

# WHERE CHINA MEETS INDIA: BURMA AND THE NEW CROSSROADS OF ASIA

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The author travels throughout Burma and adjacent regions of China (Yunnan) and India (Assam) presenting the unique position of a country that shares borders with both emerging world powers. He also provides an historical context and future considerations for the relationship between these three countries as Burma loosens isolation policies while China and India increase their economic and military might.

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## HISTORY

- British annexed Burma as an Indian province vs. creating a separate colony like Sri Lanka - period of high volume of Indian immigration
- Post WWII: economy and infrastructure destroyed but radical nationalist movement ultimately drove British to refocus on Malaya and HK
- 1948 independence from the UK leads to a series of civil wars ultimately resulting in military takeover of government in 1962
- 2009 new constitution but military retains a quarter control of parliament seats and president indirectly elected
- 2010 military backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) wins 80% of seats; high registration fee and political division limits independent/democratic parties chances for success; new president, Thein Sein considered a moderate and under his guidance the following changes have occurred: amended party registration laws, freed political prisoners, lifted internet restrictions, halted Chinese dam - > this has resulted in embargos and sanctions being lifted; Japan most aggressive with investment, HRC and BO visit
- 2012 independent parties win 80% of open seats
- Burma border areas have various rebel factions - Wa army as large as Taliban in area size of Belgium (current cease-fire)
- China (aggressive) vs. India (passive) expansion - China leaders obtain power through civil war and pursue expansionist policy up to India borders; India granted independence following Gandhi's passive resistance - i.e. China crosses McMahon line to "claim" Tibet

## ECONOMY

- Debatable whether sanctions lead to a regime change or if they disproportionately hurt the lower classes
- Burma receives less international assistance than any other developing country ~\$4/year/person - 10x less than Laos
- 80% of China's oil passes through Straits of Malacca - potential choke point initiated by future enemies
- Chinese view Western's Burmese policy as hypocritical given West's history of propping up tyrannical regimes that benefit their interest
- China poverty East to West; India poverty West to East -> both in Burma direction thus both increase development towards Burma

## TRAVEL

- **Yangon:** Kipling on Shwedagon - 'a beautiful twinkling wonder that blazed in the sun'; Phayre and Merchant Streets for Edwardian buildings
- **Mandalay:** Mandalay Hill - 1,729 wooden steps to tops with platforms and pagodas along the way up; **PYL:** Golden Triangle for Coffee
- Interesting Notes on China - ethnicities larger than European countries (10m Miao > Sweden); Shanghai before Deng Reforms: 3 buildings over 20 stories, now 2,000; Nearly all overseas Chinese from southeast coast - Pearl River Delta