

to encircle India, it is imperative for India to significantly enhance maritime engagements with Myanmar, to counter Chinese juggernaut in the region.

Supply of Defence Equipment. Myanmar is a big market for defence equipment, which has been primarily captured by China. India needs to boost its military hardware exports to Myanmar, create a captive market for our rapidly growing defence industry, particularly in light of Make in India Initiative, which is likely to make India a major defence equipment manufacturer in the decade ahead. It would be pragmatic to send a defence sector business delegation to Myanmar to promote our exports.

Maritime Engagement. Our engagement with Myanmar in maritime domain has a special strategic significance; therefore our maritime engagement with Myanmar has to be increased manifold, both at functional as well as strategic level. India needs to institute regular maritime exercises, to foster stronger relations. India could assist Myanmar in development of Naval assets, management of coastal security as well as consider supply of Naval equipment.

Establishment of IT Labs. India could establish IT labs in Myanmar to promote IT literacy in the Armed Forces.

Present Military to Military Cooperation. The current defence cooperation with Myanmar is very insignificant, cosmetic in nature, which needs to be taken to the next level with a comprehensive program on military to military engagement, without any further delay.

Recommended Defence Cooperation.

Counter Terrorism.

Evolve a mechanism to discuss counter terror aspects at Services level on regular basis, say quarterly or half yearly basis, preferably

at the field formation level to exchange information and discuss effective means to counter terror in a coordinated manner.

Institute an intelligence sharing mechanism at the affected field formation level.

Organise CI/CT training as well as training exercises on yearly basis under 3 Corps.

Border Management. Revitalise the border management mechanism adopted with Myanmar. Even though the border management is done by Assam Rifles during peace, Army representatives of the respective field formations must be included in the regular interactions or deliberations.

Joint Exercises. As part of confidence building measures to enhance mutual trust amongst the neighbouring countries, joint exercises at platoon/company/unit level must be conducted every year, alternatively in either country at the field formation level.

Courses of Instruction. Enhance allotment of vacancies, as per their request, in various courses of instruction in our training institutions.

Training of Special Forces. Training facilities for training of Special Forces could be offered to Myanmar Armed Forces.

IT & Cyber Courses. IT & Cyber Security Courses could be allotted at MCTE, Mhow and DIAT, Pune, as on requirement basis.

Naval Aspects.

Extend Naval training facilities to Myanmar Navy as on requirement basis.

Asist in installation of coastal security infrastructure in the coastal areas of Myanmar.

Air Force Technical Training. Extend Air Force flying and technical training facilities as on requirement basis.

Cadets Exchange Program. A Cadets Exchange Program could be instituted to organize visits by cadets from NDA / IMA / other Services training academies to respective academies on yearly basis, alternatively by the two countries.

Intelligence Sharing. The two countries could institute an intelligence sharing mechanism on common threats and challenges in the region affecting both the countries.

English Language Training. India could consider establishing an English learning institute in the country under the aegis of our Embassy, duly staffed by instructors selected by Min of HRD.

Interaction Between Think Tanks. The defence related Think Tanks could play a very vital role in enhancing the understanding of the strategic interests of the two countries. We could organise regular interaction on yearly basis between the Think Tanks of the two countries, held alternatively in either country. The Think Tanks could offer Domain Expert Teams, drawn from retired fraternity, to help Myanmar conduct specialized training, establish / refine training institutions in of Myanmar Armed Forces.

Disaster Management. A Seminar on Disaster Management could be organized by a nominated Think Tank in coordination with Services & NDMA, in which reps could be invited from South Asian countries.

Visit by Premier Course Students. Myanmar could be visited every year by either of the course students of HC / HDMC / NDC to bolster the defence cooperation between the two countries.

Indian Instructors in Training Institutions in Myanmar. We could consider posting Indian instructors in premier Service institutions like Command & Staff College as well as in other training institutions in Myanmar.

Conclusion

Myanmar, apart from being an important neighbor of India, it is also the gateway to ASEAN for us. Myanmar holds the key to our engagement with ASEAN countries, thus it holds a special significance to India. Its strategic location in the Bay of Bengal, deep Chinese inroads in to the region by developing ports and infrastructure virtually encircling India, Myanmar is of immense strategic importance to India. The recent transition from military rule to democratic political set up in Myanmar would usher rapid economic and social development, in which India has a large role to play benefitting both the countries. It is opportune time for India to play a pro-active role, revive our long historical social and cultural linkages and forge a comprehensive strategic partnership with Myanmar to usher peace and prosperity in the region as a whole.

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**INDIA – MYANMAR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP :
IMPERATIVE FOR SUCCESS OF ACT EAST POLICY**

SYNODOS PAPER

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General. Republic of the Union of Myanmar is a sovereign state in South-East Asia bordered by Bangladesh, India, China, Laos and Thailand. Myanmar shares a land border of 5876 Km with its five neighboring countries; 193 Km with Bangladesh, 1463 Km with India, 2185 Km with China, 235 Km with Laos and 1800 Km with Thailand. One-third of Myanmar's total perimeter of 1930 Km forms an uninterrupted coastline along the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea.

Demography. Myanmar is the 40th largest country in area and 25th largest in terms of population in the world, with a population of 51 million people. Ever since independence in 1948, the country has been mired in rampant ethnic strife, wherein the ethnic groups have been involved in one of the world's longest running civil wars. The ethnic groups comprise 68% Burmese, 9% Shan, 7% Karen, 4% Rakhine, 3% Chinese, 2% Indians, 2% Mon and 5% others. Majority of population practice Buddhism approx 80%, Christians 7%, Muslims 4% and 2% follow other religions.

Military Rule. Myanmar has been under Military Rule from 1962 to 1990, when the Govt held

free elections for the first time in 30 years, INLD Party headed by Aung San Suu Kyi won 80% seats, however, military junta refused to cede power. There after the military rule continued through the military backed political party till 2015. Myanmar general elections held in Nov 2015, were the first openly contested elections since 1990, in which INLD obtained absolute majority. The country is now in the process of transition of power to the democratically elected Govt since 1962, when the military rule was imposed in the country.

Economy. Myanmar is a country rich in jade and gems, oil, natural gas and other mineral resources. The income gap in Myanmar is among the widest in the world, as a large proportion of economy is controlled by supporters of the former military Govt. Myanmar has a low level of human development, ranking 150 out of 187 countries.

Strategic Importance for India. Myanmar serves as a gateway for South East Asia for India. It shares land border of 1463 Km with India adjoining five NE States; Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura. These states have been affected by

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insurgency for decades, with the insurgents enjoying safe heavens in Myanmar. The mountainous and rugged terrain obtaining along the border has facilitated establishment of insurgent training camps and logistic bases in Myanmar. To effectively deal with insurgency in these states, eradicate the menace, it is imperative to obtain active support and cooperation of Myanmar Govt.

Myanmar, as a neighbor, is of immense importance as a partner towards ensuring security and development of our North-East Region. Improvement in connectivity, promoting trade and commerce with Myanmar would directly usher peace and prosperity in the North-East Region.

With a long coast line adjoining Andaman Sea, Myanmar assumes great strategic significance for security of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It has assumed even greater significance with plethora of Chinese activities which include expansion of Sittwe Sea Port, development of deep water port on Kyaukpyu in Bay of Bengal and creation of Naval facilities with reconnaissance & electronic intelligence systems in Coco Islands, which is just 18 km from Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Myanmar shares land borders in excess of 2100 Km with China in close proximity to our NE states, thus, deep in roads by China into Myanmar could be detrimental to our security interests. Myanmar, a key constituency for our Act East Policy, could serve as a strategic buffer state for India in the context of expansionist China.

Myanmar, in the threshold of ushering economic development, offers huge opportunity for Indian industry to enlarge its footprint in the region. In addition, Myanmar affords a huge market for Indian industry including defence sector, particularly in view of the Make in India Initiative.

India - Myanmar - Bangladesh Cooperation in socio - economic - HRD - cultural - security

domains can transform the region as a whole, with win-win situation for the three countries. The cooperation would in particular, usher growth and prosperity in our NE Region.

India's connectivity to ASEAN hinges on connectivity with Myanmar, thus a gateway to ASEAN for us. Improvement of connectivity with Myanmar gives us direct access to the countries in Malay Peninsula; Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Malaysia.

Advantage India

Historical Cultural Ties. India shares long historic social and cultural ties with Myanmar, which need to be revived by strengthening bilateral ties by initiating a comprehensive partnership across the entire spectrum of relations.

Aung San Suu Kyi : India Connection. We need to leverage the Indian connection of Aung San Suu Kyi, an alumni of college in Delhi, the de facto ruler of Myanmar towards strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries.

India is at the cusp of graduating from a developing economy to a developed economy in the decade ahead. Myanmar offers huge market as well as investment opportunity for our vibrant and dynamic private sector to expand footprint in the ASEAN countries.

Myanmar after decades of military rule, is poised for an economic and social transition, which requires large skilled human resource. India an emerging skilled human resource powerhouse, could meet immediate requirements of Myanmar and usher speedy economic growth.

China has made deep inroads in to Myanmar towards trade & commerce, development of infrastructure, supply of military hardware etc. However, there is a growing anti China sentiment in the country, which could be exploited by India to advantage.

Contours of Comprehensive India -Myanmar Partnership

A Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with Myanmar across the entire spectrum of trade & commerce, industry, investment, infrastructure development, agriculture, HRD, social, health, cultural exchanges, tourism, and above all security, is the order of the day, would go a long way in strengthening the bilateral relations between the two countries.

Myanmar : A Land of Opportunities. Myanmar has recently witnessed transition from military rule to democracy, after almost five decades of struggle for democracy. This has opened the country for building international relations with the world community, emerged from isolation due to the sanctions imposed on the country during its military rule. Therefore, there is an inevitable competition between various countries to be part of the growth story in Myanmar. India, being a neighboring country with historical socio-cultural linkages has an obvious advantage over others. But India needs to adopt a proactive approach, get its act together to obtain its rightful share in the entire developmental process of Myanmar, lest be left out of the competitive race as it normally happens. Let us drive our interests, rather than wait for the outcome as it may.

Soft Power Diplomacy. The comprehensive partnership with Myanmar should go well beyond trade & commerce and economic benefits. It should be focused at social and cultural integration of the two countries, with peace and prosperity as the underlying principles and economic development as a key driver. Compared to the Chinese model of economic invasion, ultimately leading to economic coercion & terrorism, India must focus on social and cultural integration coupled with economic prosperity of the country. This could be achieved by exploiting the enormous soft power capability of the country towards building strong, long lasting and vibrant bilateral relations with Myanmar.

Improve Connectivity Between two Countries. Improvement of connectivity between the two countries is a pre-requisite to improve bilateral relations, therefore, it should be accorded the highest priority by the Govt. The improved connectivity with Myanmar would simultaneously connect the country to other ASEAN countries in Malay Peninsula, thus boosting our bilateral relations with them as well. The two major infrastructure projects in particular; Kaladan Multi Modal Transport Transit Project and Trilateral highway connecting India, Myanmar and Thailand, need to be completed at the earliest to promote economic activity between the two countries and ASEAN countries.

Trade & Commerce. Today, our trade with Myanmar by land is restricted to two trading posts, one each in Manipur and Nagaland. These need to be upgraded to enhance volumes as well as develop more such trade points along the India - Myanmar border. Our trade through the sea route could be increased manifold. The early fruition of Kaladan Multi Modal Transport Transit Project would go a long way in strengthening trade between the two countries.

Investment by Indian Industry. Indian industry could be a game changer in accelerating and steering the economic growth in Myanmar. Indian private sector should be encouraged to establish industry in Myanmar, particularly the manpower intensive industry to generate employment as well. India could take up a case for establishment of SEZs by Indian industry in Myanmar, which would further add to the speedy economic development of the country. It would be pragmatic to send a business delegation to Myanmar to identify areas for investment by Indian industry, without any further delay. Likewise, Indian industry could seek projects for investment in harnessing vast natural resources of Myanmar, benefitting both the countries.

Indian Banks in Myanmar. It may be worthwhile considering establishment of select Indian public and private sector banks in Myanmar, which would further promote economic activity.

Infrastructure Development. Indian industry could play a very important role in infrastructure development in Myanmar, provide impetus to the economic development as a whole.

Education. India could play a significant role in improving education in Myanmar. Indian private institutions could be encouraged to open schools and colleges in Myanmar to improve quality of education. India could help in improving and setting up new education institutions in Myanmar. In addition, students from Myanmar could be encouraged to pursue higher studies in India, particularly in the NE states.

English Learning. Today, there is great demand for English language learning in Myanmar for obvious reasons. India could play a major role in this aspect by opening English Learning Centres, particularly in major cities, through our embassy in Myanmar. The infrastructure could be provided by the host country, English trainers could be provided by us, selected by Ministry of HRD in coordination with MEA.

Skill Development. Skill development is an important area of bilateral cooperation which would find immediate resonance with the Govt of Myanmar. India could promote skill development in Myanmar by promoting suitable training institutions for skill development.

Agriculture. India could promote agriculture in Myanmar by sharing our expertise in the field and forge a bilateral agreement to import agriculture produce to meet our domestic requirements as done in the case of African countries.

Cultural Exchanges. India - Myanmar share social and cultural historical linkages which

need to be revived through a mechanism of cultural exchanges between the two countries.

Promote Tourism. Myanmar is a Buddhist country. Origin of Buddhism in India, makes India a special tourist destination for people of Myanmar, which needs to be promoted.

Air Connectivity. India could consider commissioning direct air flights from India to Yangon along with other important cities of Bangkok and Hanoi, to boost economic activity in the region.

Establishment of National Institutions. Indian democracy has matured over the years, established one of the finest institutions in the world. India could assist Myanmar in establishing any such institutions taking advantage of Indian experience.

Skilled Manpower. India could be a major source of skilled manpower in the social sector for Myanmar, like doctors, engineers, nurses, teachers etc. However, the Govt intervention is required to promote such an initiative.

Contours of Defence Partnership with Myanmar

India shares a porous border of 1463 Km with Myanmar, which runs through rugged mountainous and forested areas, with very little connectivity, difficult to be guarded. The insurgents have taken advantage of the terrain to establish training camps and logistics bases across the border, which helps them to operate with immunity. Moreover, Myanmar has very little deployment of security forces along the border, which further promotes the anti - India activities from across the border. This has perpetrated insurgency in the states of Manipur and Nagaland for over six decades. This by far remains the major security concern for India.

The growing importance of IOR as well as Asia-Pacific Regions, Chinese strategic overtures in the IOR coupled with development of ports in Myanmar as part of the string of pearls strategy