

India's Three Policies on Myanmar

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Policy Brief Series No. 206 (2026)

1. Introduction

The military coup in Myanmar early in 2021 triggered a response from India which is different from the policy discernible in the years before the democratically-elected government was toppled. The current policy has been influenced by the situation along the India–Myanmar border region, their ethnic configurations, and impact on the Indian border states of Manipur and Mizoram. India's long-term objectives in Myanmar have continued to play a role in shaping New Delhi's reaction to the coup and the ongoing Spring Revolution in Myanmar aimed at toppling the military regime.

The military coup unveiled a situation along the India–Myanmar borderlands that was least expected by the governments of the two countries. Almost the entire Chin State and a vast swathe of Sagaing Region – the two provinces of Myanmar sharing borders with India (along with Kachin State) – rose in rebellion against the coup. While the older and bigger ethnic armed organizations ('EAO') braced themselves for a renewed conflict with the State Administration Council ('SAC') (as the Myanmar junta designated itself), new pro-democracy resistance groups identifying themselves as the People's Defence Force ('PDF') and Chinland Defence Force ('CDF') mushroomed and plunged into full-scale preparation for war against the military regime. Efforts were made by the National Unity Government ('NUG') – government-in-exile constituted by elected lawmakers opposed to the SAC – to unite these EAOs, PDFs and CDFs under a single chain of command which has been partially successful. An overwhelming majority of functionaries of these groups active along the India–Myanmar border belong to the Kuki-Chin and Burmese ethnic groups. As the war started, thousands of refugees and pro-democracy activists crossed the border into the Indian border states of Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland similar to the situation in 1988 when refugees and activists sought asylum in India to escape persecution.¹ The reaction to this phenomenon has been dissimilar in the Indian border states owing to the disparate political circumstances and ethnic configurations.

2. Manipur's Anti-Refugee Policy

In February 2023, former Chief Minister of Manipur N. Biren Singh informed the state assembly that 393 Burmese nationals had been apprehended in the state.² The government had begun capturing the biometric details of the refugees following a directive from the central government which was scheduled to be completed within a month.³

About a year later, 84 Burmese nationals were deported and many were also interned at a detention centre in the subsequent months.⁴ On several occasions, delegates representing some resistance groups had submitted memoranda to the state government with a plea for asylum and assurance that the refugees would return to their homes after the end of the war.⁵ However, the Manipur government and civil society organizations in Imphal Valley were apprehensive that most of the Burmese nationals were not refugees but illegal immigrants belonging to the Kuki-Zo communities who intended to settle in the state permanently. But among the deportees was a sizeable chunk of Burmese from Sagaing Region.⁶

This uneasiness of the Manipur government and civil society organizations in the state's Imphal Valley over illegal immigrants from Myanmar stems from the state's social configuration, distribution of the ethnic groups, and control over resources. Manipur shares a border of 398 km with Myanmar's Sagaing Region. It is a state with a geographical area of 22,327 km² comprising the Imphal Valley, constituting about 10 per cent of the total expanse, surrounded by hills that make up the remaining 90 per cent. Manipur is inhabited principally by three communities: the majority Meitei (professing Hinduism and Sanamahism) residing mostly in the valley and the Christian Naga and Kuki-Zo tribes inhabiting the surrounding hill districts including the India–Myanmar border region. The Meitei constitute about 53 per cent and the Kuki-Zo and Naga constitute approximately 35 per cent of the state's population of 2,570,390 as per the 2011 census. The numerical superiority of the Meitei has enabled the community to exercise political dominance *vis-à-vis* the Naga and Kuki-Zo communities.

The land laws in the state of Manipur are such that no outsider is legally permitted to purchase land in the hill districts although some Meitei settlements had sprung up in a few hill districts such as Churachandpur and Tengnoupal. At the same time, the laws do not bar residents from the hill districts from purchasing land in Imphal Valley. Consequently, the quantum of land ownership with the Meitei has dwindled, fuelling demands by the community for certain safeguards like the Scheduled Tribe ('ST') status similar to that of the Naga and Kuki-Zo tribes.⁷ Early in May 2023, ethnic riots between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities engulfed Manipur that led to the killing of

¹ H.C. Vanlalruata, "Mizoram Houses Over 40000 refugees, IDPs", *The Times of India*, 21 November 2025; "Myanmar influx on rise: Manipur ex-CM cites UNHCR report of 64,300 refugees in India since 2021", *India Today NE*, 6 September 2025; "Refuge Sought for Nagas Fleeing Myanmar Conflict", *The Hindu*, 8 September 2023.

² "Manipur govt resumes biometric capture of illegal Myanmar nationals after Centre's directive", *Hindustan Times*, 30 July 2025.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ "Manipur deports first batch of illegal immigrants to Myanmar", *India Today*, 8 March 2024; Aaisha Sabir, "Illegal Myanmar Immigrants Languish in Jails and Detention Centers in India", in *The Diplomat*, 4 December 2023.

⁵ Interviews of pro-democracy activists and leaders of resistance outfits by the author in Manipur, 20 May–5 June 2023.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Kaushik Deka, "Drugs, land rights, tribal identity and illegal immigration – Why Manipur is burning", *India Today NE*, 5 May 2023; interviews of civil society leaders and academics by the author, Imphal, Manipur, 11–13 March 2024.

at least 260 persons and the displacement of over 60,000.⁸ The trigger was the Meitei's demand for ST status and its opposition by the other tribes.⁹ Eventually, sharp boundaries were erected between the valley and the Kuki-Zo inhabited hill regions. The Meitei residing in the Kuki-Zo inhabited areas were compelled to relocate to the valley and the Kuki-Zo residents in the valley were coerced to abandon their houses and shift to the hills.¹⁰

The conflict was aggravated with the engagement of militant outfits from both the communities (the Naga tribe getting only more recently involved).¹¹ There are 25 rebel groups from the Kuki-Zo communities that have suspension of operations ('SoO') agreements with the state government and are supposed to adhere to ceasefire rules that include keeping their weapons in the designated camps under lock-and-key.¹² But compliance is an exception rather than the rule and their violations have been reported from the other north-eastern states such as Assam and Nagaland as well.¹³ The Meitei civil society organizations and the state government had also made a case before the central government for abrogation of the ceasefire with the Kuki-Zo militant groups.¹⁴ Among the Meitei were two militant groups – Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun – that emerged during the strife to safeguard the interests of the community against the Kuki-Zo. There were widespread allegations by Kuki-Zo groups that the Meitei radical outfits were being sponsored by the Meitei-dominated state government.¹⁵

There were also allegations by a section of government officials and civil society organizations that militants from Myanmar were involved in the state's ethnic strife.¹⁶ While the nature and extent of the involvement of Myanmar militants remains a matter of speculation, there was certainly an impact of Myanmar on the conflict in Manipur. The warring sides made use of drones to monitor each other's movements.¹⁷ There were reports that rocket launchers were being manufactured at home which were also uploaded on social media and a small group was also spotted by the media making bulletproof vests.¹⁸ Across the border in Myanmar, some resistance groups have established facilities to manufacture similar weapons and equipment in the absence of factory-made firearms.¹⁹ The use of such weapons was not discernible earlier either in Manipur or anywhere in India's north-eastern region. The Meitei civil society organizations and the state government also firmly believed that illegal immigrants from Myanmar were engaged in the ethnic strife in Manipur. The Minister of Home Affairs, Amit

⁸ Jugal Purohit, "'Can't go back' – families in violence-hit Indian state fear resettlement deadline", *BBC News*, 31 October 2025.

⁹ Srishti Ojha, "Manipur violence: What was the high court order that triggered massive unrest in the state? Explained", *India Today*, 4 June 2023.

¹⁰ Vishal Tiwari, "Manipur: Buffer zones or fixed borders?", *Frontline*, 15 May 2026.

¹¹ Moushumi Das Gupta and Ananya Bhardwaj, "The new fault line in Manipur—inside growing Naga-Kuki conflict & why it's worrying security agencies", *The Print*, 25 May 2026.

¹² International Crisis Group, "Finding a Way Out of Festering Conflict in India's Manipur", Asia Report No. 346, 14 February 2025 (<https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/0fkaazpu/>).

¹³ Namrata Goswami, "Terror in Assam Hills", Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 21 November 2006.

¹⁴ Vijaita Singh, "Meitei group rejects Suspension of Operations pact with Kuki-Zo groups in Manipur", *The Hindu*, 6 September 2025.

¹⁵ Greeshma Kuthar, "Saviour Complex: Why the Biren Singh government gives a free hand to Arambai Tenggol", *The Caravan*, 15 April 2024.

¹⁶ "Insurgents From Myanmar Civil War Worsen Manipur Ethnic Conflict: Report", *NDTV*, 20 December 2024. Meitei civil society organizations have alleged that Myanmarese militants from the Kuki-Zo communities were involved in the ethnic strife in Manipur. On the other hand, Kuki-Zo civil society organizations have alleged that Meitei militants from the state's Imphal Valley who are based in Myanmar were involved in the conflict.

¹⁷ Debanish Achom, "Explained: Weaponised Drones Arrive in Crisis-Hit Manipur in Major Escalation", *NDTV*, 2 September 2024.

¹⁸ Ananya Bhardwaj, "'Bulletproof jackets' made from iron poles, gun training: How village panels are guarding Churachandpur", *The Print*, 12 July 2023.

¹⁹ Rajeev Bhattacharyya, "An Inside Look at Myanmar Resistance Groups' Weapons Manufacturing Factories", in *The Diplomat*, 4 October 2023.

Shah, claimed that illegal infiltration from Myanmar had sparked the conflict in Manipur.²⁰ Shah even named an outfit, the Kuki Democratic Front, as being involved in Manipur, which was denied by the Myanmar wing of the Kuki National Organisation ('KNO-B').

Added to the speculation over involvement of Burmese rebels in Manipur was the belief that illegal immigrants from Myanmar were involved in illegal poppy cultivation and drug trafficking in the state. It has been argued that the illicit cultivation is sponsored from across the border in Myanmar. Former Manipur Director General of Police, P. Dounghel, went on record to say that the state has been linked with the infamous Golden Triangle straddling contiguous regions in Myanmar, Laos and Thailand.²¹ Not surprisingly, the central government has decided to expedite the fencing of the India–Myanmar border amid large-scale protests from a section of the Kuki-Zo and Naga communities residing along the border.²² The Manipur government is also toying with the idea of a National Register of Citizens ('NRC') in the state, as a safeguard against illegal immigrants.²³

3. Mizoram's Pro-Refugee Policy

Manipur's antithesis is the contiguous Indian state of Mizoram that has gone all out to assist Burmese refugees, rebels and pro-democracy activists. Mizoram shares a border of 404 km with Myanmar. Unlike Manipur, Mizoram's population is relatively homogeneous with 87 per cent professing Christianity and belonging to the Kuki-Chin-Mizo ethnic groups, the Mizo constituting the majority.²⁴ The same social fabric of Kuki-Chin-Mizo communities is discernible across the border in Myanmar where about 18 resistance groups are active and engaged in combat against the military junta.²⁵ Thousands of refugees from Chin State and Sagaing Region crossed over to Mizoram in 2021 after the military coup, in a replay of the situation that unfolded after the 1988 uprising in Myanmar. More than 60,000 refugees are estimated to be currently sheltered in Mizoram.²⁶

The Mizoram government allocated land for refugee camps to be constructed across many locations in the state and has offered Burmese refugees access to healthcare and public education. Refugees were allowed to rent accommodation and enter the local workforce.²⁷ Former Chief Minister of Mizoram, Zoramthanga, informed the state legislative assembly that his government had allocated over INR 38 million as humanitarian aid for the refugees. Mizo civil society organizations also participated wholeheartedly and co-ordinated with the state government, churches, Chin non-profit organizations, and diaspora groups to mobilize resources to meet the refugees' basic needs.

However, the stance adopted by the state government and the civil society organizations on the refugees has been different from that of the central government in New Delhi. On 20 July 2021, Home Minister Amit Shah informed the Parliament that India has taken steps to prevent the influx of Myanmar refugees into the country. The border police (Assam Rifles) had been instructed to maintain strict vigil and surveillance and to initiate appropriate measures to check infiltration into the country's north-eastern region. India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or the associated 1967 Protocol, so there is a perceived lack of protection for refugees. In response to the central

²⁰ "All 10 Kuki MLAs from Manipur ask Amit Shah to prove his claim about Kukis coming from Myanmar", *Scroll*, 11 August 2023.

²¹ Zaheer Akram Bora, "'Manipur victim of golden triangle' – 238.72 kg heroin seized, 2243 cases registered in 5 years: DGP", *NENow*, 19 January 2023.

²² "Home Ministry calls for expedited border fencing along Indo-Myanmar in Manipur, Arunachal", *India Today NE*, 13 August 2024.

²³ Phurailatpam Keny Devi, "Manipur plans NRC seminar amid confusion over census sequence", *India Today NE*, 26 April 2026.

²⁴ Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, *Census of India 2011*, 2011.

²⁵ Zo Tum Hmung and John Indergaard, "Chinland Council Established in Myanmar", in *Stimson*, 11 January 2024.

²⁶ "Refugee influx to India's Mizoram surpasses 60,000; ASEAN foreign ministers to discuss Burma", *DVB*, 11 July 2023.

²⁷ Rahul Karmakar, "How is Mizoram handling the refugee crisis?", *The Hindu*, 13 July 2025.

government's directives, Mizoram's Minister of Home Affairs told the state's legislative assembly on 8 March 2021 that the issue of refugees was a matter to be dealt by the directives of the central government. At the same time, he explained that these refugees would be rehabilitated in the state until instructions were received from the central government.

In the end, New Delhi chose not to offend Mizoram, though there have been occasional crackdowns on Burmese nationals engaged in gun-running and drug trafficking in the state. For instance, in 2024, a sensational case came to light where 10 people including some Burmese nationals were charge-sheeted by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in an arms-and-explosives seizure case. The NIA was of the view that the racket was procuring weapons and ammunition from other states to supply to some Myanmar-based insurgent groups.²⁸ There have, however, been more cases involving Burmese nationals with drugs than gun-running in the past five years.²⁹ In Myanmar, production and trafficking of drugs – especially heroin and amphetamine-type stimulants – have skyrocketed owing to an interplay of many factors including unemployment and a floundering economy.³⁰

The linkage between Chin State and Mizoram predates the military coup and the beginning of the Spring Revolution. Chin State had the highest poverty rate among all states and regions in Myanmar about a decade ago.³¹ A large section of the populace, especially those living near the border with India, has heavily depended on Mizoram for their livelihoods. They are engaged in trading merchandise to and from the Indian state and many residents have taken up jobs there.³² A wide range of commodities is exported from Mizoram: medicines, fuel, solar panels, vegetable oil, salt and garments. The export of fuel (petrol and diesel) and medicines has increased manifold since the onset of the Spring Revolution because the junta has deliberately blocked supply routes from mainland Myanmar to territories controlled by the resistance groups as part of the 'Four Cuts' strategy against the opposition.³³ That a severe humanitarian crisis has still not gripped Myanmar's Chin State (and Rakhine State) is largely due to the continuing supply of essential commodities from Mizoram through multiple routes.

Mizoram's assistance to Chin State has extended beyond humanitarian support to refugees. In 2024, the Zo Reunification Organization (ZORO) in Mizoram convened a meeting to end the feud between two armed groups in Chin State: the Zomi Revolutionary Organization (ZRO) and Chin National Front (CNF). These outfits had engaged in occasional gun battles after the military coup. These efforts resulted in an agreement and a pledge by the leaders of the twin groups to desist from armed clashes.³⁴ Current Chief Minister of Mizoram, Lalduhoma, also convened a meeting of leaders from several resistance groups in Chin State for discussions to end the internecine squabbles. Finally, after hectic negotiations, a merger agreement was reached between the Chinland Council and the Interim Chin National Consultative Council (ICNCC) to form a unified Chin National Council.³⁵ Preceding the agreement, Mizoram's Member of Parliament K. Vanlalvena visited an office of the Chinland Council in Chin State, where he invited members of the alliance to join the Indian Union. Myanmar's junta thereafter issued a statement urging Indian politicians to avoid

²⁸ "NIA Files Chargesheet Against 10 in Mizoram Weapons Seizure Case Linked to Myanmar Insurgents", *NDTV*, 31 August 2024.

²⁹ Press Trust of India, "55 Myanmar Nationals Among 385 Held in Mizoram for Drug Smuggling In 2023: Cops", *NDTV*, 4 February 2024.

³⁰ "Why is the drug trade growing?", *CNI News*, 16 May 2026.

³¹ United Nations Children's Fund, "Chin State: Mobilising states and regions for children" (available on its web site).

³² Interviews of refugees, pro-democracy activists and leaders of resistance groups by the author, Mizoram, 2023–2026.

³³ United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, "Military's 'four cuts' doctrine drives perpetual human rights crisis in Myanmar, says UN report", 3 March 2023.

³⁴ "Myanmar-based ZRO and CNF sign peace agreement in Mizoram", *North-east Now*, 29 July 2024.

³⁵ "Myanmar rebel groups sign merger pact in Mizoram, in CM's presence: Reports", *India Today*, 6 March 2025.

"self-interested actions" that could harm bilateral ties.

At the same time, there are indications that Mizoram's hospitality towards the refugees might have diminished over the last five years. The state government had issued an order for refugees staying in the capital Aizawl to not purchase land, engage in businesses without permission, obtain driving licenses, or enrol in voters' list. The influential Young Mizo Association passed a resolution urging the Mizoram government to place the refugees sheltered in the state in a "compact" area.³⁶ The government abstained from implementing any such policy, but it has prohibited birth and death certificates for "illegal immigrants and refugees" in the state and cancelled past certificates.³⁷ These developments notwithstanding, it is undeniable that Mizoram's support to Chin State has been a key factor that helped the resistance groups to liberate a vast swathe from military rule. These groups control more than 80 per cent of Chin State and this explains why hectic preparations are underway by the junta for a renewed offensive.³⁸

4. New Delhi's Multi-Pronged Policy

Giving consent to the differing policies of Manipur and Mizoram means that New Delhi believes in a multi-pronged approach towards Myanmar which has been apparent since the late 1980s. Indian security agencies were alarmed when informed that two separatist outfits from the north-eastern region – the People's Liberation Army (Manipur) and United Liberation Front of Asom ('ULFA') – were being trained in Kachin State in Myanmar under the Kachin Independence Army ('KIA'). The two groups were also exploring the possibility of procuring weapons and enrolling in the coalition of Burmese rebel groups, the National Democratic Front ('NDF').³⁹ This would have opened the doors for more groups from India's north-east to be trained in Myanmar and get access to weapons and ammunition. India's external intelligence agency – Research & Analysis Wing ('R&AW') – arranged to meet with KIA. Within a few months, KIA Chairman Maran Brang Seng led a delegation to New Delhi where they were allowed to open an office and receive diplomatic training. A deal was struck requiring KIA to flush out the rebel groups from India's north-east from its territory. R&AW agreed to provide three consignments of weapons at a time when KIA was desperately searching for sources across South-East Asia.⁴⁰ Since then, ties between New Delhi and KIA have remained cordial with current speculations that the Indian government is also exploring options to access rare-earth minerals in Kachin State.⁴¹

However, New Delhi's need to befriend KIA was dictated more by the exigency of effectively neutralizing the separatist groups in the north-eastern region. In all probability, Myanmar's military, the Tatmadaw, was aware of the assistance received by KIA from the Indian government which explains its reluctance to launch operations against the camps and training facilities of the separatist groups from India's north-east.⁴² In 2001, an informal cessation of hostilities was arrived at between the Myanmar military and the Khaplang faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-Khaplang) which was converted into a written agreement 11 years later.⁴³ This outfit operates in the Naga-inhabited areas of northern Sagaing Region in Myanmar and has an alliance with separatist groups from Assam and

³⁶ "Mizo youth group wants Myanmar refugees in 'compact' area", *The Hindu*, 29 October 2022.

³⁷ H.C. Vanlalruata, "Mizoram: No birth and death certificates for illegal immigrants", *The Times of India*, 2 February 2023.

³⁸ "Chin Resistance Groups Control 80 Percent of Chin State", *ISP*, 24 July 2025.

³⁹ Rajeev Bhattacharyya, *ULFA: The Mirage of Dawn*, HarperCollins Publishers India, New Delhi, 2023, p. 58.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁴¹ United News of India, "India eyes Stilwell Road to tap Myanmar rare earths, challenge China", *The Statesman*, 24 February 2026.

⁴² Interviews with functionaries of the ULFA who had availed training in Kachin by the author, Assam, 2012–2018.

⁴³ Rajeev Bhattacharyya, *Rendezvous With Rebels: Journey to Meet India's Most Wanted Men*, HarperCollins Publishers India, New Delhi, 2013, p. 235; Rajeev Bhattacharyya, "Amid Tatmadaw Offensive, India's NSCN(K) Rebels are on the Retreat", in *The Diplomat*, 4 June 2019.

Manipur. Camps of these groups also existed in southern Sagaing Region through a tacit understanding with the Tatmadaw.⁴⁴ Despite these developments, the Indian government had consistently made a case before the Tatmadaw to dismantle the camps. Nay Pyi Taw had acquiesced on some occasions resulting in flush-out operations against the rebel camps, in 2016 and on a bigger scale in 2019 during Operation Sunrise (I and II) when a combined operation was launched by the armed forces of the two countries.⁴⁵ After the coup in 2021, the groups from Manipur have joined hands with the Myanmar military against the resistance groups.⁴⁶ The possibility of a renewed crackdown on the camps has therefore diminished in the current scenario. Still, the activities of armed groups along the India–Myanmar border continue to figure prominently in bilateral talks.⁴⁷

The second vital factor shaping the relations between the two neighbours is India's ambitious Act East Policy where Myanmar is seen as a key component. The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project through Myanmar seeks to provide an outlet to the landlocked north-eastern region of India, and the Trilateral Highway will link the region to Thailand. Work on the Trilateral Highway is suspended due to disturbed conditions in Myanmar.⁴⁸ Progress has been made on the Kaladan project after the Indian government in 2022 firmed up an understanding with the Arakan Army which controls the entire area from Zorinpui at the border with India to the outskirts of Sittwe in Rakhine State.⁴⁹ Six firms (including two owned by the Myanmar government) are engaged in the construction of the 109 km highway from Zorinpui to Paletwa in Myanmar's Chin State.⁵⁰ The scope of airstrikes in the region is minimal, especially with the involvement also of the Myanmar government in the project – that is certainly an achievement for the Indian government. But the claims made by the Indian government that the project would be completed in 2027 are misleading. Only about 10 per cent of the highway has been built so far and it is unlikely that it will be finished before another 10 years, given the current condition of the non-concrete road. Moreover, the jetty in Paletwa lies in a dilapidated state which will also have to be revamped.⁵¹

Thirdly, China's increasing influence in Myanmar and its determined plans to develop a deep-sea port in Kyaukpyu for access to the Indian Ocean have prompted New Delhi to expedite its efforts to remain in close proximity to the Tatmadaw.⁵² In early May 2026, India launched the ninth United Nations ('UN') Peacekeeping Officer Course

for Myanmar servicemen in Nay Pyi Taw. Deputy Commander-in-Chief General Kyaw Swar Lin presided over the programme (scheduled for about 10 days), which was also attended by India's Ambassador Abhay Thakur, defence attachés, Indian instructors, and the Myanmar trainees. This was India's second UN Peacekeeping course convened in Myanmar since the 2021 military coup.⁵³ The Indian government has also supplied weapons and ammunition to the Tatmadaw, similar to the policies of China, Russia and some other countries. Indian firm Sandeep Metalcraft Private Limited has provided fuses to the Tatmadaw which are used to cause detonation in bombs and artillery.⁵⁴ Post 2021, Indian firms, including state-owned entities, have shipped at least USD 51 million in arms, raw materials and associated supplies to the Tatmadaw and arms dealers, according to a UN report.⁵⁵ Not surprisingly, these policies have invited sharp criticism from Burmese pro-democracy activists and resistance leaders.

The outcome of the ongoing war in Myanmar remains uncertain, although the military has been successful in recent months in recovering territory that it had lost to the resistance groups after the coup. It has also effectively neutralized two of the biggest rebel groups – Ta'ang National Liberation Army and Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army – resulting in the collapse of a formidable alliance called Operation 1027 (with Arakan Army) that had liberated vast swathes of territory from Tatmadaw's control.⁵⁶ The greatest drawback of the resistance groups is lack of unity and the absence of a single chain of command, which the NUG has not been able to overcome. The Indian government certainly does not want to put all its eggs in one basket, which explains its multi-layered policies in Myanmar prompting varied interpretations about its actual objectives in the country.

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ISBN: 978-82-8348-311-6.

TOAEP-PURL: <http://www.toaep.org/pbs-pdf/206-bhattacharyya/>.

LTD-PURL: <https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/vq0d0ave/>.

Date of publication: 5 June 2026.

⁴⁴ Interviews with functionaries and former functionaries of the People's Liberation Army and United National Liberation Front by the author, Manipur, 2012–2019.

⁴⁵ Press Trust of India, "India, Myanmar conduct joint operation to destroy militant camps in Northeast", *The Hindu*, 16 June 2019.

⁴⁶ Shivam Patel, "Fighters from Myanmar civil war aggravate bitter ethnic conflict in India", *Reuters*, 20 December 2024.

⁴⁷ Informal conversation with a former secretary of Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, 18 November 2025.

⁴⁸ Shashank Mattoo, "Why one of India's most valuable strategic projects is stuck?", *India Today*, 25 March 2025.

⁴⁹ Rajeev Bhattacharyya, "India-Myanmar: Why Kaladan transit project could resume soon", *The Week*, 1 December 2024.

⁵⁰ The author witnessed the combined office of the six firms in Myanmar near Zorinpui during a visit to Myanmar between 29 January and 4 March 2026.

⁵¹ The author traversed the entire incomplete highway between Zorinpui and Paletwa on 29–30 January 2026.

⁵² Zachary Fillingham, "Backgrounder: Myanmar's Kyaukpyu Port", *Geopolitical Monitor*, 14 December 2023.

⁵³ Maung Kavi, "India Launches UN Peacekeeping Course for Myanmar Troops as Civilian Toll Mounts", *The Irrawaddy*, 12 May 2026.

⁵⁴ Justice for Myanmar, "India supplying fuzes to Myanmar military, supporting indiscriminate attacks", 15 July 2022.

⁵⁵ Murali Krishnan, "How India is supporting Myanmar's military with arms", *DW News*, 25 May 2023.

⁵⁶ Yun Sun, "Operation 1027: Changing the tides of the Myanmar civil war?", in *Brookings*, 16 January 2024.



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