

# International Relations Class 07

17th January, 2024 at 9:00 AM

## INTRODUCTION (09:17 AM)

- A Brief Overview Of The Previous Class.

## MYANMAR'S TROUBLED HISTORY (09:24 AM)

### British Burma (1885–1948):

- In 1937, Burma became a distinct colony under British administration on April 1.

### Independence (1948–1962):

- On January 4, 1948, Myanmar gained independence, establishing itself as a republic.

### Military Rule (1962–2011):

- A significant turning point occurred in 1962 when a military coup d'état took place. From 1962 to 1974, Myanmar experienced rule under a revolutionary council led by a military general.
- **23 June 1997---Myanmar was admitted into the ASEAN.**
- **August 2007---Saffron revolution (due to an increase in the price of fuel), led by Buddhist monks.**
- 2008 April - A new constitution was published, which allocated a quarter of seats in parliament to the military and banned opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi from holding office.
- Civil wars

### Period of Liberalization (2011–2021):

- **2010 General Elections:**
- In 2010, General Elections marked the beginning of the liberalization period.
- The military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) emerged victorious, declaring Retired General Thein Sein as President.

### 2012 By-Elections:

- Elections in 2012 witnessed Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party winning 43 out of 45 available seats.

### 2015 General Elections:

- The year 2015 saw General Elections where the NLD secured an absolute majority of seats, marking a significant shift in Myanmar's political landscape.
- NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi was constitutionally barred from the presidency.

### 2016 - Political Transition:

- In 2016, Htin Kyaw was elected as Myanmar's first non-military president since the coup of 1962.
- On April 6, 2016, Aung San Suu Kyi assumed the role of State Counsellor, similar to a Prime Minister.

### 2020 Elections and 2021 Military Coup:

- In the 2020 elections, Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD secured victory, prompting complaints of irregularities from the USDP.
- Election observers, however, declared no major irregularities in the voting process.

### Coup - February 1, 2021:

- On February 1, 2021, Myanmar's military, the Tatmadaw, led by Min Aung Hlaing, detained State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and other ruling party members.
- President Win Myint was placed under house arrest.

### Reactions to Military Rule:

- **Condemned by:** UN General Secretary, US, Western European leaders, and Southeast Asian democracies.
- Demands included the release of captive leaders and an immediate return to democratic rule.
- The U.S. threatened sanctions, including freezing US\$1 billion of military assets.

**Refrained from Criticize:**

- India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Russia, Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines, and China.
- Representatives of Russia and China had conferred with Tatmadaw leader Gen. Hlaing just days before the coup.

**ASEAN Summit - April 24, 2021:**

- On April 24, 2021, ASEAN convened a high-level summit to address the escalating crisis in Myanmar.
- A 5-point consensus was reached at the summit:
- Immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar.
- Constructive dialogue among all parties.
- Appointment of a special ASEAN envoy to facilitate dialogue.
- Provision of humanitarian assistance.
- A visit by the envoy to Myanmar.

**India's Stand on Military Coup:**

- India proclaimed a notable policy shift in diplomatic engagement with Myanmar's current regime in the aftermath of the military coup.

**India's Stand in 1987:**

- The historical context suggests India's stance on Myanmar's political situation in 1987 was marked by a different diplomatic approach.

**India's Stand Now (December 22, 2021):**

- In December 2021, the Indian Foreign Secretary visited Myanmar and held discussions with Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, Myanmar's military chief.

**4th Quad Foreign Ministers Meet - February 2022:**

- During the 4th Quad foreign ministers meeting in February 2022, India expressed non-support for the idea of imposing sanctions on Myanmar.
- India emphasized its concerns about the crisis, especially as an "immediate land-border neighbour."
- The Indian stance highlighted specific concerns about Myanmar, emphasizing that India doesn't follow a policy of national sanctions.

**India's Three Points - February 2022:**

- **Security Concerns:** India underscored its apprehensions related to security.
- **Preferential World Treatment of Military Rule:** India expressed concerns about the global treatment of military rule.
- **Support for ASEAN Five-Point Consensus:** India endorsed the ASEAN five-point consensus on Myanmar.

## **INDIA'S STAND ON MILITARY COUP D'ÉTAT: A MAJOR POLICY SHIFT (09:50 AM)**

- The aforementioned points collectively signify a significant policy shift in India's approach towards the military coup in Myanmar.

### **Critics' Perspective:**

- Some critics question whether India's approach could be perceived as legitimizing the coup.

### **Foreign Secretary Visit - December 2021:**

- Following the coup in December 2021, the terms used in the Ministry of External Affairs press release included chairman, state administrative council, used to refer to military Junta.
- Continued military cooperation: India's decision to provide Myanmar with RADAR tech and Remote control weapon system through BEL also invited criticism.
- India also attended the ASEAN defence minister meeting during the time on counter-terrorism which was further criticised.
- Continued economic linkages: India has set up an Indian centre at Yangon during that visit for further economic cooperation.
- Development projects.
- India also expressed its support for ongoing connectivity projects like the Kaladan multimodal project and the IMT trilateral Highway project.

### **Response of India:**

- In response to this criticism, India expressed that it will follow a twin-track approach towards Myanmar.
- Under this approach, India will carry on diplomatic engagements with the military junta and at the same time push the country gently for the restoration of democracy.
- The explicit goal of India's approach is to address specific concerns regarding Myanmar.
- the implicit goal however is to counter-weight China in Myanmar's south East asia and Indo-Pacific region.
- Another goal within this approach was to gently push Myanmar closer to democracy and include the objective of federalism and proportional representation.
- The military Junta had indicated that they might have elections very soon.
- India also stated in Myanmar it would be acceptable to along with an immediate end to violence and the release of political leaders.

## **REASONS FOR INDIA'S INVERTED APPROACH TO MYANMAR (11:02 AM)**

- The growing influence of China is one of the implicit reasons.
- **Initially, after the coup China distanced itself from the military junta to ward off backlash from Myanmar's citizens and to avoid international criticism.**
- **However, later China started collaborating with the military junta.**
- **In this regard, China gave a second-hand Ming-class submarine to Myanmar.**
- **Myanmar navy was also getting submarine training from China.**
- China has also given him a C8 20 anti-ship missile and home-built aircraft in Myanmar
- China has been involved in China Myanmar economic corridor within the BRI with Myanmar.
- China has already converted the Kyunphu port into its string of pearl diplomacy.
- In response to this India has maintained its presence in Sittwe Port under the necklace of diamond strategy.
- To uphold our Act East policy.
- For upholding neighbourhood policy.
- kaladan multimodal project which even serves the purpose of providing an alternate route to NE India and IMT project which serves as a regional alternative to China's BRI.

### **Analysis:**

- India's engagement with the Military Junta could appear to be a litmus test for Indo- Bangladesh especially when Bangladesh and Myanmar are at loggerheads over the Rohingya issue.
- Given that more than 1 million Rohingyas are languishing in Bangladesh, bilateral outreach of any country to Myanmar brings Bangladesh into a relational calculus.
- Right now India walks a tightrope regarding Myanmar keeping the moral contention of pro-democracy stand on one hand and a realist contention of security on the other hand.
- However, the present minimal engagement with the Junta in Myanmar is the most pragmatic approach keeping in mind our security concern and rising Chinese influence in the region.
- As per a few analyses, India's approach regarding the imposition of sanctions on Myanmar was different from that of the US and therefore it could be said now it depends on the mutual understanding between India and the US that they want to consider Myanmar as an important actor in Indo Pacific thereby shedding specific prejudice against Myanmar.
- India, as discussed, is guided by the twin strategic goal of on one hand engaging with Myanmar without diplomatically recognising the military Junta on the other hand counter weighting China in Myanmar and S East Asia.
- However, India needs to take a pragmatic yet cautious approach not to interfere directly in the internal politics of Myanmar.
- and S East Asia and at the same time engage with regional actors like ASEAN.

### **June 2023 - Indo-Myanmar Talks on Rupee Trade:**

- India and Myanmar are expected to conclude ongoing talks on rupee trade by the end of June.
- This development aims to clear hurdles for payment mechanisms amidst US sanctions.
- It is anticipated to significantly boost bilateral trade, currently standing at \$1.76 billion.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has permitted payments to be received in Indian Rupees.
- The Myanmar government plans to establish currency convertibility for the Indian rupee in trade.
- Under the settlement mechanism, Myanmar will accept payments for exports to India in Indian rupees.
- Export earnings in Indian rupees can be utilized for payments of goods and services imported from India.
- RBI has appointed and authorized PNB of India to open a special Rupee Vostro Account (SRVA) for foreign trade with Myanmar.

### **May 2023 - Operation Karuna for Cyclone Mocha:**

- Cyclone Mocha approached the coasts of Myanmar and Bangladesh in May 2023.
- India initiated "Operation Karuna" to provide humanitarian assistance to people in Myanmar affected by Cyclone Mocha.
- This operation aligns with India's commitment to ensuring Security and Growth for All in the Region.
- India, as a first responder, aims to support neighbouring countries during such calamities.

### **Who are Rohingyas?**

- Rohingyas are Muslims residing in Myanmar's Rakhine state (NW Myanmar).
- Described by the UN as one of the most persecuted minorities globally and among the most discriminated people in the world.
- Denied citizenship under the 1982 Myanmar nationality law.

### **Global Response to the Issue:**

- United Nations: Later described by the United Nations as a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing."
- **Bangladesh, India, and Indonesia:** In December 2020, Bangladesh relocated more than 1,500 Rohingya refugees to an isolated Bhasan Char Island under its Ashrayan Project.
- Concerns: The area is ecologically fragile and prone to floods, erosion, and cyclones. Rohingyas are perceived as having no strategic value to any country.
- In August 2022, the Union Home Ministry announced that Rohingya refugees in New Delhi would be held at a detention centre and then deported.
- In February 2022, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor proposed a refugee and asylum law. However, being a bill from a private member (a parliamentarian not in government), it could not pass.
- From February 13 to 18, 2022, the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees discussed Rohingya refugees' circumstances during her visit to Cox's Bazar and Bhashan Char.

### **INDIA'S RESPONSE TOWARDS ROHINGYA REFUGEES (11:30 AM)**

- In April 2021, the landmark Mohammad sali mullah vs UOI case came up.
- In this case, the principle of nonrefoulment was discussed.
- Non-refoulment is a principle under International law that states that a person fleeing prosecution from his country should not be forced to return to his own country.
- This involves the right not to be expelled.
- On this principle, Rohingya refugees approached SC of India.
- They claimed that the deportation of Rohingyas by the Indian state is a violation of Art 14 21 and DPSP under Art 51C.
- **In response to this SC argued :**
- 1) Art 14 and 21 should be dissociated from Art 19.
- The right not to be expelled under the non-refoulment principle can be interpreted as the right to reside or settle in any part of the country which is an FR under art 19(1)(e) ( available only for the citizens).
- The Court further said that since India is not party to any refugee convention Art 51 is not applicable in this case.

**(THE TOPIC FOR THE NEXT CLASS: INDIA- SRI LANKA RELATION)**