⁶ In terms of both internal controls and external relations, the military government became stronger than it had ever been. No foreign government or international organisation can take credit for the reform program introduced by President TheinSein in 2011. However, the Obama Administration's more measured approach to Burma since 2009 placed the US in a position where it could respond promptly and positively to this unexpected turn of events.⁶⁷ Since Hillary Clinton's successful visit to Burma in 2011, several steps have been taken by Washington to encourage the reform process and develop closer bilateral ties.

This shift in US policy has been widely welcomed, but there is no agreement on what actually prompted the Secretary of State's visit. It has been variously described as a calculated move to leave behind the discredited policies of the Bush era.⁶⁸ It is likely that, to a greater or lesser degree, all these factors contributed to the decision to make the visit, and to pursue closer relations between Washington and Naypyidaw. Nothing to do with the relationship between the US and Burma, however, can be taken for granted.⁶⁹ It is still fragile, and the process of rapprochement could easily be derailed, either by developments inside Burma or by the actions of anti-regime elements outside it. The signs for improvement in the relationship over the longer term are encouraging, but all involved need to be patient. They will have to accept that, while the US and other members of the international community can help Burma in many ways, only the Burmese themselves can decide their future.⁷⁰

Conclusion:

Myanmar has a great deal of strategic significance for both India and China. Over the last two decades the Chinese have built very close economic, political, military and developmental relations with Myanmar. Myanmar's role in providing the Chinese have used the geophysical advantage they enjoy to gain access to Myanmar's mineral and natural gas resources. India has embarked on a policy of building closer relations with Myanmar to counter the Chinese influence and facilitate the growth of trade and commerce with ASEAN as part of its look east policy. It is financing road and port development projects in Myanmar which would improve connectivity of India's north eastern states and help their development. Both China and India will need a good amount of Concerns about India and China's Energy diplomacy in Burma. And U.S. also interested in Myanmar. United State policy might be developed towards Burma. By typing improvement in the bilateral relationship to concrete actions on the part of the Burmese leadership. U.S. government take steps for bonding good relationship with Myanmar.

Endnots

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