

22/06/2024

(MODEL ANSWER)

- Q. "Discuss India's foreign policy towards Myanmar, considering both strategic interests and democratic values. Suggest policy changes and implementation strategies to align with national interests while upholding democratic principles."

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Answer Template:

Introduction:

- India's foreign policy towards Myanmar stands at a critical juncture, balancing strategic interests with democratic values. Myanmar's political landscape shifted dramatically with the military coup in February 2021, leading to widespread human rights abuses and instability.
- India, as a regional power, faces the challenge of maintaining diplomatic relations while responding to international pressure to support democratic principles.
- According to reports, since the coup, Myanmar's military has perpetrated severe violence resulting in over 5,000 deaths and displacing approximately 2.5 million people.

Body:

- **India's Strategic Interests:**
 - **Strategic Geopolitical Location:**
 - Myanmar holds significant geopolitical importance for India as it serves as a bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia.
 - *Example: India's "Act East" policy aims to enhance connectivity and economic ties with ASEAN countries through Myanmar.*
 - **Security Concerns:**
 - India shares a 1,643 km border with Myanmar, crucial for security against insurgencies and cross-border threats.
 - *Case Study: India's military cooperation with Myanmar to counter cross-border insurgent groups like NSCN-K and UNLF.*
 - **Economic Interests:**
 - Myanmar offers opportunities for India in energy security (gas pipelines), trade routes (Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project), and investment.
 - *Example: Indian investments in Myanmar's telecom sector through companies like Bharti Airtel.*
 - **Counterbalancing China's Influence:**
 - Myanmar is pivotal in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and serves as a strategic partner for China in the region.
 - *Case Study: China's investments in Myanmar's infrastructure (Kyaukphyu Deep Sea Port) to facilitate BRI connectivity.*
 - **Historical and Cultural Ties:**

- India and Myanmar share historical and cultural ties dating back centuries, influencing people-to-people relations and diplomatic engagements.
 - Example: Cultural exchanges and religious pilgrimages between India (Buddhist heritage) and Myanmar (majority Buddhist country).
- **Democratic Values and Human Rights Considerations:**
 - Support for Democratic Movements:
 - India's democratic credentials position it as a model for Myanmar's pro-democracy movement.
 - Case Study: Support for Myanmar's National Unity Government (NUG) and civil society advocating for democratic reforms.
 - Human Rights Concerns:
 - India faces international criticism for maintaining relations with Myanmar's military regime amidst human rights violations.
 - Example: Reports of Indian military hardware sales to Myanmar despite international sanctions and human rights abuses.
 - International Pressure and Reputation:
 - India's foreign policy stance towards Myanmar impacts its international standing, particularly in forums like the UN Human Rights Council.
 - Case Study: India's voting pattern on Myanmar-related resolutions at international bodies.
- **Policy Changes and Implementation Strategies:**
 - Enhancing Diplomatic Engagement:
 - Increase engagement with Myanmar's democratic forces, including the NUG, ethnic minority groups, and civil society.
 - Example: Diplomatic efforts to mediate peace talks between Myanmar's military and ethnic armed groups.
 - Humanitarian Aid and Development Assistance:
 - Expand humanitarian aid and development projects in conflict-affected regions of Myanmar.
 - Case Study: India's contribution to humanitarian relief efforts in Rakhine State and Chin State through bilateral and multilateral channels.
 - Ethical Considerations in Arms Sales:
 - Implement stricter controls on arms exports to Myanmar, ensuring they do not contribute to human rights abuses.
 - Example: India's review and amendment of arms export policies in alignment with international human rights standards.
 - Promotion of Democratic Values:

- Support capacity-building programs and exchanges to promote democratic governance and institution-building in Myanmar.
 - *Case Study: Training programs for Myanmar's civil servants and judiciary in collaboration with Indian institutions.*
- Regional Cooperation and ASEAN Engagement:
 - Strengthen partnerships with ASEAN countries to foster a unified approach towards Myanmar's democratic transition.
 - *Example: India's role in ASEAN-led initiatives on Myanmar's political reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts.*
- Public Diplomacy and Soft Power Initiatives:
 - Utilize cultural diplomacy and public outreach to build bridges with Myanmar's civil society and public opinion.
 - *Case Study: Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) initiatives to promote cultural exchanges and educational scholarships.*
- Monitoring and Accountability:
 - Establish mechanisms to monitor the impact of policy changes on Myanmar's human rights situation and adjust strategies accordingly.
 - *Example: Regular consultations with international human rights organizations and civil society groups for feedback and recommendations.*

Conclusion

- India's foreign policy towards Myanmar must navigate the complexities of strategic interests and democratic values. By recalibrating its approach, India can play a constructive role in Myanmar's democratic transition while safeguarding its national interests
- Moving forward, India should prioritize inclusive diplomacy, humanitarian aid, ethical arms trade practices, and cultural diplomacy to strengthen bilateral relations with Myanmar.
- This approach not only aligns with international norms but also enhances India's credibility as a responsible global actor committed to promoting peace, democracy, and human rights in the region.