

***DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE
FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE,
POLITICAL STABILITY, AND ETHNIC
RECONCILIATION IN MYANMAR***



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Introduction

Myanmar is currently facing a severe political and humanitarian crisis that has escalated since the military coup in February 2021. In 2021, the military seized power from the democratically elected government which ended nearly a decade of democratic rule. Since the coup, Myanmar has been struggling with widespread armed conflict and violence. Historically, the country is no stranger to internal conflict due to its colonial history and a complex ethnic makeup. From 2010 to 2021, Myanmar underwent a transition from military rule to democracy. The country had held its first free elections in decades in 2010, which led to various constitutional reforms. Nevertheless, the military remained in control over important ministries and a guaranteed quarter of parliamentary seats. Established ethnic conflicts were not addressed, leading to ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) controlling parts of the country. Ethnic minorities, especially Rohingya muslims, remained marginalized and suffer severe human rights violations. In the 2020 election, the military unverifiably claimed a large amount of voter fraud and called for a new election. The elected government rejected this and prepared for the new parliament. The military seized power hours before the new parliament was to be sworn in by arresting important political figures and effectively ending democratic rule in Myanmar. Following this, the country has been at unrest, with various armed clashes and escalations. Despite different attempts at nationwide ceasefires and peace talks, progress towards nationwide peace has been slow. The UNSC has a mandate to maintain international peace and security and therefore needs to address the current situation in Myanmar. A resolution aiming for sustainable peace and stability could focus on inclusive political dialogue and alternative governance structures. Addressing concerns over power sharing and equal treatment of minorities in a new constitution may also be necessary for long-term peace.

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Key Terms

National Unity Government

The *NUG* is a government-in-exile formed in response to the military coup that took place in February 2021. It was established by the CRPH, claims to be the legitimate government of Myanmar and includes elected politicians, ethnic minority representatives and other pro-democracy groups

Coup d'état

French for 'stroke of state', illegal seizing of power from the current government, often violent and/or sudden

CRPH

The *Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttawa* is an opposition body made of elected politicians who lost power in the coup and condemn the coup as illegitimate. It operates in exile, supporting local resistance to the military junta and advocating for a return to democracy

SAC

The *State Administration Council* is the name of the military junta who seized power in 2021 and is led by Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing.

Ethnic reconciliation

Refers to the process of restoring good relations between (Myanmar's) different ethnic groups who are currently in conflict. This can be achieved for example by addressing historical grievances and rebuilding trust in equal dialogues.

EAOs

Ethnic Armed Organisations are armed groups in Myanmar representing specific ethnic groups, often defending their rights by violent conflict. Their spheres of influence can be of different sizes, with some controlling large areas in Myanmar and some confined to small regions. EAOs are a significant contributor to Myanmar's internal armed conflict.

Tatmadaw

The official name of Myanmar's armed forces. It has a by western democracy standards large influence on politics and decision making, with control over ministries and seats in parliament. The Tatmadaw has in the past faced criticism over human rights abuse.

Military junta

A type of governance led by a council of military officials, often appearing after a coup d'état.

4K Coalition

A military alliance of the EAOs of the ethnic groups Karen and Karenni, local to southern Myanmar.

General Overview

Historical Context

Myanmar's current troubled situation is, as is the case in many conflict regions, directly connected to its colonial past. Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, was gradually colonised by the British and became part of their colonial empire, first as part of British India and later as an individual colony. British colonisers dismantled existing governance structures and increased their power by employing the 'divide and rule' strategy, meaning artificially creating conflict and divisions between different ethnic groups by treating some favorably while others were brutally oppressed. Indigenous resistance was fierce but met with British violence, forced relocations and further oppression. In the beginning of the 20th century, new nationalist independence movements were forming among indigenous groups, with varying ideals and visions for a future state. Myanmar gained independence in 1948 following World War 2, but soon struggled with internal conflicts because of British imposed hierarchies in the Burmese society. There were various violent uprisings by different ethnic groups seeking to improve their standing and gain autonomy.

Military Coup & its aftermath

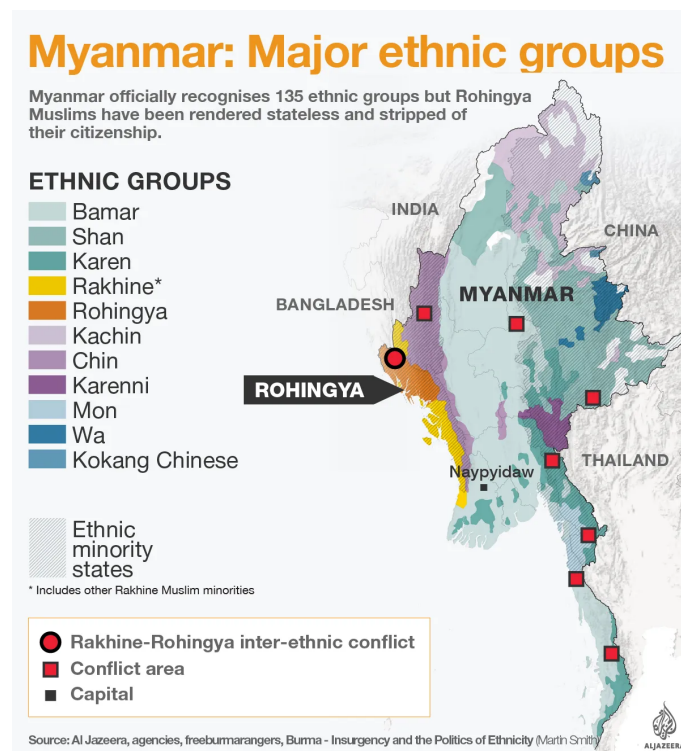
The military coup in Myanmar began the morning of February 1, 2021, when the Tatmadaw seized power from the democratically elected government hours before the newly elected parliament was set to meet for the first time. The military declared a state of emergency, decided the results of the 2020 general election were invalid and transferred power to the SAC. President Win Myint and several other politicians were arrested, and citizens faced heavy repressions, like internet shutdowns, new censorship, and lethal force by the military against peaceful protesters.

Following this, the SAC faced widespread domestic resistance which manifested in a nationwide civil disobedience movement involving citizens from many different parts of society, widespread protests and the formation of the NUG. The junta responded with brutal violence, killing thousands of civilians. According to the UN over 6,000 civilians have been killed since the coup, with even more dying due to torture and denial of medical care. SAC military operations on civilians in regions with a large ethnic minority included the burning

of villages and airstrikes on civilian homes, schools, and hospitals, causing massive displacement and destruction. The junta has also carried out unfair trials and imposed harsh sentences such as executions. The SAC's actions have led to a catastrophic humanitarian crisis, with more than 3.5 million people internally displaced and widespread economic collapse. Despite losing control over large parts of the country to resistance forces, the regime continues to use violence to maintain power, while facing domestic and international condemnation for its human rights violations.

Ethnic Minorities

Myanmar recognises 135 different ethnic groups, which can be divided into eight main groups: Bamar, Karen, Rakhine, Shan, Mon, Chin, Kachin, and Karenni. The Bamar, make up nearly 70% of the population and have historically dominated the politics and culture in Myanmar. Each group has distinct languages, traditions, and territories. There are also numerous smaller ethnic communities, as well as unrecognized groups like the Rohingya Muslims and Burmese Indians.



[*Myanmar: Major ethnic groups and where they live | Al Jazeera*](#)

Ethnic minorities in Myanmar have long faced systemic discrimination and violence, particularly under military regimes. The Rohingya, a Muslim minority group have been subjected to especially severe persecution, including denial of citizenship. This has been described by the UN as a textbook example of ethnic cleansing. Other groups have endured decades of armed conflict, forced labor and human rights abuses by the military. Government policy has often favored the Bamar majority, and minority languages, religions, and cultural practices restricted. Ethnic minorities are also often excluded legally from political participation.

Major Parties and Their Views

4K Coalition

The 4K Coalition is firmly opposed to the military junta and is committed to ending military rule in Myanmar. It actively participates in resistance efforts and supports the NUG and the CRPH. Their main goals are to achieve equal democracy and ethnic rights. The coalition rejects negotiations with the junta, unless it will agree to significant political reforms, and also calls for the creation of humanitarian corridors to protect civilians and allow aid delivery in conflict-affected areas.

United States of America

The US government condemns the coup and urges for the restoration of democracy and human rights, and accountability for crimes committed by the Tatmadaw. Joe Biden imposed sanctions on members of the SAC. From a strategic viewpoint, the US sees importance in a stable and democratic Myanmar due to concerns over regional stability and China's influence.

People's Republic of China

China stands in favor of the SAC, particularly since 2024. China has moved away from its traditional position of non-interference and is now providing economic, and military support to the SAC. It has also pressured EAOs to cease resistance and has intervened diplomatically and militarily to fight resistance forces, especially when threatening Chinese investments or influence. While China continues to facilitate dialogue between Myanmar's factions, it increasingly favors the junta and aims to preserve current power structures to prevent another transition to democracy.

Republic of France

France condemns the military junta in Myanmar and the ongoing violence and human rights abuse since the 2021 coup. France calls for a ceasefire, the release of all political prisoners and the implementation of relevant SC resolutions. It advocates for inclusive political dialogue involving all parties. France has increased its humanitarian assistance to over 6.5 million euros in 2023 and continues to support international efforts to hold the junta

accountable. The French Senate recognises the NUG as the legitimate government of Myanmar.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom condemns the military junta's violence, human rights abuses, and the planned December 2025 election, which is seen as a sham election to legitimize military rule. The UK calls for an immediate end to the junta's violence, which includes lethal airstrikes on civilians, and demands the release of all political prisoners. The UK has provided substantial humanitarian aid and supports accountability mechanisms to ensure justice for victims. It supports the NUG and urges the international community to reject the planned elections and instead support the citizen's efforts to build a legitimate democracy.

Russian Federation

Russia maintains strong support of Myanmar's military junta since the 2021 coup and provides military, and economic support. Russia is the main supplier of arms to the junta which includes advanced military equipment which has been used in operations against citizens. Vladimir Putin has personally hosted junta leader Min Aung Hlaing multiple times, improving their relationship and expanding cooperation in defense, energy and trade. Russia recognizes the junta's legitimacy and supports the planned elections. This alliance has helped the junta sustain its rule amid widespread international isolation and sanctions and enables Russia to expand its influence in Southeast Asia.

State Administration Council (Myanmar)

The SAC in Myanmar intends to stay in power and legitimise its rule through a planned general election in 2025. They insist the election will lead to political transition, stating it will hand over power to the winning party. Several democratic and ethnic opposition groups have rejected the election as a sham as it excludes large groups of the population. The SAC uses military force to suppress resistance, such as airstrikes and mandatory military service. Additionally, they engage in diplomatic efforts to gain international approval and strengthen relations. Although the SAC faces challenges such as loss of control in certain regions to EAOs and a humanitarian and economic crisis, it remains committed to maintain control over the country in the future.

National Unity Government (Myanmar)

The NUG firmly rejects the planned 2025 election and claims it a sham designed to legitimize military rule instead of restoring democracy. The NUG believes the electoral process to be neither free nor fair since it excludes major political parties, bans important opposition figures, criminalizes disagreement, and does not allow voting in parts of the country controlled by the resistance. It calls on the international community to reject the junta's election and instead support the people's efforts to build an inclusive democracy. The NUG emphasizes the need for genuine dialogue, the release of all political prisoners, and the establishment of a new constitution including minority rights for all ethnic groups. The NUG remains committed to overthrowing the military regime and establishing a democracy that reflects the will of the Myanmar people.

Timeline of Key Events

Incorporation of Burma into British India

- **1886**, all of Myanmar is colonised and now administered as part of BI, but later becomes its own Crown Colony.

Japanese Occupation of Burma

- **1942-1945**, marked by widespread destruction, forced labor and suffering in the population

Independence

- **4 January 1948**, Myanmar is no longer a British colony, a multi-party parliamentary system is established

Military coup

- **1962**, General Ne Win overthrows democratically elected government and establishes one-party socialist state

New constitution

- **2008**, grants military significantly more power, for example with a quarter of parliament seats reserved for military, immunity from prosecution for members and the power to declare a state of emergency and impose martial law.

First election under new constitution

- **2010**, first general elections held in two decades, Tatmadaw backed party wins with 80%, opposition parties boycott elections, election is described as a sham election by international observers. military junta that was a successor of that came into power in 1962 dissolves in 2011

Dissolution of 1962 military junta

- **2011**, successor military council of the junta from 1962 steps down and cedes power to elected government, part of a planned transition to civilian rule with strong military influence remaining.

Coup d'etat

- **1 February 2021**, The Tatmadaw seize power from newly democratically elected government, ending progress towards free democracy in Myanmar

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Independent Investigation Mechanism for Myanmar - September 2018

UN entity established by the HRC to increase accountability for different crimes and human rights violations committed in Myanmar since 2011. It collects and preserves evidence of crimes such as war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. It does not conduct trials but shares its evidence with relevant courts. The military junta does not cooperate with the IIMM, and there is currently limited access to witnesses and evidence within the country. The ongoing conflict in Myanmar has increased the scale and complexity of crimes, potentially overwhelming its resources.

Five-Point Consensus - 24 April 2021

A 5-point agreement proposed by ASEAN in response to the military coup. The five points contain calls for a ceasefire, constructive dialogue between all involved parties and provision of humanitarian aid. Additionally, a Special Envoy is appointed by ASEAN, who is to mediate dialogue and meet with all involved parties. It is largely ineffective due to the junta's unwillingness to co-operate with this scheme.

UN Security Council's Resolution 2669 - 21 December 2022

Resolution expressing the SC's deep concern over the state of emergency declared by the SAC, calling for a ceasefire and demanding the release of newly imprisoned political figures.

Questions a Resolution Should Answer

- How can access to humanitarian aid and protection of civilians be ensured in conflict-affected areas?
- What role should international parties play in supporting peace and reconciliation?
- Are sanctions necessary to pressure parties violating international agreements?
- How is follow-up and monitoring of the resolution's implementation ensured?
- Is the inclusion of ethnic minorities and marginalized groups in political processes protected?

Appendix

[IISS Myanmar Conflict Map](#) - *The Myanmar Conflict Map is a platform for data visualisation and analysis.*

[Myanmar's Troubled History: Coups, Military Rule, and Ethnic Conflict | Council on Foreign Relations](#) - *helpful overview of the background of the current situation*

[Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar](#) - *official website of the IIMM, could be helpful when preparing operative clauses*

[Myanmar | History, Population, Coup, & Facts | Britannica](#) - *overview*

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