

1. Myanmar's Political Transition and its Implications for Emerging Geopolitical Scenario in Asia – Vignesh Ram, Research Scholar, Department of Geopolitics and International Relations, Manipal University, India

Abstract: The contemporary debates on Myanmar and its ongoing transition suggest that it will have a very significant role to play in the emerging geopolitical reality. The quantum shift in Myanmar's political system has brought it to the centre stage of all the major discourse among the members of strategic and academic community. The nation is no more in isolation. It is emerging very much as a part of the mainstream. Over the years, Myanmar certainly had become the victim of its own States' policy. The growing realization about its past mistakes mainly on its adamant posture is getting reflected in its ongoing transition. In its state of isolation, Myanmar had confronted a number of challenges including western sanctions. It was mostly treated as a *pariah* state largely due to its military regime and authoritarian connotations. However, China had been able to evolve a strong relationship with Myanmar and also developed deep linkages with the military in addition to the economic realm. China all these years dominated the scene and was able to exploit the natural resources of Myanmar and neglected the larger interests of the local populace. Virtually, China had no competitor. There seems to be a drastic change internally in Myanmar with regard to its changing perception about China. The recent policy decision in Myanmar on its opening up its economy is a case in point. It has certainly been featuring as a major part of discourse. Myanmar has been experiencing a new shift where the role of Western powers and the United States in particular seem to be growing in the foreseeable future. The emerging role of India in Myanmar is also a positive indication of the growing rivalry among major powers in the region. New challenges to traditional patterns of interaction might alter the current structure in the region and could create new cooperative ventures among new major powers vis- a-vis traditional powers.

2. ASEAN-Myanmar Interactions and Myanmar's Transformation: What Influences at Play? – Ludovica Marchi, University of Reading and Evi Fitriani, University of Indonesia

Abstract: Myanmar has recently made abrupt changes showing to detach itself from the label of pariah state and undemocratic regime. The reform process initiated in 2011, the 2012 by-elections and transfer of power to a civilian military-sponsored government, and the chairmanship of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2014 produced a novel image of Myanmar. How did that image come about? How has ASEAN influenced Myanmar and how has Myanmar bothered ASEAN? The Association and its member states pledged to observe the non-interference principle in a member's internal affairs. Was ASEAN's position on SLORC/SPDS, Yangon military junta, 'constant' over time since 1991 when the European Union started to engage in sanction policy-making, or where there 'changes' in ASEAN's behaviour approaching Myanmar? This paper will focus on the interactions of ASEAN with Myanmar leading to changes in their relations. Official documents issued at ASEAN and Asia-Europe meetings, ASEAN and Myanmar leaders' speeches together with secondary sources and interviews conducted in Myanmar,

contribute to this work. Whereas many scholars have hinted at the non-interference issue characterising ASEAN-Myanmar interactions, no emphasis was laid on ASEAN institutional dimension affecting Myanmar's transformation. This is the original contribution of this paper.

3. Perambulating the Dilemma of Civilian Myanmar: From the Mirror of Evolving Regional Dynamics – Tridib Charaborti, Professor and former Head of Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, and Mohor Chakraborty, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, South Calcutta Girls' College, Calcutta University, India

Abstract: Myanmar - a country with significant politico-strategic imprint in the Asian region since time immemorial – has emerged as the cynosure of the eyes of both regional and extra-regional powers. The country's endowment of rich natural resources and deeply-entrenched historical bonds with India and China has erected a solid foundation for the development of its relations with New Delhi and Beijing. The recent transformation in Myanmar's politico-economic dynamics reflected through the process of democratisation is essentially a product of history. It stretches from the phases of Independence to democracy, democracy to dictatorship and the reverting back to a democratic initiative, which augurs well for the flowering of its ties with India and China at the respective bilateral levels. In addition to New Delhi and Beijing, Myanmar has entered the US' democratic policy radar, particularly in the wake of the changing political system from dictatorship to civilian government. The involvement of this new actor has added a significant dimension with respect to regional power-politics or 'influence-politics', much to the chagrin of the resident powers, read India and China. On this road to Myanmar's process of democracy, numerous dilemmas have naturally evolved and involved - both within and outside - for the existing civilian government. Insofar as the internal constraints are concerned, a number of thorns faced by the present administration are: ethnic equation; democracy-dictatorship tussle and its acceptability; psycho-dilemma of the military rulers in policy-making; the pressure of the democratic rulers on the military elite; and the necessary means for adjustment within the new political system. While pertaining to the external hurdles, the salient factors are: the permutation-combination between the civilian government and Myanmar's historical ally, China; India's policy of constructive engagement, its extended aid and trade policy towards the new government and its impact on China; the Indo-US proximity and its spill over effect on Myanmar augmented by the touching of its soil by President Obama in November 2012; and ASEAN's regional pressure for democratic functioning in Myanmar. It is in this backdrop, that the proposed paper will attempt to analyze the impact of the enhanced engagement of China on the one hand and US on the other with Myanmar, and its reciprocal effects on Indo-Myanmar ties against the milieu of India's celebrated 'Look East' policy. Within the scaffold of this study, the paper will take cognizance of the following components: **first**, the rationale behind the shifting dynamics of Washington and New Delhi towards Naypitaw in the present juncture; **secondly**, whether such a paradigmatic shift on parts of both India and US are viewed as an 'encirclement policy' by China?; and **finally**, the implications of this process of enhanced engagement between

Myanmar and China on the one hand and Myanmar and US on the other from the prism of the Indo-Myanmar relational equation.

4. Australian Perspective on Myanmar: In the Wake of Contemporary Political Changes in Myanmar – Pragya Pandey, Research Scholar, Centre for Indo-Pacific Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

Abstract: The inauguration of new civilian government in Myanmar in 2011 and the subsequent release of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi has brought in the hope of political and economic reforms though incomplete and fragile. For much of its contemporary history, Myanmar has been ruled by a military dictatorship, leading to international isolation and condemnation. However, for the first time in decades, the new government has officials lifted certain restrictions on press freedom and parliamentary debate; initiated limited economic reforms, released some political prisoners which attracted the international attention and hope that better times might be ahead. Australia and Myanmar have a longstanding bilateral relationship, a country still referred as 'Burma' in Canberra most often. 2013 Defence White Paper of Australia mentioned that relations with Myanmar would be restored. Australia is improving further its bilateral engagement and supports the reform process, in recognition of the Myanmar's progress towards democracy. The progress on political reform has seen easing of international sanctions. Canberra also lifted targeted travel and financial sanctions last year and **is considering to restoring defence relations with Myanmar**. A number of official level visits have taken place between the two countries including that of the President U Thein Sein. Australia has a proud history of contributing to Myanmar's development, with development assistance to help address critical needs in education, health and rural development, peace building and other areas of development, which continues to be a cornerstone of the bilateral relationship. This is an appropriate situation for Australia to take a new approach as Myanmar heads towards the chairmanship of ASEAN in 2014. The central theme of this paper would be to analyse this changing dynamic of the bilateral relationship between the two countries.

5. US Engagement Policy Towards Myanmar – Arenla Jamir, PhD Scholar, Centre for Indo-Pacific Studies, School of International Studies, Jawarhalal Nehru University, India

Abstract: The remarkable, yet rapid and unexpected progress Myanmar made towards democratic rule, and economic prosperity has been encouraged and embarked upon by Obama's policy of principled engagement. Despite profound disappointment between 2009-mid 2011 in the US-Myanmar relation, positive changes emerged with the coming of Obama's first term in office. The far sighted leadership and diplomatic visits exchanged between U.S President and the President of Myanmar mid 2011 onwards to Washington and Yangon respectively has been historic. This nascent opening up of Burmese government to the U.S have demonstrated increasing signs of interest in politics, economic, and social development and national reconciliation. However, this opening and reform process comes with lots of uncertainty and fragility. The paper will look into how the U.S re-engages, rebuilds, re-connects and re-commits with Myanmar even as challenges daunts ahead.

d. The paper will also dwell into the reform processes in Myanmar and evaluate the response of the U.S.
