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# The Junta Is Not the Partner India Needs: Rethinking the Myanmar Policy

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# The Junta Is Not the Partner India Needs: Rethinking the Myanmar Policy

 **The Indian Express** 5 June 2026 **GS2**

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## INTERVIEW ANGLE

*"India shares a long border with Myanmar and faces insurgency and connectivity stakes there. Can it afford to engage anti-junta forces, or does realpolitik require dealing with whoever controls the capital?"*

Source: [Original editorial](#)  [The Indian Express](#)

## WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

India's Myanmar policy rests on a single wager: that the military junta is the durable, dominant partner. As Myanmar fragments under a multi-front civil war, that wager is becoming a strategic liability. For an aspirant, this is a high-value GS2 "Neighbourhood First" and "Act East" case: it tests whether you can weigh **hard security interests against democratic values** without collapsing into either naive idealism or cynical realism, exactly the judgement the examiner and the interview board are probing for.

## THE CRUX IN 60 WORDS

The junta no longer controls the Myanmar territory India cares about, especially the **border with the Northeast**. China has **hedged across all actors**; India, by betting on the generals alone, is over-exposed and pays a values cost for backing a coup regime. The fix is **hedging, not exclusivity**: keep security contact with the junta, but engage ethnic armed organisations, the National Unity Government and civil society.

## THE ISSUE, DECODED

ELEMENT	WHAT IT IS	WHY IT MATTERS TO INDIA
<b>The junta</b>	Military regime since the <b>Feb 2021</b> coup	Controls shrinking territory; unreliable on the border
<b>NUG</b>	National Unity Government (parallel anti-junta govt)	A stakeholder India currently under-engages
<b>EAOs</b>	Ethnic Armed Organisations along the border	Control ground India needs secured
<b>Kaladan project</b>	Kolkata to Sittwe port to Mizoram link	Bypasses the Siliguri Corridor; needs a stable Myanmar

## THE ANALYSIS: WHY BETTING ON THE JUNTA FAILS

- ❶ **It cannot deliver the border.** The junta does not control large border areas; a partner that cannot secure the ground is no foundation for counter-insurgency or connectivity.
- ❷ **China has already hedged.** Beijing courts the junta, EAOs and others at once, so India's single bet leaves it exposed if the balance tips.
- ❸ **The values cost is real.** Backing a regime that ousted an elected government strains India's "largest democracy" and Global South identity.
- ❹ **The refugee spillover is unmanaged.** Conflict pushes displaced people into Mizoram and Manipur, straining Northeast states and federal ties.

## DATA AND INSTITUTIONS VAULT

*India-Myanmar border ~1,643 km, touching Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram. Myanmar is the only ASEAN state with a land border with India. Connectivity: Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (Kolkata to Sittwe to Mizoram) and the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway (Moreh to Mae Sot). Policy framework: Gateway for India's Act East Policy; Myanmar is in ASEAN, BIMSTEC, and Mekong-Ganga Cooperation. Border management: the Free Movement Regime (FMR) is being scrapped and the border fenced. Coup date: February 2021; capital Naypyidaw; ASEAN response is the Five-Point Consensus.*

## THE DEBATE

**Argument FOR engaging only the junta:** It holds the capital and the formal state; India needs a counterpart for treaties, border coordination and to deny China a clear run.

**Argument FOR broadening engagement:** The junta cannot deliver on the ground, China has already hedged, and exclusive reliance carries both strategic risk and a democratic-credibility cost.

**The balanced verdict:** Keep **functional, deniable** security contact with the junta, but **broaden** outreach to EAOs, the NUG and civil society. Hedging preserves leverage whichever way the conflict resolves, and aligns India's interests with a stable, representative Myanmar.

## HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (TRANSFERABLE SKILL)

*In foreign policy, UPSC rewards the candidate who refuses both extremes, “only deal with democrats” and “only deal with power”, and instead argues **calibrated hedging**: protect core interests while keeping channels open across actors. The same pattern applies to India's posture on the Taliban, on Bangladesh after a government change, and on West Asia. Show that interests and values often **converge in the long run** through stability.*

## DIAGRAM-IN-WORDS

Bet only on junta -> junta cannot control border -> security + connectivity at risk + China hedges + values cost. The recalibration: Security contact with junta + outreach to EAOs/NUG/civil society -> leverage preserved across a fractured polity.

## THE WAY FORWARD

- 1 **Keep essential security contact** with the junta on the border.
- 2 **Open channels to EAOs and the NUG** quietly, as China already does.
- 3 **Engage civil society and humanitarian actors**, including on refugees.
- 4 **Anchor it in Act East and Neighbourhood First**, framing a stable, representative Myanmar as the Indian interest.

## THE TAKEAWAY BOX

*“India’s Myanmar policy must balance strategic imperatives with the reality of a fractured and contested state.” Critically evaluate. (250 words)*

*“In a fractured neighbour, betting on a single actor is not realism but a gamble; hedging across the contest is the realist’s true discipline.”*

*Border ~1,643 km, 4 NE states · Kaladan + Trilateral Highway · FMR being scrapped · Myanmar in ASEAN/BIMSTEC/MGC · coup Feb 2021 · ASEAN Five-Point Consensus.*

*Should India engage a junta that overthrew an elected government, or does principle demand keeping it at arm’s length even at a strategic cost?*

*Connects to GS2 PYQs on India’s neighbourhood and “Act East” (e.g. 2017 GS2 on neighbourhood policy); probable forward question is the fractured-state framing above.*

*today’s India-Nepal editorial (neighbourhood recalibration); static GS2 on India and its neighbourhood, ASEAN and Act East.*

**Sources:** *Indian Express, MEA, The Hindu*

Source: [The Junta Is Not the Partner India Needs: Rethinking the Myanmar Policy](#) — Ujjyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Editorial Analysis

### ● KEY ARGUMENTS AT A GLANCE

**India’s continued primary reliance on Myanmar’s military junta undermines both its strategic interests and its democratic credentials as the regional balance shifts; New Delhi should recalibrate toward a broader set of Myanmar stakeholders rather than betting on the generals alone.**

#### ✓ SUPPORTING

- The junta does not control large parts of Myanmar’s territory, including areas bordering India’s Northeast, making it an unreliable partner for border security, connectivity projects, and counter-insurgency cooperation.
- Betting solely on the junta cedes ground to China, which has hedged across multiple Myanmar actors, and leaves India without leverage if the balance shifts against the

generals.

- Aligning primarily with a regime that seized power from an elected government sits uneasily with India's self-image as the world's largest democracy and a voice for the Global South.

### **COUNTER**

Realists argue India cannot ignore whoever controls Naypyidaw, given stakes in border management, the Kaladan project, and denying China a free hand, so engagement with the junta is a pragmatic necessity.

### **WAY FORWARD**

Maintain functional contact with the junta on border and security matters while broadening outreach to ethnic armed organisations, the National Unity Government, and civil society, hedging India's bets and preserving leverage across a fractured polity.

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### **MAINS ANSWER FRAMEWORK**

#### **QUESTION**

*"India's Myanmar policy must balance strategic imperatives with the reality of a fractured and contested state." Critically evaluate India's engagement with the military junta. (250 words)*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

India's Myanmar policy rests on a wager: that the military junta will remain the dominant actor and a workable partner. As Myanmar fractures under a multi-front resistance, that wager looks increasingly unsafe.

#### **BODY**

Myanmar matters to India for hard reasons: a 1,643 km shared border with four Northeast states, insurgent sanctuaries, the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, and the imperative of denying China uncontested influence. The instinct to deal with

whoever holds the capital is understandable.

But the junta no longer controls large swathes of Myanmar's territory, including border regions critical to India's security. A partner that cannot deliver on the ground is a poor foundation for border management or connectivity.

Meanwhile China has hedged, cultivating the junta, ethnic armed organisations, and others simultaneously, leaving India over-exposed if the balance tips against the generals. There is also a values cost: aligning primarily with a regime that overthrew an elected government strains India's democratic credentials and its Global South messaging.

The answer is not to abandon contact with the junta on essential security matters, but to broaden engagement to ethnic armed organisations, the National Unity Government, and civil society, preserving leverage across a contested polity.

### CONCLUSION

Strategic prudence and democratic principle point the same way: India should stop betting on the junta alone and engage the full spectrum of Myanmar's contested politics.

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