

## МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ, ПОЛИТИКА И ЭКОНОМИКА СТРАН АЗИИ И АФРИКИ

UDC 327

### The Impacts of the Adjustment of India's Foreign Policy for India — Myanmar Relations (1992–2014)

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India and Myanmar are two neighboring countries that share a border of nearly 1500 kilometers and have a relationship based on history, politics, culture, and ethnicity from over 2000 years to the present. India officially established diplomatic relations with Myanmar after the Southeast Asian country gained independence in 1948. Since 1992, the implementation of India's Look East Policy in addition to the strategic importance of Myanmar as a neighbor created a catalyst for new development in relations between the two countries. India — Myanmar relations have shifted from a cold and strained status (1962–1991) to improvement, consolidation and development in the years 1992–2014. Furthermore, the relationship between the two countries was developed on the basis of inheriting the achievements of the previous period (1948–1991) that were not only in the political sphere. There was a complete development in many aspects (politics — diplomacy, economy, security — defense, etc.) for two decades after the end of the Cold War. This article focuses on analyzing the adjustment of India's foreign policy, especially the implementation of the Look East Policy and the “Act East” strategy, and the impact of this adjustment for the development of India — Myanmar relations during 1992–2014.

*Keywords:* India, Myanmar, foreign policy, adjustment, relations.

## Introduction

India and Myanmar are neighboring countries which have had traditionally long-standing and close relations. Over many periods of ups and downs in its history, the links of politics, culture, religion, and society between India and Myanmar are the basis of these relations today. After formally establishing diplomatic relations in 1948, the relationship between the two countries entered a period of peace, cooperation and development. From 1962 to 1991, relations become cold and declined. The India — Myanmar relationship (1948–1991) was dominated by “idealism” and “realism” in the planning of India’s foreign policy. After the end of the Cold War, the trend of dialogue, peace and cooperation along with the development needs of India and Myanmar created new catalysts for the development of relations. Since 1992, with the implementation of India’s Look East Policy and the strategic importance of Myanmar as a neighbor created a catalyst for a new development in relations between the two countries. India — Myanmar relations have shifted from a cold and strained status (1962–1991) to improvement, consolidation and development in the years 1992–2014. In addition, the relationship between two countries was developed on the basis of inheriting the achievements of the previous period (1948–1991) that were not only political, but also in the areas of politics-diplomacy, economy, security-defense. This article focuses on analyzing the foreign policy adjustment of India, especially the implementation of the Look East Policy and “Act East” strategy, and the impact of this on the development of India — Myanmar relations during 1992–2014.

## Literature review

India — Myanmar relations and India’s foreign policy since the Cold War are issues that Vietnamese scholars are interested in researching and publishing in many publications such as books, magazines, and websites. India’s foreign policy in general and its adjustment since the Cold War has been noted by several scholars [1; 2]. Since 1992, with the implementation of the Look East policy, India has made an important adjustment in its foreign strategy. India’s Look East policy is centered on Southeast Asia with the aim of recovering from the crisis, bringing strong economic development to India, and elevating the country’s political strategy in the world. Some scholarly works mention the basic contents of the Look East policy [2–4]. Under the Look East policy, the relationship between India and neighboring Myanmar has experienced new development from the end of the Cold War to 2014 [5]. The relationship between the two countries is not only in the field of politics — diplomacy [5], security — defense, but also in the field of trade and investment [6]. In addition, India also has to compete fiercely with other major powers (US and China) to strengthen its position and influence in Myanmar, which is known as the “cross-roads of Asia” [7]. It is worth noting that India — Myanmar relations under the impacts of India’s Look East policy (1992–2014) have not yet been systematically mentioned by Vietnamese historians in specific studies.

If the research situation in Vietnam on India — Myanmar relations in general and the relationship between the two countries in the period 1992–2014, in particular under the effects of India’s Look East policy, is still quite limited. As a result, this is a topic of interest for many foreign researchers. This issue overall is reflected in a number of studies on India — ASEAN relations [8; 9]. Several works refer to the development and basic components of the Look East policy [10–14]. With its geostrategic position, neighboring

Myanmar is a key factor in Indian foreign policy making [15–19]. Other works focus on presenting an overview of India — Myanmar relations in the fields of cooperation mainly in politics, economy, and military security [9; 16; 20–32]. They emphasize the Chinese factor affecting the development of this relationship [33; 34]. In addition, India — Myanmar relations, with India's foreign policy towards Myanmar in the period 1992–2014, are also listed in the range of raw data through reports or agreements [35; 36]. However, the aspects related to the topic of this article, noted in the above-mentioned research, are still general and not comprehensive.

With the above approach, foreign researchers mainly refer to India's Look East policy, the development of India — Myanmar relations in general or bilateral relations in some specific stages, focusing on the important role of neighboring Myanmar in India's foreign policy and the implementation of the policy in terms of diplomacy, and the Chinese factor in the bilateral relationship. In each work, India — Myanmar relations from 1992 to 2014 under the impact of India's Look East policy are mentioned to a certain extent and are not systematic. Nevertheless, it is important to rely on the works of Vietnamese and foreign scholars as they provide a base for the content of this work.

## Results and discussion

### ***Look East Policy (1992–2014): One of the most important adjustments in India's foreign policy***

After the Cold war, in order to serve the domestic economic reform and adapt to the new international situation, India has conducted an adjustment of its foreign policy on the basis of a comprehensive diplomatic execution “linked to the West and toward Oriental”, the importance of relations with developed countries, large countries, “economic diplomacy” being the focus, viewing diplomacy as beneficial for economic development, ensuring ethnic benefits, and regaining the world's power. Despite foreign policy adjustments, India did not abandon the principles of peace and democracy, remaining neutral as the statement of Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao illustrates: “*The world has changed, the countries have changed and nothing can justify unless India changes. We have to adjust and find the actual ways but we never change our principles and objectives*” [1]. The biggest adjustment for India's foreign policy after the Cold War has been implementing the Look East Policy since 1992.

The Look East Policy was officially launched in 1992 and was enforced by Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao (1991–1996). This new foreign policy in India's long-term strategic considerations was aimed at building and expanding India's influence in the Asia-Pacific region while also simultaneously competing with and curbing China's influence in the region and especially in the Indian Ocean-India's traditional area of influence. Basically, the overall objective of this policy is to develop India as a military and economic power not only in Asia but also across the world. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh asserted that “*This is a strategic shift in India's vision for the world and New Delhi's position in the global economy*”. India deploys the Look East Policy to develop economy and trade relations with East Asian countries and maintain a high and stable rate of growth of India's economy. Furthermore, India is pursuing economic integration with the Asia-Pacific region in which India aims at building the Asian Economic Community [10]. India strives

to become a regional power and gain the economic and strategic benefits that accompany this status, simultaneously curbing and competing with China — a neighbouring country. To reach this objective, the Look East Policy was seen as a new direction for India's foreign policy after the Cold War [1].

The birth of the Look East Policy stems from many factors. *Firstly*, the collapse of the Soviet Union and East European communist bloc resulted in India losing its status, which had been important in terms of economics, politics, and defense. Although India was not a member of the socialist bloc, it had a close relationship with the Soviet Union. Following the Sino — Indian War in 1962, India — Soviet Union relations became closer with the signing of The Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation between the two countries in 1971. The relationship between India and the Soviet Union was a strategic alliance that was based on political interests, the Soviet Union was also a strong supporter of India in terms of economy and trade. Thus, the collapse of the Soviet Union strongly affected the economic and political situation in India, and it was a decisive factor for India's foreign policy adjustment. *Secondly*, the consequences of the Gulf War (1990–1991) affected the India's main oil supply. As a petroleum importing country, India faced many difficulties when this war broke out. India lost a total of 500 million USD from its debt in Iraq and about 112 million USD in trade with Iraq and Kuwait [13]. These circumstances made India seek new sources of energy. *Thirdly*, the rise of China's economy has been perceived by India as a threat towards India's interests in the Indian Ocean and the East. The objective of the Look East Policy is to look for an area to help India counterbalance other countries, first of all, ASEAN countries, China, Japan, etc. At the same time, this policy will help India resolve some problems in the South Asia region. Although the Cold War ended, the relationship between India and South Asian countries has still faced many difficulties due to the instability of the region, primarily the situations in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, etc. *Fourthly*, after the Cold War, India faced unrest due to the threats of terrorism in Punjab, Jammu, and Kashmir. Thus, India should establish outside partnerships to prevent these threats. Moreover, India has increased cooperation with the Asia — Pacific's countries to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. Lastly, because of the economic crisis, India must carry out reform to stabilize and improve people's lives. This resulted in an urgent need for the Government of India to strengthen diplomatic relations in order to restore and develop its economy effectively. In conclusion, from the internal and external factors mentioned above, in order to stabilize and develop the country and enhance its position in the international arena, India has carried out the Look East Policy.

India's Look East Policy is divided into two distinct phases. The first phase lasted roughly one decade, from 1992 to 2002, and was implemented under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao (1991–1996) and Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1998–2004). This was a period in which India resumed regional relations. Before 1991, India focused on maintaining diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, which were established shortly after India gained independence in 1947. The fact that India pursued a foreign policy that was focused on the Soviet Union and South Asian region made the country almost completely removed from the development process in the East Asia region. This was the reason for the readjusting of India's foreign policy, which is reflected in the Look East Policy. The first phase of the Look East Policy centred and focused primarily on trade and investment linkages with Southeast Asian countries. The second phase, which began in 2002, marked

a new step forward by achieving free trade agreements and establishing economic ties between India and other countries in the region [11]. The second phase of the Look East Policy is also marked by the following characteristics.

*Firstly*, it is geographical expansion. If the emphasis of the first phase is primarily to develop trade and economic relations with ASEAN countries, the second phase is the expansion of the “East” to Northeast Asia, Australia, and New Zealand in the South Pacific, while also strengthening economic and security cooperation with these countries. The rise of China and the shift of the global strategic focus of the United States to the Asia-Pacific region have made the geopolitical landscape of this region change. Therefore, India has begun to actively participate in and become a catalyst for the political developments in the region. At the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations between Vietnam and India (1972–2007) in Hanoi, the Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India Pradeep Kumar Kapur also affirmed that “*The main goal of the Look East Policy at the beginning of the 1990s was to strengthen relations with ASEAN. This policy is gradually expanding into the Far East and Pacific region to create favourable conditions for India to have closer links with China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands*” [3]. In short, “Look East” is now not only oriented toward Southeast Asia but also toward the Asia-Pacific region. *Secondly*, the expansion of the field of cooperation encompasses several different areas, particularly security and defense cooperation, such as joint military exercises on the sea in the fight against terrorism. *Thirdly*, India recognizes that a relationship with Southeast Asia also includes geography. In the second phase of the policy, India began to develop roads and transportation between India and Southeast Asia. The India — Myanmar — Thailand Highway and the New Delhi — Hanoi Railway Project are two examples. *Fourthly*, if the first stage had the characteristic of competition and restraint of China, in the next stage, despite the competition, there is also a tendency to cooperate with China to solve bilateral issues. *Fifthly*, if in the first stage India is separated from the Northeast due to external issues, after the development phase of the Northeast, there is an opening to commercial relationships from Southeast Asia [4].

It could be said that with the Look East Policy, the Asia-Pacific region was considered as “a springboard for India to enter the global market”. In India’s Asia-Pacific strategy and Look East Policy, Southeast Asia, in general, and Myanmar, in particular, hold a very important strategic position, as a vital factor for the success of India’s Look East Policy. Myanmar creates a link not only between India and Southeast Asian countries, but also between South Asia and Southeast Asia. Myanmar provides an uninterrupted connection from India to Laos and Thailand. It is the only country in Southeast Asia that shares a border of 1463 km by land and sea with India. Myanmar is India’s gateway to Southeast Asia and could be the required impetus to realize India’s Look East Policy [15] Myanmar is viewed from India’s perspective as a “land bridge” that connects India with Southeast Asia and it is a vital link in its new trade route via the Look East Policy [17]. In this policy, Indian policymakers considered the Northeast region to be the starting point for India’s “link” with Southeast Asia in order to restore the historical ties between India and Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam through Myanmar to promote cooperation in the sphere of trade. Consequently, India — Myanmar relations in the field of politics and diplomacy from 1992 to 2014 had many favourable conditions for development when India deployed its new foreign policies, such as the Look East Policy.

## *The strategic importance of Myanmar in India's Look East Policy*

In the foreign policy of India after the Cold War to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Myanmar has occupied an important position, including the following factors:

*First, with Myanmar's vital strategic geographical position it has become a "chain" important on the way to Southeast Asia.*

Myanmar lies between Northeast Asian, Southeast Asia and the South Asia junction, and is the second largest neighbor and the largest country on the eastern flank of India. Four of the six states of Northeast India are Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram which share a mutual border with the Western states of Myanmar. North-Eastern India is the far east of India, where a frequent occurrence of territorial disputes and boundary conflicts occur with China. The state of Arunachal Pradesh (sharing approximately a 1,125 km border with China) is a land where the Chinese government has always affirmed its sovereignty [23]. Therefore, maintaining good relations with neighboring Myanmar also contributed to the Indian government protecting its territorial integrity in the far north-east. In addition, the two countries share the waters of the Bay of Bengal, consisting of an area around two islands that are of strategic importance in terms of location for India: the Andaman<sup>1</sup> and Nicobar Islands. With a coastline of 1,930 km along the Bay of Bengal, and approximately 30 km from the Indian strategic Andaman Islands, Myanmar is increasingly playing an important role in India's marine security strategy. Due to its geographic location, Myanmar holds a strategically important location in Asia. No country outside of Myanmar has such geographical advantages to serve as a link between China and India, and most major countries desire a position mainly in the place considered "Asia's crossroads".

From the post-Cold War, Myanmar held a strategic position in the readjustment of India's foreign policy with Southeast Asia. Myanmar is considered to be a "bridge" between India and Southeast Asia and is a link of vital nature in the Look East Policy, which creates an important trade route for India [17]. In such a trade route, the North Eastern Region is considered by Indian policy makers to be the starting point of the "rope" linking India to Southeast Asia to restore the long-established relationship between India and Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam through Myanmar to promote trade. This has made Myanmar significantly important in India's Look East Policy, as the statement of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh illustrates: *"Myanmar is a key partner in India's Look East Policy and has the perfect position to act as an economic bridge between India and China, between South Asia and Southeast Asia"* [2].

*Second, the impact of the Chinese factor in the foreign policy of India to Myanmar.*

In the process of implementing foreign policy in regard to Myanmar, India could not ignore the influence of China. If the India — Myanmar relationship has had ups and downs over the last decades, China — Myanmar relations are quite close. In the years 1988–1992, when India was pursuing the ideal principles of peace, democracy, and support for the democratic struggle in Myanmar, China established a strong position in their neighboring country. During the 1962–1991 period, the cold and "frozen" relationship between India and Myanmar created "gaps" for China to have deeper penetration and

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<sup>1</sup> The Andaman Islands are an archipelago in the Bay of Bengal located between India (to the west) and Myanmar (to the east and north). Most parts of the archipelago are in India, while some small islands to the north, including the Coco Islands, belong to Myanmar.



strengthen their presence and influence in Myanmar. Thereby, China has established a close relationship with Myanmar's military government and exploited many advantages from the country. As China — Myanmar relations are increasingly strengthened, the more India is threatened because if China succeeds in enticing Myanmar, the movement will open the way for China to surround India through three China allies in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Myanmar, which creates a security instability for India.

Furthermore, the deep the involvement of China in Myanmar's military government in accordance with the basis of China's strategy for Myanmar makes India very worried. In addition to becoming a partner of largest arms supplier of Myanmar, China has built a corridor area from Kunming to Myanmar's West coast, facing the Indian Ocean belt. Also, China has also supported Myanmar in the development of naval bases in Sittwe, Hianggyi, Khaukphyu, Mergui and Zadetkyi Kyun by building the bases to refuel and house radars for Chinese submarines operating in the Bay of Bengal [19]. China's movement in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea is the first step to ensure China's role in the Indian Ocean. These facilities are used to gather intelligence about the activities of the Indian Navy and serve as forward operating bases for the activities of the Chinese navy in the Indian Ocean. In this context, the efforts to expand the naval forces of India are deadlocked. The growing presence of the Chinese navy in the region has resulted in significant strategy consequences for India because the advantages of the traditional geography of India is increasingly at risk of being threatened as well as their ability to penetrate deeper into China's Myanmar. Since the late 80s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, China has engaged vigorously in Myanmar and implicitly reduced the influence of India through the implementation of a strategy named "*string of pearls*"<sup>2</sup> to establish a range of sea ports in countries along the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia. To implement this strategy, China has improved relations with most of India's neighbors including Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. In this regard, Myanmar serves as a springboard for China to pursue an ambitious expansion of its sphere of influence into Southeast Asia and South Asia [23]. It can be said that the position and influence of China in Myanmar as well as the "*brothers*" relationship (Pauk-Phaw)<sup>3</sup> between China and the military government of Myanmar is also an important factor that drives India to improve agency relationships with their eastern neighbors.

*Thirdly, border security issues in the northeast of India.*

Border security issues are considered by the Government of India as a very important basis in foreign policy planning with Myanmar, such as the wave of insurgency in the northeastern states of India (the rebels established a training camp on the territory of Myanmar), land and sea arms trading, as well as drug smuggling and terrorism. From these, the direct security concern for India was the persistent opposition movement in the northeast Indian states where more than 40 million people occupied the border with Myanmar. Armed insurgency organizations such as *the National Council for Socialist Nagaland (NSCN)*, *the United Front for Liberation of Asom (ULFA)*, *the Revolutionary People's Party of Kangleipak (Prepak)*, *the People's Liberation Army (PLA)*, and *the Unity-free National Liberation Front (UNLF)* built bases in the provinces of Kachin and Sagaing (Myan-

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<sup>2</sup> "*String of Pearls*" is a term analysts Americans used to describe maritime traffic routes of China extended to Sudan, passing through the strategic Strait of Mandab, the Strait of Malacca, Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Lombok. China wants to place more military bases, namely the naval base, in many different countries are considered "*pearl*" located in the "*chain*" stretching from southern China to the Indian Ocean.

<sup>3</sup> In the Burmese language it means sibling or close friend.

mar) and used the territory of the country as a safe haven [33]. The anti-destructive activity of these organizations grew with escalating riots in the northeastern region since India gained independence. The riots only contribute to the level of poverty in the area. India was well aware that without the help of Myanmar's military government, India's efforts to destroy the rebel forces in the Northeast would not be able to succeed. Thus, since the early 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, instead of pursuing the ideal perspectives of democracy and peace, India has made diplomatic policy more realistic in relation to Myanmar.

*Fourthly, Myanmar's abundant natural resources and possession of large petroleum reserves.*

Myanmar has great potential for oil and gas resources, minerals, lumber, and hydro-power. It is one of the rare remaining markets which has virtually untapped resources and is comparable to other resource-rich Asian countries. Myanmar has the largest oil and gas reserves in Southeast Asia. According to estimates, Myanmar has oil reserves totaling "600 million barrels and gas reserves of 88 trillion total cubic feet (tcf<sup>4</sup>) — just less than Indonesia. Recently, Myanmar also found reserves in three areas in the Bengal Bay — Mya, Shwe Phyu and Shwe (aka Shwe project) with 5.7 to 10 trillion estimated cubic feet" [34]. As assessed by the United Nations, the country is ranked as the world's 10th largest in oil and gas reserves at 3.2 billion barrels of oil and 2,460 billion m<sup>3</sup> of natural gas. As for gas exports (mainly to Thailand and China) in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it brought in more than 3 billion USD for Myanmar [7]. With rich resources, Myanmar became the "land of gold" for the major powers of the world to promote investment and energy exploration, and neighboring India is one of the partners has several beneficial advantages.

In relations with Myanmar since the Cold War to the present, energy is considered strategic factors to ensure the economic growth of India. In recent years, the two major economies of Asia have been India and China with a strong resurgence. With India and China sharing common borders with countries rich in natural resources such as Myanmar, it made Myanmar become a strategic factor in the competitive energy policies of the two powers mentioned above, especially for India as the country is conducting comprehensive reforms in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and experiencing increasingly strong economic growth. Therefore, the issue of energy security is becoming a priority of national strategy and it is usually brought to the forefront of the agenda for India's foreign policy.

With the four strategic factors mentioned above, India wanted to work more closely with the military government of Myanmar to remove the former hostile psychological attitudes (for a long period of time, India advocated opposition against military authorities) against the strategic advantages of China in Myanmar. There was also a need for a resolution for non-traditional threats in regard to the Northeast security issue as well as the expansion of influence in the region of Southeast Asia, in particular, and Asia-Pacific in general.

It can be said that for India, Myanmar is a neighboring country of strategic importance and vital to the success of India's Look East Policy. The redirection of India's policy for Myanmar is somewhat late considering the traditional relationship, history and key location of this neighboring country, but it is still the correct policy. The choice of Indian foreign policy in relation to Myanmar in the period 1992–2014 still consists of the democratic tradition, but it is more practical, flexible and wise in order to achieve the highest

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<sup>4</sup> Tcf is a unit to measure gas, calculated by 1 million cubic feet



possible efficiency. The heart of Indians still remember Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi, but their heads told us that they needed a relationship with the Burmese military authorities.

## ***The impact of India's foreign policy adjustment to India — Myanmar relations from 1992 to 2014***

### *Politics-diplomacy*

India's policy towards Myanmar has resulted in fundamental changes since 1992 (the initiation of India's Look East Policy) and, therefore, India — Myanmar relations have significantly improved. Since the end of the Cold War, political and diplomatic relations between India and Myanmar have developed gradually, marked by visits, exchanges, bilateral talks, and regular contacts at a high level between the two countries, during which several important documents were signed in many fields of corporation.

In 1992, the Burmese government responded positively to India's offer to normalize the bilateral relationship. An eight-member Burmese delegation led by U Aye, Director General of the Political Affairs Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, visited India August 11–14, 1992 and met with senior officials from India's ministries of External Affairs, Home, Defense and Commerce. This was the first ever official Indo-Burmese senior-level meeting since Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Myanmar in 1987. In March 1993, India's Foreign Secretary Jyotindra Nath Dixit visited Rangoon and met Burmese leaders, including Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt. During this visit, the agreement of drug smuggling control across the border and the border trade agreement were signed [19]. In 1994, India and Myanmar held talks in Myanmar. At this conference, India made a pledge to not interfere with the internal matters of Myanmar. In response, Myanmar also expressed an affirmation with India about the relationship between Myanmar, and China would not be aimed at countering India. At the same time, the two countries have also signed a memorandum (MoU) about maintaining stability in the border area. The talks between the countries' leaders contributed to the foundation for the development of bilateral relations during the years after the Cold War.

Although India — Myanmar relations were improving, relations worsened in 1995 when India awarded the “Jawaharlal Nehru<sup>5</sup>” award to Aung San Suu Kyi to recognize “*her brave, nonviolent and resolute struggle*” for freedom, democracy and value of dignity [35]. The Burmese military Government was opposed to India's Aung San Suu Kyi receiving the award and unilaterally withdrew from cooperation in several areas where the two countries were coordinating. Although India was enforcing the constructive intervention policy by improving relations with the Burmese military government, the “Jawaharlal Nehru” award being given to Aung San Suu Kyi suggests that “idealism” is still in existence irrelevant of India's foreign policy with their neighboring country.

Since Myanmar officially became a member of ASEAN (1997), the India-Myanmar relationship has continued to evolve into a new in regard to the Indian National People's

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<sup>5</sup> The Jawaharlal Nehru Award is the full name of the Jawaharlal Nehru Prize for International Understanding, an international award by the Government of India in honour of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister. The award was established in 1965, managed by the Indian Cultural Relations Council, and is presented to those who have made an excellent contribution to promoting international understanding, goodwill, and friendship among peoples of the world.

Party (BJP) election (1998) and the party's leader, A. B. Vajpayee, coming to power. The leadership, characterized by new and dynamic thinking, has provided new motivation for India, in relation to Myanmar, to meet the goals India planned under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. In February 1998, in order to relaunch the two countries' relations, India sent deputy Foreign Minister K. Ragunath to Myanmar. Myanmar, since the late 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has gradually joined the region to diversify its foreign policy and escape its previously isolated status: Myanmar participated in the ASEAN organization (in 1997) and subsequently sub-regional organizations such as the *Gulf of Bengal initiative for regional Economic and technical Cooperation* (BIMSTEC) (December 1997) and the *Mekong-Ganges Cooperation Organization* (MGC) (2000).

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Myanmar was still an important factor in the second phase of India's Look East Policy, as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's noted: "*Myanmar is the key partner in India's Look East Policy and has the perfect position to act as an economic bridge between India and China, between South Asia and Southeast Asia*" [2]. To achieve their goal, India focused on further developing bilateral relations, primarily in the political and diplomatic fields. A series of visits, high-level exposure, between the two countries were restored, and this helped to promote the development of a bilateral relationship. On November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2000, General Maung Aye, Myanmar Vice Chair-person of The State Peace and Development Council, made a visit to India and it was the first step in elevating India-Myanmar relations to a new stage [16]. The Government of India welcome General Maung Aye with a formal ritual that was similar to welcoming a Prime Minister. This demonstrated that India was opening a new phase in its relationship with Myanmar and was ready to pursue its interests in Asia. General Maung Aye's visit signified high-level contact between India and Myanmar, reminiscent of the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Myanmar in 1987. The visit marked the success of the effective cooperation of the two countries since the mid-90s. This event also appears to be an Indian strategic point of interest and commitment for Myanmar. It is worth noting that prior to formal ceremonies in connection with diplomatic activities in India, leaders of the Burmese delegation led by General Maung Aye visited the Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya (where Buddha attained Enlightenment) of India. This is a meaningful event in Buddhism and emphasis a common connection among people in India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and many other Southeast Asian countries. The visit further highlighted that India and Myanmar were able to move beyond the history of past dissent and made it a priority to create an effective bilateral relationship.

In January 2002, Myanmar and India signed an agreement to re-open the Consulate General in each country. Following this, the Consulate General of Myanmar was reopened in Calcutta, India and the Indian Consulate General in Mandalay (Myanmar). This has contributed to the restoration of formal diplomatic relations, facilitating frequent negotiations between the two countries. In order to preserve the relation with Myanmar, India's Foreign Ministry's response to Suu Kyi's freedom on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2002 was also quite cautious, instead emphasizing the need for "long peace" and "remediation" while still advocating steps towards restoring democracy in Myanmar. During this time, no Indian delegation met Aung San Suu Kyi after she was freed, which indicated that India was cautious and wanted to avoid any possible misunderstandings by the Burmese military government.

After a visit to the Indian Secretary in January 2002, Myanmar Foreign Minister Win Aung also completed a friendship visit to India in January 2003. Win Aung's voyage was

marked the first visit of a minister of the Myanmar government to India in 16 years. Also, in this year, in November 2003, the Vice President of India Bhairon Singh Shekhawat visited Myanmar at the invitation of the Vice president of SPDC. During this visit, India and Myanmar signed three bilateral agreements on strengthening cooperation in the fields of education, culture, and visa exemption for people bearing a diplomatic and service passport [22]. In addition, Shekhawat had a meeting with Myanmar industry officials in Yangon regarding the two countries' cooperation in several industries, such as information technology, communications, pharmaceutical products, food processing, and training. These are the areas of potential cooperation between India and Myanmar. The outline of visits presented above make it possible to see that the two countries are actively promoting the development of bilateral relations.

At the end of October 2004, Senior General Than Shwe paid the first state visit to India. At the meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Senior General Than Shwe emphasized that Myanmar would not allow any insurgent group's activities on its territory, and he pledged to restore democracy in Myanmar simultaneously and hoped to receive support from India. He also supported India's effort to become a member of the United Nations Security Council. In return, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh pledged to support Senior General Than Shwe's efforts to establish Myanmar's democracy. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh agreed with Senior General Than Shwe that the *"democracy time period is a complex process, but it creates favourable conditions for political stability and economic development"*. During the visit, India and Myanmar signed three documents, including the Protocol on strengthening anti-terrorism cooperation, drug trafficking, weapons, money laundering, organized crime, international economic crimes; the Cultural Exchange Agreement to 2006; and on cooperation in a hydropower project in Myanmar. In addition to the above, India and Myanmar signed a memorandum of understanding on non-traditional security cooperation and joint military cooperation against the active groups of rebels in Manipur and Naga in the border region. In short, Senior General Than Shwe's visit was a historic visit strengthening Myanmar-India relations. During Senior General Than Shwe's visit, India made no secret about engaging Myanmar as the centre of South Asia.

With the improvement of political and diplomatic relations, the Indian President Abdul Kalam visited Myanmar in March 2006. He was the first Indian Head of state to visit Myanmar for the last 24 years. During his visit to Myanmar, President Abdul Kalam held talks with the chairman of the SPDC, General Than Shwe. Within the framework of the visit, India and Myanmar signed an agreement on cooperation in the field of remote sensing technology and two memorandums of cooperation in the field of oil and Buddhist studies [20]. President Abdul Kalam offered to help build the institutional system and restore the democratic system in Myanmar. This demonstrated that India's efforts for democratic reforms in Myanmar had resulted in an important contribution in promoting democracy through official channels, diplomats, and in the discussions between the two governments. India asserted while collaborating with the previous Burmese military authorities, that they still did not give up their commitment to restoring democracy in Myanmar. In fact, India still maintains its own position, but the perspective and the way of view has changed more than a decade earlier.

In order to further promote the relationship with Myanmar, in 2009 the Vice president of India M. Hamid Ansari made a visit and held talks with General Than Shwe. The

two leaders discussed issues in bilateral relations, including trade, economic cooperation, energy and security. Three important memorandums were signed regarding the establishment of a technology training center, an English language center, and an enterprise training center. At the same time, the parties also comprised an agreement on promoting investment. With the conclusion of a wide range of agreements, the relationship between India and Myanmar has much potential to develop and can result in enormous benefits for both countries. Indian Vice President Hamid Ansari noted that *“The signing of agreements is a symbol of tremendous potential in our bilateral cooperation”* [36].

Before the general election took place in Myanmar (according to the “seven-step roadmap to democracy”) on July 25, 2010, General Than Shwe paid a five-day official visit to India to enlist international support for the efforts to build a “democracy plan” and held talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The two leaders issued a joint statement and announced several agreements, including five agreements on cooperation against terrorism and the preferences of India for Myanmar. According to these agreements, 60 million USD of a loan was allocated to invest in the construction projects of the roads Rhi-Tiddim and 10 million USD to buy machinery. During the talks, India promised to help Myanmar build the democratic institutions by providing training programs for Myanmar officials. When Myanmar came under the pressure from the international community, General Than Shwe’s visit to India (before travelling to China) was seen as a major action to improve Myanmar’s image. India-Myanmar cooperation, in general, and political-diplomatic relations, in particular, took on a new development basis as stated by Indian President Pratibha Devisingh Patil, *“I am confident that, just like your previous visit, this visit will prove to be a milestone in our ever-expanding ties and bring our countries even closer”* [37].

On October 12, 2011, Myanmar President Thein Sein visited India to promote bilateral cooperation with its western neighbour. This was Thein Sein’s first official visit after taking office on March 30, 2011. During the visit, President Thein Sein held talks with Indian President P.D. Patil and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. During the meetings, India applauded the transition to civilian government and offered support to promote Myanmar’s more comprehensive and far-reaching democratization process. India also praised the political, economic and social reform efforts in Myanmar over the previous years. Both leaders reiterated their shared commitment to strengthening and broadening the multifaceted relationship based on shared history, civilizational ties and close religious, linguistic and cultural affinities, and to take it to a new level. While acknowledging the fact that both sides have a responsibility to promote peace, security, and stability in the region, they emphasized the need to intensify economic, social and developmental engagement to bring about overall socio-economic betterment and inclusive growth. They agreed on enhancing effective cooperation and coordination between the security forces of the two countries in tackling the deadly menace of insurgency and terrorism, which caused a countless loss of innocent lives. Both sides also underscored the need to strengthen institutional mechanisms for the sharing of intelligence to combat arms smuggling and drug trafficking [38] can be said that the visit of Myanmar President Thein Sein was also an opportunity for India to further increase its relationship with neighboring countries which were also influenced by China.

In 2012, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh paid a historical visit to Myanmar on May 27 to 29. This was the first visit of an Indian prime minister for 25 years since 1987. The purpose of this visit was promoting cooperation and bilateral relations between

India and Myanmar in various fields: politics, security, trade and investment, etc. The agreement between the two countries consisted of 12 points on strengthening bilateral relations, establishing the border regional markets, trade forums and joint investments, building border security mechanisms, an agricultural research centre, and the cultural exchange program in Myanmar. This visit was not only a step in towards bilateral relations, but it also confirmed an Myanmar's important role in India's Look East Policy [5].

The Look East Policy with the goal of strengthening relations with Southeast Asian countries, gradually expanded to the Asia-Pacific region, resulted in India becoming an economic and military power not only in the Asian region, but also globally. However, the policy has not helped India achieve its goals set, and it seems that India is still just “observer” in matters of Southeast Asia. Consequently, India has made a very important move in foreign policy, making the decision to accelerate the Look East policy.

In May 2014, after becoming the 15<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi decided to move from the Look East Policy to Act East [12]. In his opening statement at the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEAN — India Summit, Prime Minister Modi said “*A new era of economic development, industrialization and trade has begun in India. Externally, India's 'Look East Policy' has become 'Act East Policy'*”. During his visit to Singapore in late 2014, Indian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sushma Swaraj also said “*Look East is no longer relevant, now we need action to the east*”. With the “Act East” policy, India expanded and improved its relations with Northeast Asia and South Pacific countries in all dimensions: political, cultural, and economic fields except ASEAN. India's efforts are reflected in the continuous work to strengthen relations with Australia, Japan, and South Korea [14].

The main pillars of the “Act East” demonstrate the strong involvement of India in promoting economic programs with Southeast Asian countries and attracting investment, especially in the field of infrastructure, as well as promoting the connection of Trade Points in the area. In terms of policy, Prime Minister Modi is interested in promoting economic programs with Southeast Asian countries to attract investment, especially in commercial locations. The Indian Government wants to take more practical actions in strengthening relations with ASEAN countries. This can be seen as India's step in strengthening strategic relations and expanding economic relations with Southeast Asian countries. With the first steps of “Act East”, the Southeast Asia region still plays an important role in India's foreign strategy. It creates favorable conditions for India-ASEAN relations in general and India — Myanmar relations, in particular, to be strengthened and developed in the coming years.

### *Trade and investment cooperation*

#### *Trade*

With the launch of the Look East Policy, Myanmar is considered as “a commercial bridge” for India to penetrate the Southeast Asian market. During the 90s, since the two countries resumed economic relations, turnover of bilateral trade has remained at a relatively modest level. Bilateral trade totaled 273.32 million USD from 1997–1998, 203.88 million USD from 1998 to 1999 and 205.88 million USD from 1999 to 2000 [22]. However, this is still higher than the figures for bilateral trade turnover in 1980–1981, which reached 12.4 million USD, and 87.4 million USD in 1990 — 1991. In the process of cooperation, India and Myanmar government had measures to promote bilateral trade. In



1999, the countries agreed to establish a committee on trade cooperation to boost bilateral economic relations, particularly focusing on trafficking activities along the border. They redefined the exports and imports in order to maximize the potential and comparative advantages of the countries's relations. They also agreed to discuss issues related to trade at the meeting of Deputy Ministers of the two countries annually.

From the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, trade between the two countries has made new developments. Some Indian products, especially pharmaceuticals, were popular in the Myanmar market (accounting for nearly 70 % of the pharmaceutical market in Myanmar). As demand for raw materials increased, India became the largest export market for Myanmar. In 2000, the total value of exported goods from Myanmar to India reached 220 million USD, while exports of India to Myanmar totaled 75.36 million USD. From 2004–2005, bilateral trade turnover between the two countries reached 519.11 million USD which increased up to 626.66 million USD in 2005–2006.

Since 2005, trade between the two countries developed in many fields. The presence of Indian goods in Myanmar has also increased dramatically. India has participated in the construction of infrastructure, including roads and telecommunications systems for Myanmar, to promote trade relations. Thus, in fiscal year 2006–2007, trade turnover between the two countries reached 921.87 million USD and increased to nearly 1 billion USD in 2007–2008. In particular, the bilateral trade turnover between the two countries reached 1.19 billion USD in 2009–2010, of which the export of Myanmar to India reached 1 billion USD, and imports of Myanmar from India was 194 million USD. From 2010 to 2011, the India-Myanmar bilateral trade reached 1,071 billion USD, of which the export of India to Myanmar reached 194.92 million USD and the imported value was 876.91 million USD. Currently, India has become Myanmar's fourth largest trading partner, after Thailand, China, Singapore and the second largest commodity import market of Myanmar after Thailand, comprising 25 % of the total value of goods exported by Myanmar.

Regarding the product structure, the leading products on the list of exported goods from Myanmar to India are agricultural and forest products. India primarily imports raw materials from Myanmar (agricultural and forest products, including teak, woodwork, beans, coal, ginger, fresh turmeric). Compared with imports, India's exported goods to Myanmar are more diverse, mostly iron, steel, pharmaceutical equipment, and mechanical machinery. In addition to staple food items, timber and gems are also exported to Myanmar, which meet the requirements of the Indian industry in the Northeast region. Thereby, India is able to promote the construction of industries in Northeast region and take advantage of Myanmar's raw material resources. In 2014–2015, India was Myanmar's third-largest import partner and the seventh-largest exporter to the eastern neighboring country [6].

In order to further promote bilateral economic and trade cooperation, the Joint Trade Committee (JTC) of India-Myanmar was established in 2003. The JTC held 4 general meetings up until 2011 [18]. The first meeting of the JTC was conducted in Rangoon (Myanmar) in 2003, under the presidency of the countries' trade ministers. The agenda of the meetings were largely focused on reviewing, evaluating, and determining the objectives of bilateral trade between the two countries. The second meeting of the JTC was held in India in 2006 and chaired by the Ministers of Commerce and Industry. The two ministers emphasized the natural resources of the two economies and their prospects for cooperation in various fields such as information technology, tourism, food processing,

pharmaceutical products. Despite this, commercial growth today is still a challenge due to the difficulties in the trade structure between the two countries. Because of the lack of connections between people as well as the trade organizations of both India and Myanmar, the ability to diversify trade is difficult to realized. Therefore, it is necessary to help the two peoples improve their understanding of the possibilities and opportunities. It can be said that over the course of less than 10 years (from 2003) and through meetings between the two parties, especially the fourth session that took place most recently in September 2011, the JTC has successfully oriented itself for development of the trade relationship between India and Myanmar.

Another highlight in trade relations between India and Myanmar is *the commercial activity in border areas*. This activity has become an important aspect of economic cooperation since the beginning of the 90s. The *India-Myanmar border trade agreement* signed in India on January 21, 1994 (effective from April 1995), officially marking the resumption of trade, legalized commercial activities along the border areas of both countries, and established two commercial centers in the border areas of Moreh-Tamu and Zowkhatar-RHI [32].

Since the border trade agreement, cross-border trade between India and Myanmar has been increasingly expanding and achieving some initial results. The main Indian commodities sold to Myanmar traders through the border trade channel consist of cotton yarn, automobile parts, soy, pharmaceuticals, dried ginger, green beans, fresh turmeric, turpentine and herbs for medicinal preparations. In order to foster the development of border trade, the Indian government supported additional media in Moreh and assisted with the finances required for the Manipur state Government to organize programs, such as the Seminar on border trade. Since October 2008, India and Myanmar have agreed to expand the list of items traded across the border from 22 to 40 items. Subsequently, in order to facilitate the operations of border trade, the two countries were also able to open four more points at Pangsau Pass, Paletwa, Lungwa-Yanyong, and Pagnsha-Pagnyo. These actions contributed to the strengthening of border trade between the two countries, preventing illegal trafficking and allowing for the tracking of rebel groups' activities along the border area. Since 2010–2011, trade on the border between the two countries reached 12.8 million USD<sup>6</sup>.

### *Investment*

If India-Myanmar trade relations were initiated in the mid-90s, cooperation in the field of investment between the two countries occurred somewhat later. Nevertheless, cooperation in terms of investment has made significant progress with a series of projects in Myanmar invested in by India and joint projects between the two countries. This plays a pivotal and important role for building infrastructure and energy. In addition, India has partnered with Myanmar in areas such as communications, information technology, undergraduate education as well as establishing remote induction centers and data transmission.

From the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, India has promoted a series of projects to build roads and ports in Myanmar. One of the key projects is building the highways Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemyo (called the Path of friendship India-Myanmar), which is 160 km long and con-

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<sup>6</sup> Data from the Myanmar Ministry of Trade

nects Moreh, a border town in the state of Manipur (Northeast India), to Mandalay (the second largest city of Myanmar) at a cost of 27.28 million USD. The project was funded entirely by the Indian government [8]. It was completed and handed over in 2001 and is considered to be India's initiative for not only contributing to the promotion of trade, but also strengthening friendship of the two countries. In parallel with the implementation of building the highways mentioned above, India also plans to help with the renovation, upgrading, of regional roads along the border between the two countries with two routes RHI-Timdim and RHI-Falam. It is being funded by the Export-Import Bank of India. Currently this project is being completed. In 2002, the two countries reached a consensus on the Kaladin waterway project, which connects the port of Sittwe (Myanmar) with Mizoram (Northeast India).

On July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2004, during the visit of General Aung Min, the Secretary of transport of Myanmar, to India, the two sides signed a memo on India's assistance to Myanmar with renovating and upgrading the Myanmar National Railroad. Accordingly, India will provide Myanmar loans of 56.38 million USD for the railway and help to link this route to Indian's railways. At the same time, India's rail technology and Services Limited liability company will provide Myanmar with locomotives, machinery and spare parts, lighting systems and information on railway lines. Also, India has renewed the credits for the upgrade of Myanmar's rail network.

As Bangladesh refused to provide transit facilities to states in northeastern India, India and Myanmar will consider the construction of the waterway transport route through Myanmar to the Bay of Bengal. This approach will help Mizoram and the northeast Indian states reach the sea by passing through Myanmar. From 2003, India proposed to the Myanmar Government the Multimodal Transit project of Kaladan. It is worth noting that this project was agreed upon when Myanmar's military government was being criticized by the international community after the "Saffron Revolution" (August 2007). One year later, *the Multimodal Transit project Kaladan* was restarted. The project will connect the East Indian sea ports to the Sittwe Sea port, in the Rakhine state in western Myanmar with a total length of about 593 km. This project is being conducted in three stages including the expansion of the Sittwe port, dredging the Kaladan River in the Chin state, and constructing a 62 km long highway to the India-Myanmar border area. The Government of India is funding the entire project with a cost of approximately 134 million USD [31].

*The multimodal transit project of Kaladan* was the result of India's decades-long efforts to foster the relationship between the two countries. It will connect northeastern India with the Bay of Bengal, including the construction of the Mizoram (India) state transit routes to Kaletwa (Myanmar), using the Kaladan River as a waterway transport route and improving infrastructure at the Sittwe port, on the Arakan coast of Myanmar. It will provide a direct route from the Sittwe port of Myanmar around Bangladesh, to Mizoram and the northeastern states of India. The pathway contributes to the reduction of pressure on the Siliguri corridor<sup>7</sup>. As a result of the route, Indian goods can be transported by sea and river from the northeastern regions to the port of Sittwe, and from there to the markets of Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore. Therefore, this multimodal traffic route is considered a top priority among the Indian investment projects focused on Myanmar infrastructure. The project has already achieved many results, and

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<sup>7</sup> The Siliguri corridor is about 20 km wide and adjacent to Bangladesh and Nepal, connecting the distant Northeast with the rest of the country. This area is considered of strategic importance to India.

completion will bring tremendous benefits to both countries, it helps India and Myanmar will be able to penetrate into India via the sea route from the Sittwe Port easily. In December 2016, the project was officially launched [9].

In addition to the aforementioned infrastructure construction projects, with its outstanding power and prominence, India has helped Myanmar to maximize satellite communication centers and execute information technology projects. With the information technology facilities that are not yet developed, Myanmar has always desired to receive India's assistance in the field of globalization. In 2005, the Indian Government provided a number of credit packages for telecommunications and information technology projects. At the same time, India has also renewed the grant credits for other special projects, such as upgrading the phone lines connecting Rangoon to Mandalay, 500 km of optical cable line from Moreh (state of Manipur) to Mandalay, and facilitating communication and connection through wide band access in localities. The technology system provides a broadband Internet connection in Rangoon and Mandalay.

After the visit of President Thein Sein to India in October of 2011, New Delhi expanded the credit capital line worth 300 million USD for the development of railways, airports, transportation, power transmission lines, and refineries. Road expansion projects have contributed to the strengthening of trade relations between India and Myanmar as well as serving the security interests of India. The connections with Myanmar are very important for India, as Myanmar is the "land bridge" that connects Northeast India to Southeast Asia. Investing in the development of the aforementioned infrastructure projects with the establishment of a regional initiative, The Bay of Bengal for multi-regional economic and technical cooperation (BIMSTEC)<sup>8</sup> is an attempt by India to not only promote the cooperation of trade, transportation, information, energy and anti-terrorism between the countries in the Bay of Bengal together. It also strengthens relations with neighboring Myanmar. Therefore, investing in the construction and development of infrastructure is a requirement of India and provides long-term benefits to both countries. It can be said that India's investment projects in Myanmar are considered quite promising, but as of 2014 they were still in the early stages. After India transformed the Look East policy into "Act East" and the visit to Myanmar of Prime Minister Narendra Modi (2014), India pledged to further strengthen their investment activities in Myanmar, thereby demonstrating the position of India in the economic sector as well as promoting relations with Myanmar to be worthy of the country's position in the "Act East" policy.

### ***Security and defense***

Since India enforced the Look East policy, India — Myanmar security relations occur on many levels, such as collaborating against rebel forces in the border area, drug trafficking, smuggling in the border area, helping to train soldiers, providing weapons delivery, conducting joint exercises and senior meetings between leaders of the two countries. Security and defense relations between India and Myanmar were officially begun in 1995 when General Bipin Joshi became the First Army commander of India to visit Myanmar. After that important event, senior military diplomatic operations and visits between the two

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<sup>8</sup> It is an international organization consisting of several South Asian and Southeast Asian countries, such as Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan and Nepal.

countries, originally established in 1962–1991, continued to take place. However, in 1992–1999, cooperation in the area of security and defense between the two countries was quite limited due to India still having concerns about democratic issues in Myanmar. Despite this, within the framework of the cooperation, many Indian arms transfer contracts for Myanmar were still carried out. Along with China, Russia, and Ukraine, India gradually became the supplier of regular weapons to the neighboring country [21]. After 1992, India supplied firearms, ammunition, including the 105 mm gun, T-55 tank, light aircraft, transport planes, artillery shells, mortars, and several naval ships to Myanmar [29].

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, cooperation in the field of defense between the two countries was strengthened. In January 2000, commander of the Indian Army P. Malik met with General Maung Aye in Yangon and Shillong [24]. Subsequently, the two countries started to hold regular visits between senior officials of the navy, army, and air force of India and Myanmar. In 2003, the Indian naval commander Admiral Madhvendra Singh visited Myanmar to discuss measures to strengthen cooperation between the two countries. Admiral Singh was India's first naval commander to visit Myanmar after nearly three decades. One of the principal objectives of the visit was the proposal to allow Indian warships to enter the port, allowing the Indian Navy not to be dependent on a refueling vessel while sailing from the Indian Ocean across the strait Malacca. In the same year, the Burmese Air Command, General Myat, visited India to discuss cooperation issues and training among officers. These are considered meaningful visits in the field of defense between the two countries because this is a component of India's Look East Policy and it represents a dialogue related to concerns over national air defense and the navy.

In January 2006, Admiral Arun Pradesh, commander of the Indian Navy, led a delegation to Myanmar for talks with General Than Shwe of Myanmar to discuss providing technical support to the Myanmar Naval design plan. India handed over two maritime surveillance BN-2 aircraft and air-to-ship guns to the Navy. India has also discussed with Myanmar plans to assist in establishing a Naval aviation training Center in Myanmar [26]. On this occasion, Myanmar's military authorities proposed the establishment of bases in Myanmar to facilitate the Indian Navy's training for the country. India also offered a joint scouting operation between the seven Member States of Milan, which was accepted by the Myanmar side. Also, in the year 2006, Myanmar first participated in the Milan exercise<sup>9</sup>. During the exercise, UMA Anawratha stopped in Port Blair in the Andaman Islands of India. This was the first time that Myanmar's warships had been abroad for the last 40 years. From then on, every two years, the Myanmar Navy regularly participated in the Milan exercise along with the Indian Navy and the Asia-Pacific Navy.

In October 2006, India's Minister of Defence Shekhar Dutt visited Myanmar. During this tour, he negotiated with General Maung Aye and other senior Myanmar officers to provide the T-55 battlefield tank, the 105 Li Cannon, troop transport vehicles, mortars, and advanced light helicopters made in India [30]. Following this, on November 22<sup>th</sup>, 2006, commander of the Indian Air Force Marshal S. P. Tyagi also visited Myanmar to

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<sup>9</sup> The exercise, named Milan, has been held by India since 1995 every two years. It includes the participation of many partner countries in the Asia-Pacific region, such as Australia, New Zealand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, the Philippines, and Thailand. In addition, there are also countries such as Maldives, Mauritius, Kenya, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania. The goal of the exercise has been to further strengthen naval cooperation between the countries. It is also considered a mechanism for countries to share views on existing marine affairs in the region.



discuss the purchase of weapons that the two countries had previously discussed. These contracts included a comprehensive upgrade of the fighters and the sale of advanced light helicopters produced by the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited Group, radar types, radio equipment and non-traffic monitoring electronic devices [30]. From 2007, India (along with China) was one of the two largest suppliers of weapons to Myanmar. Although the sale of Indian weapons to Myanmar encountered much criticism from the West, it did not cease the sale of Indian weapons. In July 2007, the Government of India sold a modern light-type aircraft to Myanmar. The aircraft was built by the Indian company Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and armed with rockets and machine guns.

In addition to the purchase of weapons, India also helped to train officers for the Myanmar army. In 2010, the Indian military delegation led by General G. S. Malhi visited the Myanmar National Defense Academy in the capital of Naypyidaw, where the Indian Army Armed forces trained officers for the country. For a long time, India was one of the few countries (along with China, Russia, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Singapore), which the Myanmar military government allowed to prepare officers in research and training. The Burmese side also expressed a desire for their troops to be trained in anti-insurgency programs at the Jungle Warfare Training School in Mizoram. This cooperation further demonstrates the close connection between the two countries.

In addition to cooperation in the area of defense, India and Myanmar also strengthen mutual ties in a number of non-traditional security issues, such as the activities of insurgent groups, terrorism, and trafficking in weapons and narcotics in the border areas of both countries. Since 1993, in response to the negative issues concerning the border areas mentioned above, the two governments have established mechanisms for dialogue, signing documents and legal agreements. Also, in 1993 India and Myanmar achieved a common understanding of the problem of attacks from anti-government forces and drug smugglers across the border the two countries. Myanmar expressed the desire to work closely with India to defeat the insurgency at the northeast Indian border. The two sides agreed to deploy joint patrols border, and exchange and share intelligence information. Cooperation between Indian security forces and security forces to control the situation in the northeast has been very effective. When terrorism became the focus of Indian security program, this cooperation became even more relevant for New Delhi.

In 1994, India and Myanmar signed *a memo on the maintenance of peace and stability in the border area* [26]. According to the memorandum, the parties commit to conducting ministerial-level talks between the two countries' Ministry of the Interior on the prevention of insurgency groups and smuggling near the India-Myanmar. These talks are held annually and alternate in location [27]. This is useful as the two countries are able to coordinate regularly in the fight against insurgents. In 1995, the Burmese army performed military operations with the Indian Army to counter the rebel forces along the border area.

In addition, India and Myanmar have also conducted coordinated activities to disrupt the insurgency training camps of rebel forces. When India was conducting operations against insurgents in the northeastern region, Myanmar tightened security at the border and captured gunmen trying to escape to Yangon. The training and coordination of the common army between the two countries against rebel groups in the region of northeast India increased the strength of bilateral relations and promoted the strategic trajectory of relations. However, when India presented the Jawaharlal Nehru Prize to Aung San Suu Kyi in 1995, Myanmar immediately withdrew from military operations in collaboration with

India [25]. Thus security and defense relations between the two countries were stalled for some time,

Since 1998, along with the changes in the internal affairs of the two countries, security and defense relations between India and Myanmar have been strengthened and continue to grow. Activities against insurgents in the border areas were also boosted. In November 2006, in talks with Defense Minister General Maung Aye, India offered to help Myanmar in training troops to fight the insurgency. Then, at a meeting held on the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit in Cebu, the Philippines (2007), Prime Minister of Myanmar Soe Win assured the Indian Prime Minister that Myanmar will take the necessary measures to destroy rebel groups if provided with the correct information from the Indian side. Since early 2007, India — Myanmar military relations have expanded, the armed forces of India and Myanmar have agreed to strengthen exchange mechanisms of intelligence to prevent crime in the border region as well as insurgency. Indian officials said it would provide military equipment at the request of Myanmar to serve and improve the efficiency of joint coordinated efforts against insurgents. Accordingly, the Myanmar government has decided to ban Indian rebel groups as well as their operation bases on the territory of Myanmar. Indian officials said it would provide military equipment at the request of Myanmar to serve and improve the efficiency of joint coordinated efforts against insurgents [28].

During President Thein Sein's visit to India (October 2011), issues related to terrorism and insurgent activity across the border continued to be discussed with the Indian authorities. Both countries pledged to be resolute against terrorism and ensure peace and stability in the region. Indian troops implement stringent measures to control the Manipur border. This is a step in the right direction to stop insurgents from crossing the border into India with weapons or explosives. In addition to coordination against rebel forces, India and Myanmar also made efforts in combating drug trafficking, weapons and money laundering activities at the borders. The "Golden Crescent"<sup>10</sup> area and the "Golden Triangle"<sup>11</sup> (Myanmar, Laos, Thailand) are world famous drug-producing and smuggling regions. India is greatly concerned because drug smuggling originates from Myanmar to the northeastern states of India. Without the combined military operations between the two countries, there would be no possibility to resolve the above issues.

India has always been seen as an example in the fight against drugs. As a neighboring country with India and also one of the largest drug manufacturers in the world, Myanmar has many opportunities to cooperate with India in this field. Several agreements have been signed between India and Myanmar since 1993 to collaborate against the threat of trafficking and drug use along the border. To strictly control security in general and drug trafficking, in particular, the two countries agreed to set up four checkpoints (Lungwa, Bihang, Sapi and Zokawathar) at the border areas of India — Myanmar. A border fence has been constructed, which provides control over state border sections, totaling 404 km in length. The construction of such a fence highlights the importance of ongoing activities to counter drug trafficking along the border of the two countries. In 2010, the large problem of illegal transportation of drugs and weapons across the border was discussed. Although

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<sup>10</sup> The Golden Crescent is the name given to one of the two largest illegal drug producing regions in Asia, located between Central Asia, South Asia and Western Asia. This area covers the expanse of three countries (Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan) where the surrounding mountains create a crescent shape.

<sup>11</sup> The Golden Triangle is a rugged mountainous area where the borders of three countries of Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar meet. It is well-known as one of the largest opium producing regions in the world.

both India and Myanmar have been active in preventing the movement of money and weapons across the border to Indian rebels, this issue has not been resolved and the two sides agreed that efforts should be increased to minimize these activities.

In 2011, the two governments agreed to “strengthen the effectiveness of cooperation and coordination” between security forces in addressing the serious threat of insurgents and terrorist groups. However, the management of border security is still a major challenge in the future for both countries.

Besides the issue of border security, India and Myanmar are also faced with some maritime security challenges in the Bay of Bengal, such as anti-trafficking, arms dealers, pirates, anti-terrorism, and illegal fishing. The two countries need to “*expand the security cooperation not only to maintain peace along the land border but also defend maritime trade that the two sides hope to open a sea route between Kolkata and Sittwe*” [26]. In another respect, non-traditional security challenges also include issues related to climate change, marine environments, and naval forces that need to be at the forefront when responding to disasters and conducting rescue or relief operations [22].

The Bay of Bengal is a sea that is known to produce instable weather and is always influenced by tornadoes and tsunamis. The tsunami in 2004 and Hurricane Nargis in 2008 caused much damage to Myanmar, affecting 2.4 million people, of which 78,000 were reported dead or missing. India has always been the first country to perform humanitarian relief activities for the Burmese people and assist them in overcome the consequences of natural disasters. Shortly after typhoon Nargis, the Indian government sent two naval vessels carrying over 100 tons of materials and two planes transporting 4 tons of relief cargo to Myanmar. At the same time, India also sent a group of medical personnel to aid in conducting humanitarian relief activities.

It can be said that since India — Myanmar relations were resumed in the early 90s and under the impact of the Look East policy, cooperative security and defense between India and Myanmar has increasingly been strengthened with the expansion of the range and the field of cooperation as well as the quality of coordination activities between the two countries, demonstrating the effort, goodwill, and cooperation needs of both sides. India — Myanmar relations in the field of security and defense has gradually been diversified and accelerated resulting in practical and long-term benefits to both countries, contributing to the strengthening of bilateral relations in general.

## Conclusion

Since the end of the Cold War, India has successfully implemented foreign policy towards the Asia-Pacific region and Southeast Asia in particular in the areas of politics-diplomacy, economics, and security and defense. This has created an open opportunity for India to integrate and develop. Through many years of effort, India's Look East policy has resulted in tremendous achievements. This is an important platform for India to calculate strategy, develop a correct, wise, and flexible foreign policy based on international law, overcome challenges to achieve the highest benefits for the nation while also contributing tremendously to the peaceful, stable and prosperous careers of the Asia-Pacific region and the world.

The Look East policy focused on the center of Southeast Asia with the aim of helping India to develop their economy and improve the world's political strategy. In order to establish good policy, Myanmar is considered by Indian strategic policymakers to be an

important “land bridge” between India and Southeast Asia, which is key to the successful implementation of the Look East Policy in all areas of the diplomacy, economics and security. By improving and strengthening relations with Myanmar, India contributes to the stability of the political situation of South Asia, and enhancing the country’s own image. It can be said that India’s Look East policy is a fundamental factor, and it directly contributes to India — Myanmar relations.

From 1992 to 2014, under the impact of the Look East policy, the political-diplomatic relations between India and Myanmar have made significant changes and improved through the talks of two countries’ leaders and visits between high-level officials. Agreements made between the two countries have established a legal foundation and serve as the basis for activities in other areas: trade, investment, security and defense. These are signs that illustrate the strengthening of India — Myanmar political relations and contribute to a furthering of relations. Economic cooperation, especially in the field of trade and investment, beginning particularly in 1992, have increased and allow the two countries to achieve their interests in the field of security and defense. India — Myanmar relations have been enhanced in many areas: high-level meetings between the two countries regarding the military, border security, anti-smuggling, weapons deliveries as well as military training or joint exercises. It can be claimed that India — Myanmar relations (1992–2014) have gained tremendous achievements across many fields, which are beneficial not only for the two countries but also make positive contributions to peace, stability and development of the region. These relationships have resulted in the creation of peaceful surroundings, stabilizing the development of the two countries while also contributing to stability and development of the South Asia region, Southeast Asia and Asia-Pacific in subsequent years.

Although India — Myanmar relations are developing, there are still many issues to overcome: security issues in border areas, drug-related crime, the impact of the Chinese. Currently, Myanmar is still considered a “land for martial arts” for rebel groups operating in the northeastern region of India. The insufficient control of security forces has created holes in the border areas, creating conditions for political parties of ethnic minorities, and established safe havens in Myanmar. Since the border controls are not tight enough, insurgent groups continue to hide in Myanmar where the weapons and drug trade persists. Furthermore, the influence and position of China in Myanmar is still an obstacle to India during the maintenance and development of cooperative relations with eastern neighboring countries. China had a close relationship with Myanmar during the Cold War, and it was Myanmar’s largest trade partner. China had a stronghold on the military government of Myanmar and assisted it in countering the embargo of the United States and Western countries as well as sanctions of the United Nations on human rights abuses in the country. The above analysis shows that India will have to continue to find ways to limit the influence of China and establish itself in relation to Myanmar and the region.

Based on the study of the relationship between India and Myanmar in recent years, under the impact of the trend of integration in international relations, diversification of foreign policy, and multilateralisation of India and Myanmar, it is evident that the relationship is progressing in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In overcoming difficulties and obstacles, relations between India and Myanmar were developed based on a solid foundation (with shared borders, the need for cooperation, the international context, regional and multilateral foreign policy of diversification), that enhances the position of the two countries and promoting bilateral relations develop in the future.

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## Последствия изменения внешней политики Индии для отношений Индии и Мьянмы (1992–2014)

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Индия и Мьянма — две соседние страны, имеющие общую границу протяженностью почти 1500 км и более чем 2000-летнюю историю политического, культурного и этнического взаимодействия. Индия официально установила дипломатические отношения с Мьянмой сразу после того, как эта юго-восточная страна обрела независимость в 1948 г. С 1992 г. с реализацией политики Индии «Взгляд на Восток» ввиду стратегической важности Мьянмы был дан новый толчок для нового развития отношений между двумя странами. Отношения между Индией и Мьянмой перешли от холодного и напряженного состояния (1962–1991) к улучшению, консолидации и развитию в период 1992–2014 гг. Кроме того, взаимодействие между двумя странами развивалось на основе предшествовавших достижений за период 1948–1991 гг. и сфокусировалось на многих аспектах (политика, дипломатия, экономика, безопасность). Статья посвящена анализу изменения внешней политики Индии, особенно реализации политики «Взгляд на Восток» и стратегии «Действий на Восток», а также его влияния на развитие отношений между Индией и Мьянмой в период с 1992 по 2014 г.

**Ключевые слова:** Индия, Мьянма, внешняя политика, регулирование, отношения.

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