



# The Chinese Threat to India's North-East Region Amidst the South-Asian Electoral Fest

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## Introduction

The wave of hostility in the South Asia prevalent in countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar take a similar turn as each of these countries have decided to employ the democratic approach to stabilise the reign. Myanmar being the first to initiate a quarter full of South Asian elections on December 28, 2025 in a three phased manner till January 25, 2026, is followed by Bangladesh and Nepal who have conducted elections in the months of the February and March respectively. With India and China finding themselves continuously on the turf in India's North-East region, the current circumstances aggravate the already strengthening influence of China in the region.

## The Strategic Importance of These Countries

Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar stand strategically important for India, not only because of the expanding Chinese influence, growing exponentially after the neglect felt by these nations in India's initial proposal for the Look East Policy, but also because of how geographically the three nations with China encircle India's North-East Region, with the *Chicken-Neck Corridor* stuck between Bangladesh and Nepal.

## China's influence in India's North-East Region

China's involvement in India's North-Eastern states while indirect has been eminent since its independence. The malpractices employed by the [Chinese state to disrupt the peace in the region include funding, training and sheltering terrorist outfits](#). This has been dominant since China directly supported the Naga National Council (NNC) led by T. Muivah in the 1960s, provided military assistance to the Mizo National Front (MNF) in 1972, utilised the Kachin Independence army in Myanmar to train the MNF in the 1980s, and the weapons deal with the NSCN (IM) which involved offloading at Bangladesh's Cox Bazar in 1990s.

The practice has continued even in the last couple of decades, invigorating the heat in the region, ranging from activities like dealing in Surface to Air Missiles with NSCN (IM) in 2009 or supplying arms to rebel and terror outfits like ULFA, All Tripura Tiger Forces, PLA etc in 2000s to employing Myanmar to shelter the coalition of groups like the NSCN, the KLO, the ULFA and the NDFB named the United Liberation Front of Western South Asia in 2015.

There have also been other methods wielded by China to claim the North-East region of India, like the continuous skirmishes in the Galwan or the claiming of Arunachal Pradesh naming it South Tibet or Zangnan, asserting its historical existence as a part of Tibet, renaming several cities of the state.

## Chinese Investments in Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar

Furthermore, China has also tried at maintaining relations with the following three countries by investing in them through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative, which often overshadows its activities that it carries out either in these countries or through them.

- Through initiatives like the [China-Myanmar Economic corridor](#) that improves connectivity by building roads between China's Yunnan Province to Kyaukphyu port converting it into a special economic zone,
- [Supporting Bangladesh through investments in various sectors](#) (power, energy, transformation, etc.) under the Belt and Road Initiative taking major projects like The Padma Bridge, Single Point Mooring with Double Buoy Mooring, establishing the BCIM economic corridor,
- and solving Nepal's dilemma of being a landlocked country by providing it with trade routes through Tibet to access sea ports, investing heavily in the hydropower and infrastructure sector (Kathmandu King Road, Pokhara Airport, Kathmandu-Jilong railway line, etc.) as well.

## The South Asian Electoral Fest

As all three of these countries move towards elections in a tumultuous political environment, the future hangs in the balance leaving India's North-East Region in the centre of the bargain.

[Myanmar](#) has been going through a chaotic phase since the Military coup in 2021 that removed the National League for Democracy Government, causing intense resistance resulting in a civil war. The resistance forces encompassing ethnic armed groups and people's defence forces have taken over a major amount of the territory causing thousands of casualties and displacing millions coupled with airstrikes and ground offensives caused by the 'Junta' to retaliate. The situation worsened in 2025 with a catastrophic earthquake which added a humanitarian crisis to the turmoil. The three phased election in Myanmar was considered farce and a method of legitimising the Military Rule amidst the oppressive and repressive approach employed by the military.

[Bangladesh](#) has witnessed significant change after the 2024 student protests evicting Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, bringing the Awami League dominance to a halt. This was followed by a Muhammad Yunus led interim government which promised of doing away with the Awami League and the corrupt and authoritarian culture that followed. Economic stress, alarming inflations and increasing violence were the preset conditions for the February 2026 elections in Bangladesh. The return of Tarique Rahman after 17 years amidst the economic and political turmoil proved to be pivotal for the elections.

[Nepal](#) faced a similar situation as Bangladesh as it descended into a crisis in September 2025, with a Gen-Z led protest against evils like corruption and unemployment persisting in the country. The government retaliated with a social media ban which eventually aggravated the violence in the country, causing Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli's resignation and a scorching parliament. Chief Justice Sushila Karki took over the interim government as the country's firstwoman prime minister, dissolving the preceding government and scheduling general elections on March 5, 2026. Preparations were in order as major parties like CPN-UML faced competition from new parties formed through the youth movements, ending up with Balendra Shah from the Rastriya Swatantra Party winning the elections.

## A dwindling future for India

The situation posits a challenge to India in the North East region as instability in Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar increase, providing opportunity to China which has had a history of trying to influence the North-East region India through these countries. The instability can act as a breeding ground for illicit activities from funding terror outfits in North East and infiltrations to smuggling and dumping of cheap Chinese products. Moreover, a favourable election result in all three countries for China can also lead to the encircling of the region, choking the chicken's neck.

Moreover, [the anti-India sentiment in Bangladesh](#) increasing as India provides shelter to convicted former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, compounding with a hostile reaction from India regarding atrocities caused against Hindus



evident from the [protests in Puri, Orissa](#), and parliamentary statements of India leaders worsen the situation. Bangladesh, a country turning towards Chinese investments to fight its dependency on India, with the increasing influence of [Jamaat-E-Islami](#) often affiliated with the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan acts as a major threat to India.

While a strong anti-India sentiment might not exist in Nepal, [the India-Nepal trade afflicted](#) by the protests, coupled with a retaliation towards the resumption of trade through the disputed [Lipulekh pass creates a divergence](#) in the relations between the two countries. China makes the situation worsen as it provides Nepal a connection to the sea routes, infrastructural investments, strengthening its relations.

Myanmar, which has had a history of being employed by China for disrupting piece in the Northeast region, with China's investment in the Kyaukphyu Port, which is close to the Mizoram border can act perilous for India. While the [Myanmar Junta attempts at retaining the power](#) by subverting the elections, the situation remains threatening because of Chinese influence in the country and Myanmar's balanced relations with both India and China.

### **A Suitable Indian Approach**

While attempting at improving its relations with China over the last few months, India needs to act swiftly, encompassing both internal and external balancing policies. In Bangladesh, while a return of Tarique Rahman gives a better alternative to Jamaat-E-Islami, Nepal and Bangladesh hold strong relations with India. A balanced reaction showcased by the Indian Govt. showing a subtle support to the CPN-UML and the Myanmar Junta after the earthquake, while condemning the massacre in both the countries also act as a glimmer of hope. India also requires strengthening of borders in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Mizoram, while settling internal disputes like the Manipur dispute, so as to provide a unified defence to the external threats looming over the country.