

CHAPTER VII

WAY AHEAD FOR INDIA TO SECURE ITS INTEREST

“India, with its well-established traditions of democracy, could support Myanmar in its own efforts to bring about democracy”.

General Than Shwe

7.1 Furtherance of Indo-Myanmar Relations.

While adopting a hostile policy against new Burmese Junta in 1988, the strategic consequences had not been assessed by then Indian Government. It was appreciated that the popular pro-democracy movement would eventually succeed in forming a democratic government in Burma. However the Chinese support to the military junta ensured its survival and continuity. India realized that a change in the Government is not likely in the near future so it had to change tracks as dictated by its national interest. India felt that a rapprochement with Myanmar would allow India to have an effective buffer to the East by recreating the strategic depth as was offered by the colonial Burma. Myanmar could once again play the role of a protective frontier as it had in the past (against France in Indochina and against decaying Chinese empire), thus bestowing India with a sense of security.

Chinese understood the strategic importance of this region for Indians as it has multi-dimensional security implications for India owing to its geostrategic location. India consolidated its relationship with the military junta by improving diplomatic, economic and military relations in response to developing Chinese influence over Myanmar. However, to further the relations between both the countries there is lot of ground to be covered, some of which are given out as recommendations below:-

- (a) Constructive Engagement Policy. China has always been attempting a policy of diplomatic rapprochement with Myanmar as a result India too has taken up the task of winning over them. Indeed the constructive engagement policy by India has been well received in

Yangon, but it has not apparently been willing to concede any political concessions in return. Myanmar must take advantage of its crucial geo-strategic position in the manner it wishes. It must therefore find a position for itself in the regional alliance like ASEAN, BIMST-EC, MGC, etc. This is where Indian government has to play a larger role.

(b) **Development of Health Care Services**. The basic amenities in Myanmar are far from satisfactory, especially in basic fields of healthcare, medicines and technology. Presently, this is the plus point for India. Hence India should take active part in development of Health, medicines and technology related field. This will help in countering Chinese aggressive engagement policy towards Myanmar⁷³.

(c) **Countering China's Maritime Threat**. India's response in dealing with China's emerging maritime threat in the IOR could be met by playing an activist and a cooperative role. The activist role could be accomplished by the following:-

- (i) Enhancing its diplomatic reach and strengthen the Navy.
- (ii) An increased presence in South China Sea and cooperative ties with other Navies of the region.
- (iii) The acquisition of a credible deterrence through the induction of SSBNs to put in place the maritime element of the nuclear triad.

(d) **Strengthening Indian Navy**. The areas that would need to be focussed upon to maintain an edge over China are better surveillance capability, a two carrier Navy; progressively move to an all nuclear submarine force, high speed tanker cum logistic support vessel

⁷³ Ananta, A. (2012). India's Moment Myanmar: The Promise, Challenges and New Relationship. Aspen Institute. Available at: www.anantaaspencentre.in/pdf/India_moment_myanmar.pdf. Accessed on 13 November 2014).

and all ships and submarines to be capable of land attack missiles⁷⁴.

(e) **Cooperative Role and Joint Exercises.** It is crucial to India's continuing economic development that the SLOCs in the Indian Ocean remain secure. India must play a key role in providing this security both through employment of strategic naval assets to all the players in the region. The region needs to be convinced that India is a reliable and militarily capable leader for a coordinated regional maritime front against any assertions. Countries in the region should be engaged progressively through basic and advanced exercises on a routine basis, in regional waters of the Indian Ocean, like MILAN in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. 15 ships participated in the MILAN 2014 biennial exercise of Navies at Port Blair on 4 February 2014. India brought together a total of 17 nations in MILAN 2014, making it the biggest edition since its inception in 1995. It was the first time that countries from the western Indian Ocean Region (IOR) participated including two African nations viz Kenya and Tanzania; island nations of Mauritius, Maldives and Seychelles. It was also the first time that Philippines and Cambodia participated. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise had participation of Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar and Philippines sharing lessons from their recent first hand experiences in handling disasters such as cyclones, earthquakes and Tsunamis. Rapid deployment, co-ordination, logistics and medical aid were the cardinal considerations for founding common procedures for HADR operations. List of participating nations in MILAN 2014 included Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Thailand.

(f) **Indian Navy's Cooperation with Myanmar.** The necessity to pursue close relations with Myanmar is a matter of grave importance. The Indian Navy is today an experienced sea force with a three

⁷⁴ Egretau, Renaud. (2003). *Wooing the Generals: India's New Burma Policy*. New Delhi: Authors Press. p 181- 185.

dimensional capability with core competence in building warships and submarine, close networking with departments and with the confidence of operating in distant waters. The Indian Navy can provide wherewithal and leadership for infrastructure development. India should accept the offer of development of port infrastructure at Sittwe. Training facilities at Naval and other institutions should be offered to Myanmar. India can also extend training facilities, hydrographical assistance, anti-piracy and anti-terrorism expertise as measures for closer cooperation and confidence building.

(g) **Indo-Myanmar Foreign Policy**. In consonance with its Act East Policy, the present Government is according priority for improving overall relations with its immediate neighbours, including Myanmar. The Government should take extra care in developing a good neighbourliness foreign policy agenda. Myanmar deserves a fresh look by the country's foreign policy establishment for both strategic and economic reasons.

(h) **Bilateral Trade**. India need not just compete with China. Even Thailand, another country bordering Myanmar, beats India and has become one of the largest export partners of that country. Ever since a Border Trade Agreement was signed in 1994, bilateral trade between India and Myanmar has increased, but not to its optimal level. There are very few trading points between the two countries, Moreh on the Indian side and Tamu on the Myanmar side being the most important one. Efforts should be made to open more trading points⁷⁵.

(j) **Transport Linkages**. The continuing efforts to create transport linkages between Indian, Myanmar and Thailand are a welcome step. The proposed construction of a more than 1300 km long trilateral highway from Moreh in India to Mae Sot in Thailand through Bagan in Myanmar needs to be taken very seriously for timely completion. It has

⁷⁵ Singh, Udai. Bhanu. (2009). 'India's evolving relations with Myanmar in recent times'. Dialogue July-Sep 2009, Volume 11 No, 1.

considerable potential not only in terms of trade and investment cooperation but also as a stepping stone to interconnect India with other countries of Southeast Asia.

(k) **Indo-Myanmar Anti-Terrorist Cooperation.** Myanmar has already started to cooperate with India by not allowing the Indian insurgents groups to stage violent attacks from the sanctuaries across the border. But the problem still persists and the rise of violent activities in the Northeast India makes it imperative to establish a robust Indo-Myanmar anti-terrorist cooperative mechanism.

(l) **Illegal Drug Trafficking.** Myanmar holds second largest illegal drug production in the world. India is a transit point for drugs traffickers. Given the nexus between the terrorist networks and drugs traffickers, India and Myanmar have been cooperating to deal with this menace. But more needs to be done in view of the continuing threat of terrorism and insurgency in the Northeast India.

(m) **Enhanced Trade Cooperation.** Both the countries can greatly benefit from enhanced trade and investment cooperation. The US had earlier imposed a ban on imports from Myanmar and Japan had also frozen any new economic aid to that country. However, with the elections in Myanmar and visit of their leaders to US, the Western countries and Japan have commenced investment in Myanmar. Myanmar had been facing considerable economic hardship, but it is in a process of overcoming the same. The private sector in the country has to be provided support and other investment or trade opportunities should be exploited by Indian companies and policy makers, before US and Western countries take away the benefits of opportunities.

(n) **Energy Cooperation.** Myanmar has large oil and gas reserves. More attractive is its natural gas resources. It has proven reserve of about 314.4 billion cubic meters. It already exports more than 5 billion cubic meters annually. India and Myanmar can undertake a bilateral dialogue on energy cooperation. But at a time when the new gas

pipelines are top on the agenda of international energy cooperation, it is not out of place to think of closer cooperation between India and Myanmar on this area.

7.2 **Enhancing Economic Cooperation and Human Resource Support.**

India accorded high priority to the rebuilding of Afghanistan as a nation through investment in various development and reconstruction projects, political visits and people-to-people initiatives in healthcare, education and skill development. This had positively impacting the people of Afghanistan. India has also met with a fair degree of success with its 'Africa Fund'. It could explore the use of such models in its engagement with Myanmar. An innovative scheme focusing on small and community based development projects in fields such as agriculture, rural development, solar energy; vocational training etc has a direct impact on community life. Few of the Indian initiatives are as under:-

- (a) India has offered a new concessional facility of US \$ 500 million line of credit to Myanmar for specific projects, including irrigation projects.
- (b) In the health sector, we are undertaking the upgradation of the Yangon Children's Hospital and the Sittwe General Hospital and are working on establishing tele-medicine connections between Yangon General Hospital and leading Indian service providers.
- (c) In the agriculture sector, we have assisted in setting up of disaster proof rice warehouses in disaster prone areas, have supplied agricultural machinery under a US \$ 10 million grant and are working on establishing an Advanced Centre for Agricultural Research and Education focusing on Myanmar's key crops, namely rice, pulses and oilseeds. A rice Bio-park is also to be set up.
- (d) India is also considering ways of collaborating in science and technology, biotechnology, electronics and renewable energy. In the future, there is need to expand and strengthen all such efforts.

Human Resource and Capability Building Support. In order to enhance capacity building among the Myanmar youth, India has set up the Myanmar-India Centre for English Language Training, Yangon, Myanmar-India Entrepreneurship Development Centre, Yangon, India-Myanmar Centre for Enhancement of IT Skills, Yangon and the Industrial Training Centre in Pakokku. Another Industrial Training Centre is being set up at Myingyan. We are also working on setting up an IT institute in Mandalay. All these institutes have been conceptualized keeping the needs of the Myanmar student and industrial community in mind. We have also offered over 250 scholarships for short term and long term courses in Indian training institutions under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC), Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) scholarship programmes. India's flagship National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) could also reach out to Myanmar to extend help in skill development and vocational training.

Track Record of Indian Infrastructure Projects in Myanmar. The track record of India in regard to infrastructure projects being undertaken in Myanmar is rather unsatisfactory. These need to be completed quickly to create renewed confidence in India amongst the Myanmarese. Key issues in execution of projects such as the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project, the Tamanthi and Shwezaye Hydro-Electric Power Projects, the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway etc include inadequate project preparation and challenges of coordination among the various planning and implementing agencies, and difficulties in financial structuring and funding of projects. It is critical to address these issues in future projects by suitable institutional and implementation mechanisms. An independent and effective institution or authority can be created to simplify administrative procedures, avoid delays in getting permissions and clearances from various agencies, ensure effective coordination and exchange of information among technical groups, governments, implementing agencies, financial institutions etc and bring in a program management discipline to ensure timely execution. At the pre implementation stage, high quality project preparation is critical, and must go beyond the techno-commercial aspects and cover institutional, social and

environmental aspects as well. Private sector participation in funding, implementation and operations could be explored, with adequate underwriting of risks by the Government of India, to bring in efficiencies and ensuring service delivery after creation of infrastructure assets.

Economic Support by India. The various tables below show economic support and projects undertaken by India in Myanmar in recent years. However, this is not good enough and needs to be enhanced and upgraded.

Lines of Credit (LOC) Through SBI / Exim Bank of India.

No	Project	Year	Loan	Remarks
(a)	Govt to Govt (G-to-G) for various projects.	1998	US \$ 10 million	Repayment completed.
(b)	G-to-G for various projects.	2000	US \$ 15 million	Total repayment received up to 01 Jun 2010 is US \$ 7,425,000/-
(c)	G-to-G for various projects.	2012	US \$ 25 million	Total repayment received up to 01 Jul 2010 is US \$ 11,267,428/-.
(d)	G-to-G projects.	2012	US \$ 500 mn	After Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit.

Completed Projects.

No	Project	Date of Signing LOC / Effectiveness	Loan
(i)	Up-gradation of Yangon-Mandalay Railway and purchase of coaches and locomotives.	27 September 2004	US \$ 56,358 million.
(ii)	Moreh-Tamu OFC link.	20 October 2004	US \$ 7 million.

(d)	E-governance project training of 50 Myanmar officials and setting up of two-e-learning centres in Yangon and Mandalay.	2006	US \$ 3 million	Completed.
(e)	Setting up of Centre for Enhancement of IT Skills in Yangon.	2007	Rs 9.1 crore	Completed. Being run by the hosts.
(f)	Setting up of Industrial Training Centre at Pakokku.	2009	Rs 14.74 crore	Completed.
(g)	MIEDC (Myanmar India Entrepreneurship Development Centre) Yangon.	2004	US \$ 2,09,660/-	ASEAN integration project. Completed.
(h)	MICELT (Myanmar India Centre for English language Training) Yangon.	Ongoing	-	Initiative for ASEAN integration (IAI) project. Completed.
(j)	Gift of 820 MT Milk powder.	2008	Rs 12,464 crore.	During Chinese milk crisis.
(k)	Gift of 27 tons of Horlicks.	2008	US \$ 1,03,500/	-do-
(l)	Gift of 200 MT of skimmed milk.	2009	Rs 2.58 crore.	-do-
(m)	Gift of 500 Solar Lantern for cyclone affected area.	2008	Rs 15 lakh.	-do-
(n)	Gift of Galvanised Sheets and relief materials.	2008	US \$ 32,848.91	Cyclone Nargis.
(o)	Gift of 20 biomass gasifiers by TERI.	2010	Rs 2.05 crore	-do-
(p)	Gift of 500 computers to	2007	Rs 3.99	Completed.

	Defence Service Academy by HCL.		crore.	
(q)	Gift of 250 computers to Defence Service Tech Academy by HCL.	2009	Rs 2.07 crore.	Completed.
(r)	Gift of 16 Transformers.	2010	Rs 9.9 crore.	Completed.
(s)	Maintenance of Tamu - Kalemyo - Kalewa Road	2010	Rs 10.5* crore Sanctioned in 2010.	81 mile road completed in Rs 93.48 cr. Additional Rs 10.5 cr for 28 km stretch.

Government of India Development Projects in Myanmar.

No	Project	Estimated Cost	Remarks
(a)	Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project.	US \$ 250 million.	To link India's NE with Sittwe Port. Work is in progress.
(b)	Rhi-Tiddion & Rhi Phalam Roads.	US \$ 60 million.	Involves constructing 161 kms road in Chin state of Myanmar to link border trade point at Rhi-commence. In progress.
(c)	Trilateral Highway.	India's commitment is US \$ 100 million.	Road linking India-Myanmar-Thailand (Moreh-Mae Sot) with aid from India and Thailand. India to make 2- lane roads of 78 km and upgrade from single to double for 182 Kms stretches. Work in progress.
(d)	Tamanthi &	US \$ 586	NHPC to construct Tamanthi (1200

	Shwezaye	million.	MW) and Shwegaye (642 MW) Hydel Projects. Yet to commence.
(e)	Revamping of hospitals / CICs	US \$ 8 million.	10 Community information Centres (CIC). (On going).
(f)	Construction of 10 Rice Silos (for disaster relief).	US \$ 10 million.	Completed, 3 in Yangon and 7 in Ayeyarwaddy Region.
(g)	Agricultural machinery by HMTI.	US \$ 10 million.	Ongoing.
(h)	Conservation of Bagan Temple.	Rs 12.83 crore.	Ongoing.
(j)	School Building (Earthquake Relief).	US \$ 1 million.	Ongoing.
(k)	Industrial Training Centre, Mingyan.	Rs 17 crore.	Yet to commence.
(l)	Establishment of Advance Centre	-	For Agriculture Research and Education.
(m)	Establishment of Rice Bio Park	-	At the Department of Agricultural Research in Nay Pyi Taw.
(n)	Setting up of Myanmar Institute of IT.	-	-

7.3 Need for Structured and Issue Based Progress Including Government to Government Initiatives.

The context for building a new relationship with Myanmar has to be understood in the backdrop of India's continued dialogue with Myanmar for the last two decades, on the concept of an inclusive process of national reconciliation and transition to democracy. Recent years have not only witnessed robust bilateral cooperation but also a number of high-level visits. Our relations with Myanmar encompass a number of important areas like

security, trade and investment, energy, capacity-building, health and education, science and technology, as well as infrastructure development. Enhanced connectivity between our two countries is also of mutual interest.

Development of Border Areas and Security. The development of the north eastern part of India is integral to India's policy on Myanmar. North East is a corridor and a transit route to South East Asia. But at the same time, India-Myanmar economic relations must not be made hostage to the progress made in India's North East as well as with Bangladesh. It can be developed independently. Security occupies centre stage in any discussion about South and Southeast Asia. India should be ready to work together with the Myanmar government to accelerate the process of development in the areas bordering India. This has traditionally been viewed as an area of common security concern but it is also a new economic frontier. We have cooperated against armed insurgency; however, it is the planned connectivity and development projects in the Rakhine and Chin States and Sagaing Region which are today of special importance.

Maritime Boundary Based Approach. With arrival of democracy, more players are entering Myanmar and this means more competition for China, which was having a free run for over two decades. India still has a largely land bound approach to Myanmar. It also needs a maritime boundary-based approach towards Myanmar. In fact, India's maritime border with Myanmar is longer than India's land border with Myanmar. India can have an open and clear access to Myanmar through the open seas. The proposed sea-route from Sittwe to Kolkata as part of the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project is an important step in this direction. Thailand has also invited India to have this kind of access through the building of the Chennai-Dawei corridor to connect Southern India's emerging industrial hubs to the proposed industrial and economic hub at Dawei. We must take up this opportunity.

PIO and People to People Contact. The community of more than a million strong People of Indian Origin (PIO), in Myanmar, is symbolic of our historical links as nations. As Myanmar enters a new economic era, there are

hopes for their economic progress as an integral part of the Myanmar nation. These are essentially from the Trading Community and they need to be re-connected. An outreach program is needed. Besides that, people-to-people contacts therefore have to be strengthened. We have been extending courtesies to Buddhist pilgrims from Myanmar and have also tried to encourage more tourist visits by extending our tourist visa on-arrival scheme to Myanmar nationals. These efforts should be carried forward. Myanmar has also made requests to set up monasteries and sought the help of the Archaeological Survey of India in the restoration of their monuments. Implementing such requests could strengthen the 'soft' engagement and goodwill among the two nations.

Understand Myanmar's Economic Priorities. It is important to understand Myanmar's economic priorities: a financially viable government; resources to build much-needed infrastructure, especially ports and rural roads; allow increased space for economic activity by private entrepreneurs that is free from state or military patronage; develop Myanmar's natural resources; especially natural gas, hydropower, timber, and gems; and work with the international community in clearing debts in arrears owed to the Asian Development Bank and World Bank. Crucially, these economic priorities should be the foundation of a new business and economic relationship between India and Myanmar.

(a) India's investment in Myanmar is quite low: just US\$ 189 million without taking into account the US\$ 1.33 billion investment by ONGC and GAIL. The prospects are good, especially as India has a Free Trade Area with the ASEAN. Private sector involvement in both the North East part of India and Myanmar can be enhanced if the government offers insurance cover packages that will reduce the political and economic risks involved in doing business here.

(b) Myanmar's potential for hydrocarbons and mineral resources is large. Its oilfields are a century old and there is potential for oil and gas both onshore and offshore as Yetagun and Yadana demonstrate. Even during the years when political contacts were shunned, Western oil

companies remained active in Myanmar. Apart from upstream activity, there is potential for collaboration in the future on refining and perhaps even setting petrochemicals plants.

Enhance Border Trade. The current state of Indo-Myanmar commercial relations is healthy, but below its full potential. The balance of trade has generally been in favour of Myanmar. Linking Myanmar's agro potential with the Indian market could be a way of the future. China is now Myanmar's largest trade partner, accounting for about US\$ 4.7 billion, of which the border trade amounts to about 50 per cent. Out of the US\$ 2.9 billion Myanmar-Thai bilateral trade, the border trade represents US\$ 300 million. The total bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Myanmar is about US\$ 150 million, of which border trade represents US\$ 9 million. Total bilateral trade with India was US\$ 1.4 billion, out of which border trade accounted for only US\$ 2.9 million. Informal trade flourishes. According to a study conducted by the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, informal trade at Tamu-Moreh sector alone was estimated at US\$ 500 million against a paltry US\$ 2.9 million of formal trade. It has to be the endeavour of both the countries to correct this distortion.

7.4 Act East Policy.

It is safe to assume that the new version of India's Look East Policy has been shaped partly by China's rise and the manner in which Beijing is strengthening its position in the South and Southeast Asian regions both in terms of strategic ties with countries in the region and technological advancements like anti-ship ballistic missiles. The best option open to India now is to cultivate close linkage with some influential members of ASEAN as well as APEC forum. India needs to follow the policy of 'smooth going' with ASEAN countries to achieve long term goals. The Act East Policy or the strategy of improved version of India's Look East Policy appears designed to help us manoeuvre into a favourable position in the ASEAN and Asia-Pacific, without being directly involving in any internal conflicts but at the same time meeting challenges that might arise in the region.

Underpinning this cultural transformation and an intricate web of rail, road and maritime links is a soaring vision of an Asian century that is becoming increasingly real with the on-going shift of economic gravity from the north to the south and the west to the east. There is a lot at stake in the flowering of the Asian dream as it involves the hopes and aspirations of around 1.8 billion people of India and the ASEAN region that are itching to carve their place in a changing world. The world is in a flux, and many equations may change, however, the India-ASEAN ties are not only likely to endure, but looks set to cross new milestones in days to come. While pursuing this strategy, India should also take a comprehensive effort to 'bring east' into India. Along with India moving into Southeast Asia, India should also take serious measures in bringing the countries east of India into India, within the prism of economic, cultural, and societal fields. Thus, India and Myanmar should immediately set up a high-level bilateral mechanism to review progress on infrastructure projects and broaden the discussion to include "soft infrastructure," including transit and transport agreements⁷⁶.

7.5 **Indo-Myanmar Cooperation to 'Free' Myanmar From China.** Due to years of Military or quassi-democratic rule in Myanmar, an aspirational space is open in Myanmar, which India has to consciously fill. This needs to be done not just through routine economic means but by supporting human capital.

(a) **Border Areas Insurgency and Existence of Myanmar.** Myanmar envisages the destabilising role of China in northern Myanmar's Shan state, adjoining China's Yunnan province, where armed hostilities between Kokang rebels and the Myanmar Army have killed at least 100 people and displaced thousands of civilians since January 2015. Myanmar believes that the Kokang insurgency are being encouraged by China, which is frustrated about Myanmar's recent opening up to the rest of the world and its shift away from Beijing's sphere of influence. The tragedy of Kokang civilians, who are victims of

⁷⁶ Seshadri, V.S. (2014). 'Time to demonstrate an 'Act East Policy'. *The Hindu*, 13 November 2014.

China's geostrategic power play, poses an existential dilemma for Myanmar. But the more Myanmar gets involved into a global game to counterbalance China, the worse the ethnic problem becomes due to sabotage by violent pro Chinese groups. India needs to train and equip Myanmar Army and share its huge experience in counter insurgency operations.

(b) **Opening of Myanmar Markets to the World.** From 1988 till 2011, Myanmar's Military junta was practically a client of China. However, this equation is changing, since the present Myanmar Government has commenced seeking foreign investment and sought better relations with US and EU countries. Its invitation to the international community has signalled that Myanmar is the new market with immense potential for investors to tap into a hitherto isolated society with vast potential for consumption.

(c) **Democracy Offers Myanmar A Non-Chinese Means for Development.** US, EU states, Japan and India, which are concerned about China's expanding footprint, have entered Myanmar with more vigour, since arrival of democratic government five years ago. It was done by easing economic sanctions and offering Myanmar an alternative and non-Chinese means for modernisation and economic growth. Due to removal of certain restriction on press, previously suppressed and pent-up resentments of China's role in monopolising and exploiting Myanmar's natural wealth are now out in the public sphere⁷⁷. The utter acquisitiveness and greed with which Chinese traders, miners and businesspersons have denuded Myanmar's resources have propelled a nationwide anti-China backlash. The country can make progress in its slow transition to democracy only by keeping China at bay and by involving pro-democratic foreign players to guide its political and economic evolution. India needs to play its part in the game of realpolitik.

⁷⁷ Chaulia, Sreeram. (2015). 'The Asian Age', 24 Feb. (online) Available at : <http://www.asianage.com/columnists/myanmar-needs-india-596> (accessed 25 February 2015).

(d) **Chinese Neo-Imperialism.** Myanmar Military leaders are also worried about Chinese neo-imperialism and blackmail. Retired Major General Aung Min, a minister in the office of Myanmar's President, has candidly admitted that "We are afraid of China and don't dare to have a row with the Chinese", because "if they feel annoyed with the shutdown of their projects (in Myanmar) and resume their support to the Communists, the economy in border areas would backslide."⁷⁸

(e) **Aspirational Space: An Alternative.** The intelligencia of Myanmar feels that China is a prime hurdle limiting their country from achieving full democracy. The ray of hope for Myanmar is the belief that India can make a difference. They feel that they have to learn from India how to forge acceptance of others in a diverse, multicultural society. They seek Indian constitutional expertise to move towards a federal state structure. Thus Indian diplomacy has to consciously fill the aspirational space that is open in Myanmar, not just through routine economic means but by supporting human capital and strengthening moderate and tolerant social actors there. India need not be anti-China or compete against the West in Myanmar. Indians just have to be proactive in getting accepted as benevolent Asian neighbours of Myanmar, who present a contrast to the hated China model.

⁷⁸ Chaulia, Sreeram. (2015). 'The Asian Age', 24 Feb. (online) Available at : <http://www.asianage.com/columnists/myanmar-needs-india-596> (accessed 25 February 2015).