Abstract

The series of political reforms in Myanmar, which started in November 2010, took place amid a strong alignment of interests among all regional powers in Southeast Asia. The reforms led to a limited democratization of the country and ended a long-lasting international isolation of Myanmar. Furthermore, they also had a great impact on Myanmar’s foreign policy, because they gave rise to a great improvement of US-Myanmar relations, as well as its bilateral relations with India and Japan. However, they also caused problems for the Chinese strategic interests in the country. The purpose of this paper is to answer the following question: is the recent development in Myanmar going to lead to further cooperation or competition between the key regional powers? Myanmar has a great strategic importance in the context of the US’s policy Pivot to Asia and Chinese strategic interests. Given to its abundance of natural resources and underdevelopment of infrastructure, it also has a great potential to develop into an energy and transportation hub, uniting the Indian subcontinent and connecting underdeveloped regions. Yet, the country suffers from mismanagement, internal conflicts and grave socioeconomic situation. Therefore, the internal political instability has large implications for the key regional powers and the future of Southeast Asia.