ABSTRACT

Burma functions as a link between the two big countries of East, India and China. It is true that inspite of Burma being governed for a long period as a part of Indian Empire, one knows very little about this country. Burma gradually achieved great importance not only for India but also for Southeast Asia and Singapore.

Burma is of great importance for the defence system of India and Southeast Asia. It was a great puzzle for the outside world. Its aloofness from its neighbour and its self imposed isolation was an enigma for its neighbours. Burma road and the use of the port of Rangoon acquired great strategic importance. The closing of this road had a great effect on China, the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union and hence provoked many sided protest.

The main feature of Burma is that it is an isolated country both politically and geographically. Nāgas who lived on the borders, repeatedly created a great trouble for the Indian government. Hence it is necessary for India that the government of Burma should be neutral and amenable to the interests of its neighbours.

Due to the formation of a new state of Pakistan in 1947, great danger to the defence of India was posed by the hostile posture of this new state. It is however advantageous
for India that Bangla Desh as a friendly state has emerged on the eastern border of India and the danger has been partly removed. It should however, be noted that the creation of Bangla Desh has introduced another uncertain element. Much of it would depend upon the independent role Bangla Desh plays in world politics.

In 1044 the Burma's first national kingdom of Pagan was founded by the ruler Anawrahta. In the 19th century Burma came under the British Empire as a province of India until 1937 and then it became a separate colony. Burmese politicians were influenced by the activities of the Congress party of India and this brought nationalism in Burma. But true nationalism came from Burmese themselves while they founded "The Young Man Buddhist Association" in 1908.

When Burma was a part of India, many changes in the pattern of government took place. Minto-Morley and Montague-Chelmsford reforms had also been introduced in Burma just in the same manner as in India. The Simon Commission of 1923 gave its report in favour of the separation of Burma from India, because the Burmese realised that their country might one day become a 'vassal state' of India.

When Japan assumed authority over Burma in the IIInd World War, Burma declared herself an independent state, receiving recognition from all the axis powers. But after
the defeat of Japan and the reoccupation by Britain, the real administration of Burma was handed over to the Supreme Allied Commander of Southeast Asia, Admiral Mountbatten. The NU-Attlee agreement declared the republic of the Union of Burma as a fully independent sovereign state on January 4, 1948.

The new union of Burma plunged into civil war, after gaining independence. But the rebels failed in their attempt before the AFPFL (Anti-Fascist People's Federation League) government under the Premiership of UNU. When AFPFL partly became divided into two, the situation became worse. UNU did not control the situation. He called Ne Win for Premiership, who was elected without any opposition. The main reason of this coup was the religious policy of UNU. Ne win government was a military administration.

But in the general election of 1960, came overwhelming victory for UNU and his party. But-General Ne win took over power in March 1962, and UNU was arrested. Power came in the hands of Revolutionary Council which was formed under the Chairmanship of General Ne win. The General Ne win government was basically totalitarian. The Revolutionary government is based on a system of Socialist democracy and socialist economy.
In contrast to India, Burma left the British Commonwealth due to the fact that Burmese leaders thought that the Burmese freedom would not be secure in Commonwealth. Many times, the Burmese government received financial aid from the Commonwealth countries. The Commonwealth Conference of Delhi solved the "karen" (a tribe) problems through Commonwealth mediation through a good offices committee of Commonwealth representatives in Rangoon. Burma's relations with Commonwealth countries remained good.

Since independence, Burma's foreign policy was based upon neutralism. Burma sets a good example of how a small nation is able to keep up its independence in a world ruled by two rival power blocs and clashing ideologies. Burma is a major cosmopolitan centre in Southeast Asia. The Revolutionary Council has balanced Eastern and Western influences in Burma. Because Burmese want to avoid the agony of a Vietnam type "War of National Liberation." Burma believed that the Asian conflicts such as Vietnam, Kashmir, Malaysia, Indonesia, should be solved on peaceful settlement, on the basis of the 1954 Geneva accord and a new Geneva type conference. Burma has sympathy towards Yugoslavia, Israel, Laos, and Cambodia. A short time back, Burma took a neutralist stand in Indo-Pakistan conflict over Bangla Desh. But when Bangla Desh came as a political reality, Burma was among those first few countries.
which recognised it even at the risk of diplomatic rupture with Pakistan. Burma also agreed with recent Simla Agreement and believed that it was a contribution to peace for Asia as a whole.

The most important aspect of Burma's foreign policy has been the manner in which the world powers like China, Russia and U.S.A. has maintained good relations towards Burma. Burma is one of the Colombo powers, to expand the area of peace and economic progress in the fields of cooperation and development. Burma believes in friendly relations with other countries. The non-alignment with power blocs, and the policy of neutrality is defensive. Burma has friendly relations with India, Pakistan, Ceylon and China. Being close to Communist China geographically, Burmese foreign policy makers attached great importance to their relations with China.

Burma has remained aloof from SEATO, because it has no faith that the defence organisation like SEATO will be successful. This type of regional arrangement only increases the possibilities of conflict instead of peace and security. On account of her aloofness from all types of military alliances and her neutralist stand, she enjoys world-wide confidence. Burma is not getting sizeable economic aid from the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. because of her absolutely neutralist policy.
Burma's relations with China have always depended upon five principles of peaceful co-existence which enjoin cordial relations between states with differing political and social systems on the basis of mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs and settlement of conflicts between nations by peaceful means. A treaty of friendship was signed between the two countries in accordance with the 'Five Principles of peaceful co-existence' (Panch-Sheel) jointly initiated by both countries.

In 1967 a rift in Burma-China relations was precipitated by the Chinese. It was due to Peking's frustration which was caused by the failure in becoming politically or economically dominant in Burma. Rangoon signed the Test Ban Treaty of 1963, which was opposed by Peking. Burma has recognised the validity of an Indian territory claimed by China on the Sino-Indian border dispute. Burma favoured the formation of Malaysia, but China attacked it as a new colonialist plot and supported Indonesia's "confrontation policy."

Burma remained neutral. China has been anti-U.S. and Pro-NLF and North Vietnam. Rangoon maintains friendly relations with Moscow while Peking remains indifferent from Moscow on account of deep ideological differences and the aggressive
stance of U.S.S.R. Finally, Burma is neutral on the Laotian issue, while Communist China supports the Pathet Lao regime.

It is not easy to explain Peking's aim in supporting 'Cultural Revolution' in Burma. Its 'Red guard' diplomacy may have been an unintended aspect of its own chaotic internal revolutionary situation. Peking's aim may have been to force Ne win to accept Communist participation in a united front government.

After 1967 the relations between the two countries have improved. Since then the relations between the two countries have remained neutral. Burma done remarkably well in diminishing Chinese and other foreign influences. The ideological basis of China's foreign policy, its expansionist aims, its sensitivity to the developments in this part of hemisphere, and Burma's military vulnerability continue to introduce so many unpredictable factors that nothing can be forecast for future relations between these two countries.

After gaining independence, Burma became the member of the U.N. and other U.N. specialized agencies. Burma's role in the U.N. as an uncommitted, anti-colonial and under-developed nation is what one might expect of a newly independent Asian country. Burma's efforts in the U.N. is to follow an independent policy and estimates each case on the basis of
merits as it comes up on Korean war. On Korean war Burma supported the U.N. but the cost of decision paid by Burma was heavy.

Burma's stand in the U.N. has been closely allied to that of other Arab and Afro-Asian nations. The former Secretary General of the U.N. U Thant of Burma played a very important role in solving many international problems. The KMT problem had been brought before the U.N. Through the efforts of the U.N. Commission, this problem was solved. Burma cannot hope to enter the race of nuclear disarmaments or influence its policies due to its economic backwardness and inadequacy of scientific advancement.

Burma is a close neighbour of India in Southeast Asia and it is also closely related with India since ancient times. The migration of Indians into Burma is as old as the history of these two countries which goes back to pre-historical age.

Indians were very much affected by the Burmese policy of Burmization. Under the immigration policy of Burma, thousands of Indians have been forced out of business and so out of the country. The Indian leaders remained silent because they wanted to have friendly relations with Burma. In reality the Burmization programme has been one sided and partial. It has not been applied with equal force against the people of
Communist countries like China. The frontier relations between India and Burma have not acquired much importance. After their independence both India and Burma have followed the policy of non-alignment and neutrality. It is generally known that Nehru and UNU were principal architects of the policy of the non-alignment for the newly independent nations. Some observers do not hesitate to say that "Burma's foreign policy is nearly a duplication or carbon copy of India's foreign policy." But this is not wholly correct, because Burma does not follow India in all respects such as the membership of the Commonwealth etc. In view of strong ties between two countries a treaty of friendship was signed between them in 1951. India tried her best to establish extensive diplomatic relations with Burma and to strengthen the economic and commercial contacts with her.

The military coup in Burma shocked and surprised India very much. However, she welcomed the declarations of the Revolutionary Council with regard to domestic policies. India and Burma sincerely desired to avoid war and to maintain their solidarity with Arabs and Afro-Asian world. Burma's foreign policy based upon Gandhian tradition of non-violence and the ancient Buddhist principle of "Ahimsa" (has been reflected in the Burmese foreign policy). Both the countries followed Nehru's principles of "Panch-sheela."
Burma was very much sympathetic towards India in the hour of China's aggression and appealed to Indian and Chinese to desist from aggravating the armed conflict and from any action prejudicial to one another's vital interests. General Ne win and Mrs. Indira Gandhi scanned the world scene from the Asian-angle. Both India and Burma remain as peaceful co-existing neighbours with mutual good will and trust.

Thus we see that both the countries have a great similarity of ideas, beliefs and interests. The aims and objectives of their policies are also similar. The quick recognition of Bangla Desh by India and Burma augers well for the future of this region.