



BMUN LXXII



MYANMAR SPRING REVOLUTION



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Myanmar Spring Revolution at BMUN 72! My name is Eric Ho, and I am honored to be your Head Chair this year. As a two-time delegate of BMUN's crisis committees, I know both how daunting and exciting it can be, especially if it is your first time participating in a crisis committee. I encourage all delegates to read through the position paper guidelines thoroughly, and please reach out with any questions regarding the topic or crisis committees in general.

To introduce myself a bit further, I am a second-year majoring in Electrical Engineering & Computer Sciences, and I'm from Orange County. I've had the privilege of participating in Model UN for 7 years now, and I've enjoyed competing and chairing crisis committees for the past 4 years. Outside of classes and BMUN, I enjoy watching sports, procrastinating on work and exams, and trash-talking my friends in Fantasy Football. I am looking forward to seeing how you all shape debate and solutions around this conflict while navigating the different updates you will face!

Working alongside me this year are my lovely Vice Chairs: Danielle, Joanna, Kidd, Megan, and Tanirika!

As a first year at Cal, Danielle is majoring in Nutritional Science at the College of Natural Resources. This is her first year in BMUN and is looking forward to chairing the crisis. From her prior experiences in MUN, Danielle is super interested in global relations and collaboration and is looking forward to seeing debate in action in March! Aside from MUN, you can catch Danielle running around the Bay Area and on new trails around Berkeley. She enjoys cooking fusion food, listening to music, especially Taylor Swift and Phoebe Bridgers, and discovering new ice cream shops! She's super excited to see everyone and meet everyone in Crisis!

Joanna Bai is a freshman majoring in Society and Environment in the College of Natural Resources. Originally from Irvine, CA, she has seven years of experience in Model UN and is super excited to be chairing for BMUN this year! She is super passionate about international issues and education, but aside from that, enjoys playing violin, reading, listening to music, eating food, playing tennis, and procrastinating. This is her first time chairing a crisis committee, so she is really looking forward to being a part of this experience and meeting all the delegates!

Kidd Stablein is a third-year majoring in Political Science and minoring in history. This is his eighth year of Model UN and his second time chairing a conference at BMUN. Outside of MUN, Kidd can be found in his free time playing sports, from basketball to spikeball. If he's not outside, he can be found watch-

ing movies or reading books any chance he gets. He's a big movie/novel buff, so feel free to send any recommendations his way. Kidd is looking forward to meeting all of you in March and can't wait to see how delegates write and direct a pivotal moment in Myanmar's history.

Megan Lee is a second-year majoring in Political Economics and Art History. She loves learning about history and is passionate about making arts education more accessible to the public. In her free time she enjoys visiting museums, painting, and trying new cuisine. This is her 5th year involved in Model UN and her second time chairing BMUN - she can't wait to see how this committee unfolds. She is looking forward to meeting you all in March and is excited to see this committee unfold!

Tanirika Singh is a fourth-year majoring in Molecular & Cell Biology. This year will be her 7th year doing Model UN and she is incredibly excited to be a part of such an amazing committee for her final year in BMUN! During her downtime, she loves to go running, visit history museums, explore new cities across the Bay in search of the best pasta, and is an avid Formula 1 fan. She can't wait to meet you all and is looking forward to seeing the direction the committee takes with this incredibly exigent matter!

Once again, please don't hesitate to reach out to us via email at myanmarbmun72@bmun.org with any questions about the topic or committee session. Best of luck, and we're excited to see you at BMUN 72!

Best,



Eric Ho

Head Chair of the Myanmar Spring Revolution

Email: eho@bmun.org



MYANMAR SPRING REVOLUTION

TOPIC BACKGROUND

The Union of Myanmar, established first as the Union of Burma in 1948, is marked by ethnic diversity, authoritarian regimes, political strife, military control, and opportunistic use from foreign parties. Understanding the history and context which set the stage for its events throughout the 20th and 21st century is important, and should be noted to get the complete picture and weight of issues which have plagued the nation.

Myanmar's History with Military Rule (1948-2011)

Colonial Rule in Burma

Before the 19th century, the region of Burma consisted of kingdoms and principalities ruled by different ethnic groups and territories. The region had historically been multicultural and ethnically diverse, consisting of multiple co-existing kingdoms. Although conflict regularly occurred amongst kingdoms, the diversity of governing entities contributed to an overtone of stability. This state of equilibrium would undergo a significant shift with the encroachment of the British Empire.

The British, who had been involved in the region since the 1600s through the British East Indian Company, looked towards Myanmar as an important acquisition for its growing empire. Namely, they

sought to supply its markets with more natural resources and instate the area as a barrier of defense for its crown jewel, India. For most of the 19th century, the British made attempts to take over Burma, finally colonizing the region in 1886. Burma remained a vassal state until 1937, when it was fully annexed and integrated into the British Empire.



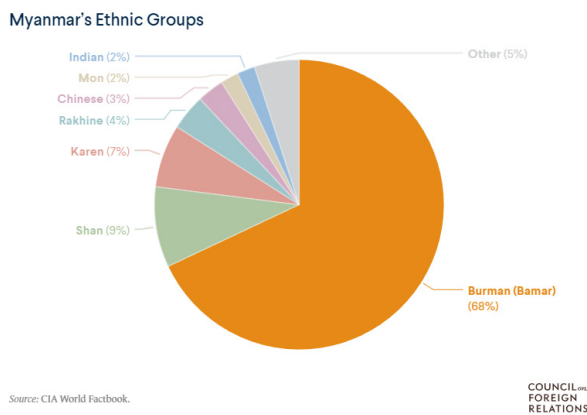
The British's occupation of Burma resulted in drastic regional changes, from the government to ways of life. The kingdoms that existed before were consolidated into two bureaucratic systems: Burma Proper and Ministerial Burma. In addition to the consolidation, free market capitalism became the new backbone of the economy, and many social/cultural ideas were imposed on the Burmese people. These changes

resulted in benefits ranging from technological advancement and infrastructural improvements; however, these improvements came at the expense of the Burmese people. The consolidation and separation of peoples throughout the region, in the form of Burma Proper and Ministerial Burma, resulted in ethnic divides and conflict that led to brutal oppression under the military-controlled government. People were placed into work camps, driven to starvation, or even killed in the colony control of Burma. Colonial rule would scar the region economically through intensive resource extraction and politically through the establishment of racial hierarchies. The brutal methods and practices of extracting natural resources and separating peoples by the British would go on until Burma's independence in 1948.

Burma's Independence

Amidst the Second World War, temporary Japanese occupation, and declining British power, Burma was in a position to push for independence. The Burma Independence Army (BIA) fought alongside the Japanese and resisted British control in Burma. The region's loyalties were split, with various ethnic groups ranging from Indian minorities to Khmer minorities backed by the British and Allies and the Burmese people backed by the BIA and Japanese. These ethnic divides would greatly contribute to the hostility between Burma's army and ethnic opposition groups in the country. As the Second World War ended, the BIA switched sides to the Allies, and its leader, General Aung San, negotiated independence with the British. General Aung San succeeded in 1947 when the Aung San-Attlee Agreement was signed, which promised Burma independence in a year, and the two administration zones unified into one Burma.

While General Aung San and the BIA¹ accomplished liberation, there were still many things left to be desired for the new state of Burma. The new 1947 constitution, while promising various ethnic groups protection from Burmese dominance, contained many loopholes on these issues. These loopholes consisted of policies that blocked minority ethnic groups from government and reduced local ethnic minority leader influence. On top of the failures in the constitution, General Aung San and eight cabinet members were assassinated in 1947 by a contingent of politicians who opposed him, which resulted in a drastic strain on the stability of the union, and with the quick exit of the British, Burma's democracy was under much strain. These issues resulted in intense political violence and ethnic conflict surrounding the new parliamentary democracy in Burma.



Military Coup 1962

Increased ethnic and religious tensions in Burma led to an opening for General Ne Win, leader of the nation's military, also known as the Tatmadaw. He seized power in 1962 with a military coup that transformed Burma into a one-party state. Under General Ne Win's leadership, the ruling Burma Socialist

Programme Party (BSPP) became the sole control of legislative power in the country. General Ne Win led the BSPP on a harsh counterinsurgency campaign, abandoning the Burmese constitution's founding ideals of diversity. The Burmese military severely cracked down on the country's ethnic groups under the BSPP, resulting in large amounts of violence. The ethnic-Burmese controlled government would go on to persecute the Shan, Kayin, Chinese, and many more smaller ethnic groups while in power. The BSPP promoted tactics that violated human rights and impoverished Burma by tanking the economy. Military rule was absolute under the BSPP, and any resistance could result in severe punishment.

For the next 12 years, Burma was ruled by martial law and experienced a massive reduction in rights. The facade of a nonmilitary government was put forward, with General Ne Win becoming a self-appointed president. However, he still retained the same power as when he was the country's military leader. Popular unrest was rampant throughout Burma, and multiple student protests erupted in the 60s and 70s, challenging the government's military rule, but all of the protests were brutally put down. In 1974, the National Democratic Front (NDF) came to challenge the military and its power. The NDF is composed of large minority ethnic groups in Burma such as the Kachin, Chin, Shan, Lahu. In opposition to the various ethnic resistance movements, in 1984, the military launched offensives in various ethnic group regions that resulted in the mass exodus of people into neighboring countries such as Thailand. This refugee crisis marked the beginning of a continuous flow of refugees out of Burma into neighboring countries under BSPP rule. Into the 1980s, the BSPP would continue to struggle with currency failure and

¹ The BIA and military would eventually become known as the "Tatmadaw", and following the 2021 coup, the "junta". Both terms will be used throughout this paper and should be thought of as interchangeable. See the glossary for more details.

drastically decreasing standards of living and development.

Military Coup 1988

With the continuous disaster in Burma, General Ne Win stepped down in 1988 and was replaced by a civilian lawyer, Dr. Maung Maung. In the same year, public protest failed to be eradicated, and a new coup occurred by the military, establishing a new dictatorship. The new dictatorship was called the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). It promised to restore order and stability after the BSPP failed; however, it was a facade for establishing a new military government. In protest, students rebelled against the new dictatorship and formed the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF). The ABSDF became the new resistance against the authoritarian SLORC dictatorship.

In the same year, 1988, an icon of resistance came to the forefront of the opposition against the dictatorship. Daw Aung San Suu, the daughter of Aung San, became a major outlet for resistance against the SLORC. She quickly became a national icon for opposition against the dictatorship, founding the National League for Democracy (NLD), which became the central opposition party. Her popularity was so significant that she held rallies with 500,000 attendees and began to gain traction for the elections; however, the SLORC put her under house arrest to stop her from running for office. The SLORC did not just stop at her, but also attacked the NLD. After the NLD won the majority of the seats in the government in 1988, the SLORC threw out the results and persecuted over a hundred NLD representatives. While the resistance was strong, so was military power in Burma.

The Union of Myanmar

In 1989, SLORC changed Burma's name to Myanmar to promote unity; however, Myanmar experienced its worst political violence from 1989–1992. During this time, multiple ethnic groups challenged and attacked the government, on top of religious conflict in the country. The Myanmar government attempted multiple ceasefires with ethnic groups in the 90s to reduce violence and conflict. Still, it only delayed the inevitable, leading to breakdowns in ceasefires and more refugees fleeing the country.

The Myanmar government, reeling from the previous years of intense political violence in the early 90s, rebranded itself again and switched the party's name to the State Peace and Development Committee (SPDC). While the name was more suitable for the international community, Myanmar was still a serious concern for human rights advocates. An International Labor Organization (ILO) investigation in 1997 found that forced labor was extensive in Myanmar. On top of that, the military government continued persecuting students who opposed the government and massacred multiple NLD supporters and citizens in an event known as the Depayin Massacre. While on paper, there was a new political party in charge, the same military government from the 1988 coup still had total control over Myanmar.

The 2000s marked a new millennium but continued conflict in Myanmar. The SPDC, still in control, started off the 2000s by relocating the capital to Naypyidaw and continuing to crack down on any resistance in the country. In 2007 the large-scale Saffron Revolution broke out, which consisted of thousands of monks protesting the military government. The protest responded to another Myanmar economic depression and rising fuel prices. Similar to

the crackdowns on NLD supporters in the 90s, the military regime went on a swift but brutal process of jailing or killing as many people as possible who were part of the Saffron Revolution.

The Saffron Revolution was the beginning of a series of problems for the military government. In May 2008, Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar, causing massive casualties, damage to infrastructure, and destruction of hundreds of communities. The government failed to respond properly and blocked off any foreign aid, which resulted in further casualties. The failed response to Cyclone Nargis resulted in the government putting forward a referendum for a new constitution and roadmap for democracy for the country. The votes were 92% in favor of this new referendum; however, people did not have much choice, as the military intimidated people into voting for the referendum. The new 2008 constitution had many flaws similar to that of Myanmar's 1948 constitution. The constitution granted the military regime permanent seats in the parliament. It also restricted any civilian involvement with military affairs, which gave the military regime total power over the facade of a new democracy. While Myanmar seems to have fallen into the cycle of military regime power again, the 2008 constitution, while unfair, showed the efforts of people's protest and resistance and planted seeds of democracy.

Sparks of a Democracy (2011-2020)

By the tail end of 2010, a democratic transition began to take root that would come to turn the tide in Myanmar. After nearly five decades of military rule, the nation held a landmark general election, which heralded the establishment of a new military-backed civilian government and signaled a foray into democratic reform. However, this milestone

development was not without major controversies, namely suspicions of fraud and election manipulation on the part of the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). As the dominant player in the nation's electoral landscape, the USDP took advantage of state resources, media oversight, and restriction of opposition to force results in their favor. Unsurprisingly, the USDP secured a definitive majority, led by newly elected president and former military general Thein Sein. Despite international skepticism regarding its legitimacy, Myanmar's November election laid the groundwork for significant steps towards democratic transition.

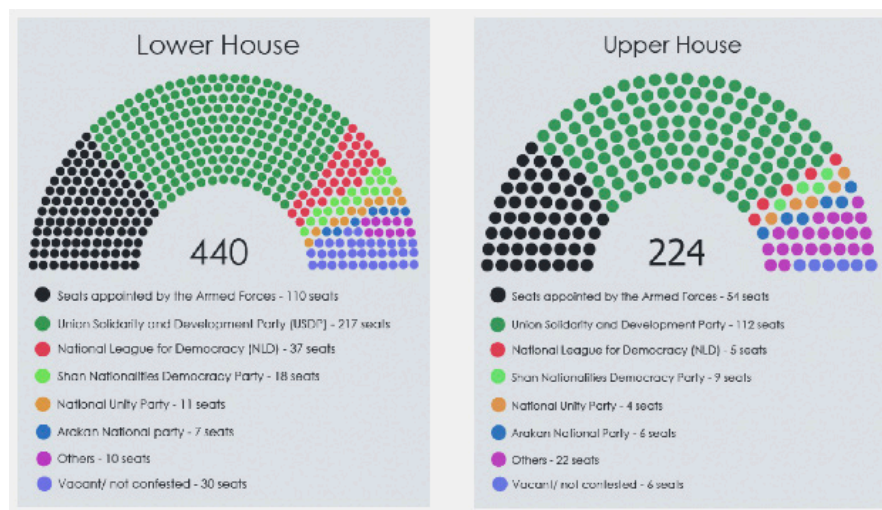


One of the crucial developments that followed Myanmar's 2010 election was the release of political prisoners and the loosening of media censorship. Beginning in 2011, President Sein announced a series of amnesties and pardons that would lead to the release of thousands of detainees, including prominent opposition leaders such as Aung San Suu Kyi. Suu Kyi, who had been under house arrest since 1989, was granted restored internet access as well as opportunities for the NLD to engage in dialogue with the sitting government. Prominent barriers to free press, such as pre-publication censorship and a long-standing ban on private media outlets, were gradually dismantled under President Sein's plan for democratization. As a result, Myanmar witnessed the emergence of new private media outlets, as well as an expansion

of freedom in both domestic and foreign journalism. Internet and social media access also saw a significant increase during this time, which extended the scope of free expression and dissemination of information. Although certain limitations remained, such as existing laws used to suppress criticism of the government, these reforms demonstrated a baseline commitment from the new regime to proliferating political and expressive freedom. Moreover, the culmination of these changes provided a platform for opposition voices to engage in Myanmar's political discourse and pose a credible threat to military dominance.

In early 2012, Myanmar held by-elections to fill 45 vacant seats in the parliament and regional assemblies of the national government. Notably, this was the first election since the re-registration of the NLD in

2011, as well as the first instance of NLD political participation since their landslide victory in the 1990 general elections which was discredited by the military government. The NLD decided to field 44 out of the 45 vacant seats, and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi herself ran for a parliamentary seat after her release from house arrest. Under the supervision of the Union Electoral Commission (UEC) and international monitors, the NLD achieved a remarkable victory, winning 43 out of the 45 contested seats. The by-elections, which were widely regarded as a test of the government's resolve towards a true democratic transition, were seen both internationally and domestically as evidence of positive progressions towards reform. It also marked the return of the NLD to the nation's political scene, which would pave the road for their future successes in general elections.



Results of the 2012 by-elections

Developments in Myanmar did not go unnoticed by the international community, and likewise, the nation took strides to emerge from decades of relative isolation and advance foreign relations. Regionally, Myanmar escalated their participation in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), even chairing the organization in 2014. This opportunity

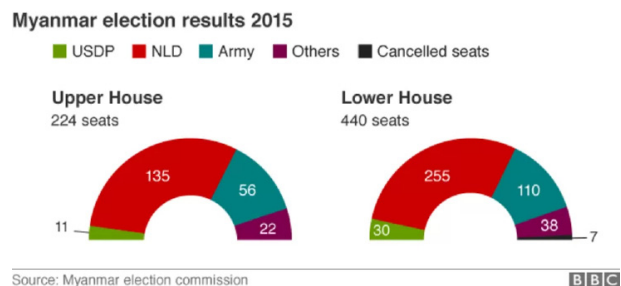
allowed for the forging of closer regional ties, an engagement in multilateral cooperative efforts, and a further legitimization of their burgeoning democracy. In the same vein, the United States and European Union (EU) agreed to ease previously instated sanctions on Myanmar after the 2012 by-elections, and by 2013 the EU had completely lifted all sanctions

on the country with the exception of arms sales. Particularly, the country's relationship with the United States improved, with President Barack Obama conducting a historical US presidential visit to the nation in 2012. Myanmar continued to maintain close rapport with China, which had been a long-standing ally especially amid decades of Western sanctions. However, democratic advancements bolstering free public expression had intensified voices opposing Chinese economic projects in Myanmar. In general, Myanmar's efforts to further its international engagement and attract foreign investment was seen as a significant step towards democratic reform. Diplomatic collaboration, assistance with peacebuilding, and economic development are only a few of the vast benefits the nation was able to achieve through its increased involvement on the global stage.



Fault lines began to form in Myanmar's relatively steady democratic growth when, after decades of suppression, the NLD was able to secure a landslide victory in the nation's 2015 general elections. While a parliamentary vote taken that same year guaranteed the military veto power against constitutional reforms, the NLD's newly established grip on governmental power posed an undeniable threat to the military's historical dominance over the government. The years leading up to the 2020 election were a delicate balancing act marred with complexity, especially when it came to the pressing issue of internal ethnic conflict. While President Sein's administration had

taken marginal steps towards peace, such as forming truces and ceasefires with rebels from the Shan and Karen ethnic groups, violence began to flare in Rakhine state, leading to speculations of government complicity in ethnic cleansing against the Rakhine Muslims (also known as the Rohingya). Issues came to a head in 2016 after attacks on police outposts by a Rohingya insurgent group known as Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) led to a military crackdown that triggered the mass exodus of refugees into neighboring countries. The resulting humanitarian crisis garnered international attention, with allegations of human rights abuses and forceful displacement marring the waters of Myanmar's path towards an inclusive democracy. Efforts by the government to implement socio-economic reforms and improve welfare were hindered by bureaucratic corruption, limited capacity, and the COVID-19 pandemic, all of which exposed the nation's vulnerabilities in adapting to the growing demands of the population. Furthermore, despite the NLD's electoral victory, the military maintained a stronghold on politics, straining attempts to further democratic reform. The fragility of Myanmar's transition was fully exposed in 2021, when a shocking turn of events led to a military coup against the NLD government.



Motivations to Coup and Key Events

In 2015, the National League for Democracy (NLD) won the election by a significant margin and contin-

ued that momentum by gathering another massive win in the 2020 election against the USDP. In response, in 2021, the Tatmadaw alleged that the basis of the NLD victories was rooted in voter fraud. The junta utilized this as grounds to launch a coup, which went on to involve NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi being charged for crimes such as corruption and the arrest of other key NLD leaders. This resulted in massive waves of civil unrest, as not only did thousands of civilians refuse to go back to work until elected

officials were back in control, but also local militias, ousted officials, and lawmakers teamed up in protest to form the National Unity Government (NUG). A few months after its creation, the NUG formally declared war against the junta. The People's Defense Forces (PDFs), the armed division of the NUG, worked alongside the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), a large-scale strike organization led by civil servants, to counter and protest against the junta.

CURRENT EFFORTS AND STATE OF THE CONFLICT

The Tatmadaw, in retaliation through their actions, were responsible for the deaths of over 3,000 protestors and carried out unfair trials resulting in executions in order to regain control. Moreover, they began to place harsh restrictions on social media and the internet, at one point banning satellite television receivers. Thus, there was a combination of limiting access to information and communication with the outside world as well as the active suppression of protests and dissidents by the junta. The military continued to press Aung San Suu Kyi with new charges, from corruption to possession of illegal walkie-talkies, culminating in her convictions with a cumulative sentence of about 33 years in jail.

Since the coup occurred, Senior General Min Aung Hliang has been serving as the prime minister. His leadership skirts around a former constitutional amendment that had been voided, which otherwise previously set a mandatory retirement age of 65 for all junta officials. Additionally, the General has promised to hold "fair elections in 2023" (Reuters 2023).

However, as of July 2023, he has backtracked on his plans for elections in August and has decided to extend his and the junta's rule over the nation. Thus, it remains to be seen to what extent the elections, if/when they occur, will be "fair".

Current Efforts and State of the Conflict

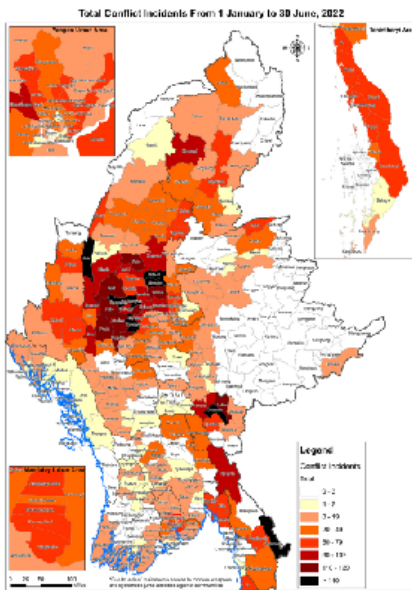
With Senior General Min Aung Hliang's outstanding promise of a "fair" election in 2023 seeming unlikely as the year continues, all signs point to the continuation of this civil war which has been dubbed the "Spring Revolution" by the NUG.

Current Tatmadaw Efforts and Strategy

A large focus of the Spring Revolution has been focused on the armed resistance of the PDFs and Ethnic Armed Organizations (militant coalitions of an ethnic group, also known as EAOs) against the forces of the Tatmadaw. At a glance, the resistance

forces are severely outclassed by the junta group, especially the air forces. The military has used their forces to conduct raids on civilians and protestors, going as far as using lethal force. They have even gone as far as deploying “snipers to kill protesters as a matter of state policy”, causing at least 6,000 civilian deaths in a 20 month period after the coup. These individuals are potentially subject to executions ordered through secret trials or a host of criminal charges. The captured civilians “were subjected to sexual violence, harassment and humiliation, including invasive body searches, as a method of torture during interrogation and detention”, adding to the battery of human rights violations committed by the Tatmadaw.

These crackdowns are a part of the larger “Four Cuts” strategy to cut off armed groups from funding, food, intelligence and recruits with devastating consequences for civilians” rolled out by the Tatmadaw. In doing this, the junta can stall out any opposition and eventually take complete control. Myanmar has been reliant on foreign aid and support for most of its history, and this strategy prevents the NUG from reaching any support networks to aid in the fight against the junta.

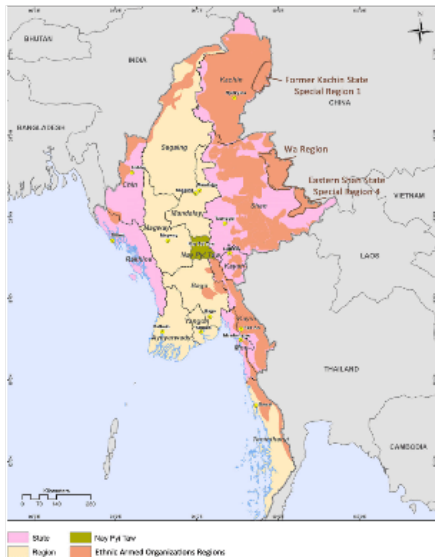


Resistance Efforts and Territorial Control

While the NUG has limited options, especially due to the arrests and charges against key personnel, resistance forces have both been on the defensive and offensive, blocking out invasions and raids from Tatmadaw forces and attacking military outposts respectively. The former has allowed them to retain territory to perform administrative operations and coordinate efforts against the junta. In particular, the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M) reports that the NUG retains effective control of 52% of Myanmar and is contesting the junta for an additional 23% as of September 2022. The PDFs and EAOs present a sufficient challenge to the junta, which can be seen through the junta’s inability to break through and retake the outlying regions of the nation which have successfully defended against air attacks with superior knowledge and command of the terrain. The NUG has demonstrated that they can hold their own against the junta, providing further legitimacy to their claims of governorship of the people.

Many arguments regarding claims of sustainable and effective governorship will likely center around determining “effective control” of territory. According to the briefing published by the SAC-M, effective control can be denoted in three parts: “control of territory and populations, capacity to administer government functions, and a degree of permanency.” The report focuses on the foremost, which at this moment, proves to be the most important factor to consider when considering control. The latter two have been a point of contention throughout this conflict and Myanmar’s history as well with the ineffective military rule and a questionable quasi-democratic government. It stands to reason that a heavy emphasis will be placed on these aspects following the sufficient control of territory and population, lest

Myanmar receive designation as a “failed state” in which legal sovereignty is maintained in the absence of political power, law enforcement, and civility.



Border Control and Trade

While the EAOs and NUG have had success preventing the surrender of their territory to the Tatmadaw, the nation has had to deal with the consequences of such conflict destabilizing trade and increasing organized crime.

This can be seen clearly in the conflicts along the China border in the Kachin state. As seen in the figure above, the Kachin state is one of the largest states in the nation, and with its proximity to China, is extremely important geopolitically to the nation. EAOs known as the Ta’ang National Liberation Army, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, and the Kachin Independence Army reside in the region and have successfully repelled the military’s efforts to gain territorial control, but harmed trade routes, particularly in the Shan State, by bombing convoys. When considering the importance of trade for the underdeveloped and poverty-stricken nation

of Myanmar, these complications, combined with the harm of COVID-19, present a larger economic challenge for the nation.

The instability of the nation has attracted further unwanted attention, namely from organized crime. Myanmar has had a history of organized crime, with the Global Organized Crime Index rating them number one in the “Criminality Score” in all nations in Asia. Many forms of organized crime, particularly human trafficking, are present in the country. Triad networks, both foreign and domestic, use Myanmar as a source nation for illegal labor or sexual activities. In light of recent events, reports indicate that “drug trafficking of methamphetamine and opium has doubled in the past year.” In addition, money laundering operations through cryptocurrencies and Ponzi schemes have also increased, further crippling an already crime-ridden nation.

Reformation of National League for Democracy (NLD) into National Unity Government (NUG)

While the National League for Democracy (NLD) represented a significant change towards democracy and freedom with its landslide victory in the 2015 election, the Tatmadaw sought and is seeking to punish those who they deem are opposed to their rule. As of 2022, the Tatmadaw has arrested or detained more than three-quarters of NLD officials, including former State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and former President Win Myint. Although the junta posits that they have “no intention of dissolving the party ahead of a planned general election in 2023,” NLD officials strongly believe that they are seeking to undermine the party, either by dissolving it or rigging any election.

With this stark reduction in power and the need for a unified defense force against the Tatmadaw, a “shadow” government (a private group of officials with power and agency in politics) formed known as the National Unity Government (NUG) under NUG Acting President Duwa Lashi La. Describing themselves as an interim government while also stating they are “the only ... legitimate Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar ... with the authority bestowed by the People’s mandate of the all parties’ democratic [sic] election held in 2020,” (NUG) the NUG’s stated goals are to create a space open to collaboration between “partner political parties, ethnic armed revolutionary organizations and civil society organizations” and the “eradication of dictatorship, abolishment of 2008 Constitution and building of Federal Democracy Union.” The broad-reaching partnership between the NUG and interested parties is referred to as the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC).

The NUG posits that recognition from the public, media, and countries alike is an important component to combating the Tatmadaw’s control of the country. The United Nations has taken the side of the NUG, backing them and encouraging other member states to delegitimize the Tatmadaw by recognizing the NUG (see section B for more information). However, it is still referred to as a shadow government by news agencies such as Bloomberg or the South China Morning Post.

Cooperation between ethnic organizations and groups has long been a challenge for Myanmar, and despite the movement towards democracy in recent years, the Tatmadaw’s influence on the government and national policy has still been notable. The NUG has been able to work closely with outside organizations, combining the input of the former NLD

leaders with ethnic armed organizations and civilian groups. The nexus of these groups allows for a sufficient militant force against the Tatmadaw which can be mobilized to any territory within the NUG’s “control.” This has been achieved with a balance where “NUG-loyal local administrations govern in the center and allied ethnic resistance organizations control their traditional territories in the border areas through their own often decades-old structures. ... the nucleus of the future federal structure of Myanmar.” In this form, the NUG and ethnic organizations have effectively taken a step against the Tatmadaw and in the direction of peaceful coexistence and codependence.

The NUG has also allowed for the strong organization of the People’s Defense Forces (PDFs) and Campaign for Civil Disobedience (CDM), the former of which works in conjunction with known ethnic armed organizations (EAOs). Militarily, these forces can control territory and push back against the Tatmadaw and their raids. In aerial combat, the EAOs’ control of “hilly and heavily-forested border states” has prevented the Tatmadaw from using their superior air forces to kill and seize border states. Despite this effort, however, the NUG’s military capabilities pale in comparison to that of Tatmadaw, and thus, a military victory is highly unlikely.

Militant organization is not the only collaboration to come from the NUG. Strikes and protests have erupted to raise awareness and cripple the economy of the junta controlled regions of the nation. Services including “in-person and distance education, in-person and mobile healthcare, electricity, and humanitarian assistance for displaced communities,” alongside education, have continued to be provided in regions under the NUG’s effective control, representing both the capacity for positive, healthy coop-

eration between government and ethnic groups, and the responsiveness of an NUG-led state.

Economic Impact

It is impossible to deny the economic and humanitarian impact that the coup has had. For a poorer nation such as Myanmar, the coup only exacerbated existing problems facing the government, such as responsiveness to domestic issues, inclusion of all peoples, and a lack of unity that impacted policy and decision making.

On the economic side, Myanmar is largely reliant on an agricultural economy with some trade influence with neighboring countries and the United States. Movement to a market economy coincided with the push for a more democratic government which doubled the GDP from 2011-2020. Other notable wins include poverty being almost halved to 25% over 2005 to 2017. With regards to electricity and internet penetration, Myanmar has 72.37% and 44% penetration respectively.

Outside of agriculture, Myanmar is home to many minerals, metals, petroleum, natural gas, and precious stones. These sources have not been harvested much, as mining is a small fraction of the national GDP. These deposits have great future value, and thus, the status of Myanmar and its economy are of great interest both domestically and internationally.

Following the coup, the economy was impacted heavily. Poverty rose to close to 40%, and by the end of 2023, the GDP is expected to be 19% lower than pre-coup metrics. Economic downturn was also exacerbated by the pandemic and its lasting impacts, and the nation is currently struggling with inflation on the kyat, the national currency. Trade has decreased

as a result of the conflicts, and nations such as the United States have placed sanctions on Myanmar in response to the military rule.

Rohingya

The Rohingya people are a Muslim ethnic minority from the Rakhine state. Having been denied citizenship and recognition as an official ethnic group, they are the largest stateless population.

In World War II, Japan invaded Burma and the British retreated to India. Burmese nationalists welcomed the Japanese occupation but Rohingya were pro-British because of the support they received from Britain during the colonial period. Fighting between Buddhist Burmese and Muslim Rohingya. Japan also repressed the Rohingya for their pro-British position.

When Japan left following World War II, Burma gained independence and did not recognize Rohingya as citizens, causing many of them to join Pakistan. During the Bangladesh Liberation War, many Bengalis sought refuge in Arakan and Burmese government expelled them to Bangladesh and this included many native Rohingya.

This history and the Burmese government's exclusivity of Burman Buddhist nationals has led to the disregard and the denial of many basic rights and protections that others are afforded. This was clearly seen in the Rohingya genocide led by the Tatmadaw in 2017 which forced over 742,000 residents—half of the residents—to seek refuge in Bangladesh. The Tatmadaw claimed that their actions were necessary in response to coordinated attacks on Myanmar security forces from Rohingya extremists.

This crisis represents the larger failures of inclu-

sion and human rights atrocities committed by the military, many of which are still taking place amidst the coup. These issues have garnered international

attention and have been considered when discussing the formation of the NUG.

INTERNATIONAL ACTION AND RESPONSE

It is impossible to discuss Myanmar's Spring Revolution, living conditions in the nation, and its history with military rule and democracy without considering the impact of international affairs. It is clear how their negative and divisive experiences with British colonial rule impacted the following decades of military rule, namely in a hostile environment and strong tendency towards regionalism. Since their movement towards independence, democratic international powers, particularly Western ones, have provided aid and support, both economic and political, in Myanmar, and while humanitarian aid has always been needed in the nation, the number of people needing assistance has risen to almost a third of the population since the start of the war. In 2023 alone, the European Union has committed around EUR 25 million of aid alone, and the United States has committed an additional USD 50 million.

Taking a look at Myanmar's neighbors, the relations and impact from China, India, and Bangladesh cannot go unnoticed. China is Myanmar's number one trade partner comprising nearly a third (USD 6.86 billion) of their total exports annually. While trade has been disrupted as a result of the coup, it has not stopped as it has with the United States. In terms of geopolitical importance, China and the Communist Party seek to expand their sphere of influence as much as possible, building relations with nations

such as Myanmar which would disrupt Western influence as well.

Outside of formalized political and economic relations with their neighbors, the ethnic conflicts plaguing the nation, and the military's harsh response to them all, has prompted the exodus of these groups into Myanmar's neighboring countries over the years. The most notable of these examples is the Rohingya people who, under great persecution and human rights violations committed by the Tatmadaw, have populated the "world's largest and most densely populated refugee camp in southern Bangladesh". The impact of decisions made by political and military leaders on ethnic minorities cannot be ignored, especially with regards to the international impact it has with relations and refuge in other nations.

The strife in Myanmar represents a microcosm of the ongoing conflict between Western powers, especially the United States, and Eastern powers in China and Russia. These nations are engaged in a deeply political, economic, and ideological conflict steeped in tactical movements to undermine the opposition without direct attack. For the United States, a China-backed and controlled Myanmar represents the worst possible scenario, allowing them to expand the influences of the Chinese Communist Party, its ideology, and economic systems to rival that of the

United States. As such, actions taken on behalf of the United States in conjunction with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) aptly reflects this feeling, and the United States and other Western nations have a vested interest, outside of solely aiding people in need, to support the NUG.

On the other hand, China and Russia's support for the junta falls much more in line with their top-down perspective on governing a nation, and for the former, the junta is much more likely to be receptive to Chinese trade initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative by the mere fact that democratic governments are less susceptible to control.

Thus, it suffices to say that while Myanmar is locked in a war of their own, they are also the battleground of a continuing geopolitical and ideological standoff between the United States and China.

United States

The United States has long held peaceful relations with Myanmar hoping that the nation, after its independence, would blossom into a prosperous, democratic nation. This sentiment was and is supported by the United States' persistent fight against communism or any influences viewed negatively post World War II, coinciding from the start with Myanmar's independence from the British. Alongside the United States' moral obligation to provide aid to those in need in the nation, diplomatic relationships have always been maintained in hopes of providing a democratic counterpoint to any potential communist risings in the East.

Myanmar's foreign relations following their independence were very troubled. As a newly independent nation in a swiftly changing world, Myanmar was

steadfast in staying independent and eventually adopted a tendency towards isolation. Despite their best wishes, however, they were thrust into international affairs when Chinese Nationalist forces, or the Kuomintang (KMT) party, fled to Burma in 1950. The KMT was the ruling party in China until they lost the control of the government to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and were ousted from the mainland. The survival of the KMT served, and still serves, the greater interest of the United States in the larger fight against communism, and thus, they provided weapons and supplies through surrounding nations like Thailand. In due time, however, their unwelcomed stay had run its course as their stay in Upper Burma, in the words of the ambassador at the time, has become "an adverse factor in United States-Burmese relations which tends to undermine and lessen the favorable impact of United States policies and programs in Burma" (Sebald). Seeking to keep positive relations with all involved parties, the United States pressured the KMT to relocate and helped them move to Taiwan. Half of the KMT was moved, with lengthy negotiations taking place throughout the Kennedy administration to force Chiang Kai-shek to move the remainder of the KMT troops over. Over the next years, Burma and the United States stayed cordial, and the United States began to provide economic aid in 1957. They also looked to secure a military alliance in backing of their economic support and as a means to stave off any communist influences from the CCP.

In 1958, Burma's Union Party led by U Nu split, with nearly half of the party leaning towards communism. This schism and subsequent coup sparked a series of events which allowed General Ne Win, a man opposed to communism, to lead the country on the path of socialism. He voiced to the United States quite passionately that "the Chinese Communist

Party hated him and his government” (Clymer). As the Cold War continued to unfold, the United States maintained very supportive relations, prioritizing the greater impact of Myanmar within the Cold War. They provided military support to the nation and financially committed to building a highway from Mandalay to Rangoon, something the U.S. and Ne Win viewed as a demonstration against the CCP (Clymer).

Ne Win became the first Burmese head of state to visit the U.S. and President John F. Kennedy in 1962. The United States sought to better relations with them, and while the government did not “goof badly” (words used by Ambassador Henry Byroade debriefing Ne Win’s visit to the President and Secretary of State) Ne Win and his family faced the court of public opinion in the form of racial slurs and poor treatment, drastically diminishing his opinion of the United States to a hatred of anything associated with America. Some accounts reported that Ne Win even refused to eat American corn, and he began considering isolating Burma from Western powers entirely. (Clymer).

With this new outlook and power as the head of state, Ne Win removed the Asian Ford Foundation and Fullbright Program (efforts to bolster foreign relations by creating partnerships with academic institutions, both domestic and foreign) from the nation and discouraged tourism, trade, and other relationships with the United States. Notably, he canceled the Mandalay-Rangoon highway in 1964 after many disputes over funding and plans. It would later be built and is maintained to this day.

During the Cold War, the United States’ work in Myanmar was representative of their ultimate goal of anti-communism. As the war progressed, General Ne

Win furthered the implementation of his isolationist foreign policy to prevent Myanmar from being influenced by any outside powers. The U.S. still felt (and feels) obligated to help the people of Myanmar, and they began sending aid through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in 1966 following the coup to aid in farming and the production of agriculture and health. The USAID mission eventually closed in 1989 during another crackdown by the government, but aid continued in surrounding regions such as Thailand and Bangladesh. USAID also provided aid to Myanmar after natural disasters such as Cyclone Nargis in 2008.

In more political terms, the U.S. had a unique stance regarding the decision to rename the nation from the Republic of Burma to Republic of Myanmar. In particular, the United States did not recognize the name change and continues to use Burma on all official documents. This sentiment for the old ways represents a way to subtly undermine General Ne Win and his government’s decision to try and re-brand themselves as Myanmar while making little to no internal or ideological changes. While he posited that this name change would seek to make a more inclusive country for its many minorities, all of the atrocities and human rights violations committed continued to occur. While this policy did fluctuate slightly during the Obama administration as Myanmar appeared to make strides towards greater democracy, the current administration refers to the nation as “Burma”.

The input and opinion of the world superpower’s holds great value for many, domestically and internationally. While the U.S. has not been as vocal as some other nations regarding support for the NUG or condemnation of the Tatmadaw, it has had an unwavering position in favor of a peaceful, prosperous

Myanmar under democratic rule. The current coup, civil war, and military rule are in direct violation of this outlook, and as a result, the political, humanitarian, and economic crisis formed in its wake is of great concern to the United States. Economic sanctions have been levied on the Tatmadaw, and steps have also been taken to legitimize the NUG in the eyes of the U.S.. In addition, Myanmar nationals in the U.S. at the time of the coup have been granted temporary protected status to remain in the country. The United States firmly believes in the right to free and fair elections for Myanmar to progress as a nation and believes that those cannot exist under military rule.

All things considered, the United States is working with other nations, the United Nations, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to achieve the envisioned “peaceful, prosperous, and democratic Burma that respects the human rights of all its people.”

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

Myanmar’s application to become a member of ASEAN was met with considerable opposition from member states such as Thailand and the Philippines. The concerns did not stem from the lack of democracy in Myanmar, but instead, concerns about human rights violations in Myanmar. Even with these concerns, Myanmar was admitted into ASEAN in 1997 on the grounds of its strategic importance in the region. Member states felt it was better to have Myanmar in the Association to bolster stability in the region, despite the United Nations, United States, and EU protesting the decision.

ASEAN has struggled to work with Myanmar throughout its roughly two decades of membership.

ASEAN has multiple authoritarian regimes in its membership; however, Myanmar has presented itself as an authoritarian regime with a multitude of problems. The Depayin Massacre in 2003 was the first significant struggle, caused global outrage and threats of sanctions from the United States and EU. However, ASEAN, unwilling to denounce Myanmar, attempted to mediate the situation and silently denounced the military’s actions. The Saffron Uprising two years later resulted in the same response from ASEAN. Due to Myanmar’s strategic importance as a member of ASEAN and ASEAN’s lack of understanding of Myanmar’s volatile military control, the association was not capable of real action against political and human rights crises in the nation.

The rise of democracy in Myanmar showed promise for increased cooperation with ASEAN; however, this stability and cooperation would be short lived. 2021 would mark the end of democratic policies in Myanmar and instead the revival of the military regime. After the coup in 2021, ASEAN did not follow the international community’s response of opposing the new regime, but instead tried to find a more moderate solution. ASEAN requested a meeting with the new military leader, Min Aung Hlaing, where the Five-Point Consensus was established. This document outlined ASEAN’S requests for the new government in Myanmar in the form of “an immediate end to violence in the country; dialogue among all parties; the appointment of a special envoy; humanitarian assistance by ASEAN; and the special envoy’s visit to Myanmar to meet with all parties” (Human Rights Watch). However, to date, the military regime has completely ignored the Five-Point Consensus, and ASEAN has failed to enforce it or attempt to deal with the rampant humanitarian violations in Myanmar. ASEAN is in a difficult situation where infighting and lack of unity has led to a lack of substantive solutions in dealing with the crisis in Myanmar. If

ASEAN is going to have any influence in Myanmar, it will need to be unified in its effort.

China

As bordering nations, Myanmar and China share a history enriched by centuries of cultural exchange and ethnic ties. Thus, diplomatic relations between the two nations are rooted in a level of familiarity that is crucial to their bilateral dynamic. In many respects, the exceptionality of their relationship can be traced back to the late 1940s when Myanmar first gained independence at around the same time the Chinese Communist Party established the People's Republic of China (PRC). During this period, Myanmar became the first non-socialist nation to recognize the PRC, the first to resolve its boundary dispute with China, as well as the first to sign a Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Non-Aggression between the nations. China thus considered its relationship with Myanmar to be a stellar model for approaching peaceful coexistence with other neighboring states.



Despite the remarkably amicable tone of their diplomacy, archival government documents reveal that apprehensions about Cold War loyalties ran deep in both countries. After a coup led by military general Ne Win resulted in a massive political upheaval during the 60s, China was quick to recognize the

new government and maintain stable relations. However, Beijing soon expressed frustration that Myanmar had not officially aligned itself against the U.S. in the Vietnam War, and that they were beginning to seek closer ties with the international community to the detriment of Chinese dominance in the nation. Following these developments, China began to instigate elements of the Cultural Revolution in Myanmar and supplied arms to the Burma Communist Party against the interests of the established military government. Tensions came to a head in 1967 when a massive anti-Chinese riot broke out in the city of Yangon over Chinese national students living in Myanmar who had refused to adhere to the government's ban on wearing Mao badges in school. During the years that followed, travel was restricted between the two nations and communication between the governments stalled.

Relations did not begin to repair until 1970, when criticisms on both sides had calmed and General Ne Win, at the invitation of Premier Zhou Enlai, made his first informal visit to China since the incident. In the subsequent decades, the alliance between the two states has been characterized by a robust economic partnership, especially amidst Western sanctions. China's sustained position as Myanmar's largest trading partner and a major investor is heavily spurred by a strategic aim—gaining access to the Indian Ocean through the nation's coastline. Oil and gas pipelines running from the Bay of Bengal to China are crucial to limiting China's dependence on supplies from other countries that are vulnerable to Western naval blockades. Furthermore, Myanmar is rich in rare earth metals that are often critical components of manufactured technology in China, from smartphones to missiles. The potential value from a strong economic relationship with Myanmar has culminated in a major push from China for Myanmar

United Nations

The main resolution that the United Nations put forth in terms of their response to the Myanmar coup and conflict is UNSC Resolution 2669 at the end of 2022. This resolution called for a deescalation of the conflict and an end to all of the violence. This included a direct call for the release of all prisoners, which notably included President Win Myint and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi. Other significant portions of the resolution outlined the importance of upholding human rights, freedom, and the will and interests of the people of Myanmar. The stance was that ASEAN should implement the aforementioned Five-Point Consensus in order to foster peaceful dialogue between all parties involved and also ensure that there would be unobstructed ability for humanitarian assistance and aid to reach people in Myanmar in need.

Notably, this resolution also highlighted that the recent developments and drastic shifts within Myanmar posed a great threat to the Rohingya refugees in terms of their “voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return” (Resolution 2669). The language within the resolution remains as vague, with no specific sugges-

tions or actionable items as to how to attain that. Thus, it is important to understand the influence of these resolutions in terms of geopolitical influence but also their limitations in terms of specificity and actionable task items.

In regards to additional action taken to address the Rohingya crisis, in 2017, UNICEF set up an emergency response for the large influx of roughly 700,000 Rohingya in a small area of Bangladesh. UNICEF took the initiative to set up refugee camps and oversee basic hygiene, food, and water protocols and access within the camps as well as managing educational access. The main issues that these camps presented was overcrowding, leading to issues regarding lack of space as well as the complicated inter-agency coordination within the camps. As of 2023, this emergency response is still in place, with greater emphasis being put on promoting education within the camps.

Ultimately, as you progress through this topic guide and begin developing your understanding of the issue at hand, critically analyze the language and degree of effectiveness of such resolutions and plans put forth by the United Nations.

CHARACTER LIST



Duwa Lashi La - Acting President

Acting President Duwa Lashi La is a Kachin politician and lawyer from the Shan State. He has a background as a teacher until he studied law at Rangoon University and transitioned to working as a prosecutor. He worked in law for 16 years before retiring in 1994, where he began to work in and with organizations and INGOs to better life in Burmese communities. He was appointed Vice-President of the NUG on April 16, 2021.

Duwa Lashi is credited with a central role in the anti-coup resistance movement, announcing “the launching of a ‘revolt against the rule of the military terrorists led by Min Aung Hlaing in every corner of this country.’” He is a strong supporter of democracy and directly opposes all actions of the Tatmadaw as they stand, stating the will of the people as the ultimate legitimacy of rule. Furthermore, he understands and wishes to integrate ethnic minorities into the government and create more unity between them.



Mahn Winn Khaing Thann - Prime Minister

Prime Minister Mahn Win Khaing Than is a Burmese lawyer and politician who has spoken out very strongly against the Tatmadaw. From statements, social media posts, and interviews, he has denounced the crimes of the junta and stated that freedom and democracy must prevail. Following the arrest of many NLD officials at the start of the coup, he was appointed as the acting leader and is a core founder of the NUG.



Yee Mon - Union Minister of Defense

Union Minister of Defense Yee Mon is a poet and politician who has a history in Myanmar's many uprisings. As a student in 1988, he participated in the 8888 Uprising protesting against the government, actions which caused his removal from the Mandalay University of Medicine. From 1998 to 2005, he was also a political prisoner. Since then, his involvement in the NLD has given him experience in various fields from security, planning, and natural resources and environmental conservation.



Dr. Zaw Wai Soe - Union Minister of Health and Education

Dr. Zaw Wai Soe is an orthopedic surgeon and Professor who was appointed as the Union Minister of Health and Education by the NUG. He is known for developing spine surgery and emergency medicine efforts in Myanmar and led a taskforce reforming medical education in Burmese universities. Through COVID-19, he was the vice chair on the Contain, Control and Treating Coordination Committee. On top of his role in the Ministry of Health, he has experience in numerous ministries, including labor, immigration and population and health.



Tin Tun Naing - Union Minister of Planning, Finance and Investment

Tin Tun Nang is a former businessman born in Natogyi Township. He is a eMBA graduate from the Yangon University of Economics. Drawing on his experience in the private sector, Nang was brought as a representative from the Seikgyi Village in the NLD party before moving to his role as minister in the NUG.



Zin Mar Aung - Union Minister of Foreign Affairs

Zin Mar Aung has a long history in activism and is no stranger to the political spotlight. As a member of the democracy movement, she was imprisoned for 11 years. Upon her release, she founded RAINFALL, a women empowerment organization that looks to the community level to build human-rights training and awareness-building. She is a cofounder of the Yangon School of Political Science, and she is a recipient of the Women of Courage Award in 2012.

She is a strong proponent of democracy and uses her platform to form clubs and groups that promote democracy in Asian nations despite any seeming difference in lifestyles.



Lwin Ko Latt - Union Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration

Lwin Ko Latt has been a long standing political activist since his early college days when he was arrested and in jail for 7 years due to his association with student political movements. He later joined the NLD where by 2017, he had become their Central Communication Committee Officer. From 2016-2021, he was also elected as a Parliamentary Member and founded as well as was the director of the Yangon School of Political Science.

In regards to the conflict, Lwin Ko Latt has claimed that the fight for a new government involves acquiring domestic and global legitimacy. Thus he aims to work with both the armed ethnic groups as well as international organizations to resolve the matter.



Dr. Lian Hmung Sakhong - Union Minister of Federal Union Affairs

Dr. Lian Hmung Sakhong is a political author and has had extensive political experience, holding critical roles such as being Vice-Chairman of the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) under Myanmar's peace process. He was also the General Secretary of United Nationalities League for Democracy (UNLD), which represented an alliance of political interests of different Ethnic nationalities within the nation, and later joined with the NLD. For his work, Dr. Lian Hmung Sakhong was awarded the Martin Luther King Jr. in 2007, given to those who contribute to promoting societal peace and harmony.



Dr. Win Myat Aye - Union Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management

Dr. Win Myat Aye has been a civil servant for 20+ years, serving in a range of positions from being a medical doctor to Professor in his early career. He began his journey in politics after his professional retirement and joined the NLD. In 2016, he was the Union Minister for the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and under his stewardship, the ministry became one of the most successful civilian-run divisions after a large military rule presence. He has experience chairing several important committees, working on matters from social welfare to managing internally displaced persons. He is an active advocate for promoting human rights for all people, including children, women, elderly, and disabled populations.



Aung Myo Min - Union Minister of Human Rights

Aung Myo Min is the Union Minister of Human Rights in the NUG. Before joining the NUG, he was an insurgent in the Karen National Union (KNU) and a prominent student leader in Myanmar's 1988 revolution. He was the first openly gay man in the democratic movement and was exiled from the nation for more than 20 years. During his exile, he continued to promote the rights of marginalized individuals and founded the Human Rights Education Institution Myanmar. After his exile ended, in 2013 he returned to Myanmar and continues to remain an advocate for promoting fundamental human rights, for which he has won many awards and recognitions.



Dr. Tu Hkawng - Union Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation

Dr. Tu Hkawng has served as the Union Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation for the National Unity Government since its founding in April 2021. Early into his university education, he received a degree in botany from Myitkyina Degree College under Mandalay University, after which he earned additional degrees in divinity, rural development management, social sciences, and peace studies. Hkwang was involved in opposition efforts against the 2008 constitution established under the military, conducting youth awareness training that placed him under a special investigation watchlist. He continues to be a staunch advocate for democratization and ethnic state rights.



Dr. Sa Sa - Union Minister of International Cooperation

Prior to the coup, Dr. Sa Sa was lined up to take a position in Suu Kyi's cabinet under the NLD. Now, as Union Minister of International Cooperation, Sa Sa operates as an international envoy for the resistance government pursuing goals of democratization and eradication of military rule. Sa Sa hails from the ethnically persecuted and impoverished Chins State, and pursued medicine early in his career in order to provide better healthcare to his community. Therefore, he is especially concerned with the rights of ethnic minorities and establishing advocating for equality within the nation.



Naw Susanna Hla Hla Soe - Union Minister of Women, Youths and Children Affairs

Naw Susanna Hla Hla Soe is a Karen zoologist and social activist who currently serves as Union Minister of Women, Youths and Children Affairs. She is passionate about amplifying the voices of women in the political sphere and combating the rising issue of human trafficking in Myanmar. Her work also centers on poverty alleviation for ethnic minorities, winning the seat of Karen Ethnic Affairs Minister of Yangon Region during the 2020 general elections before the onset of the coup.



Nai Tun Pe (a) Nai Suwunna - Union Minister of Labour

Nai Tun Pe (a) Nai Suwunna has been the minister since the 2021 coup and has been an agent of the government in regulating dissent in the labor force of Myanmar. Traditionally the minister of labor represented labor in the government and ensured labor rights. While that role is still true the ministry has also focused on building labor support for the government since the military coup in 2021. Nai Tun Pe (a) Nai Suwunna has been pro the government and will most likely further policy in support of the new government.



Thein Oo - Union Minister of Justice

Thein Oo is a businessman in Myanmar's computer industry, President of the Myanmar Computer Federation and also the president of ACE Data Systems. After the 2021 coup he was put in charge of the Minister of Justice. This role has been vital in the change of policies towards ethnic groups in the justice system and the support for persecuting political opponents.



Htin Lin Aung - Union Minister of Communications, Information & Technology

Htin Lin Aung currently serves as the Union Minister of Communications, Information & Technology, using his technical background to improve and expand technical access and training in Myanmar to digitize the nation securely. Using his background in Computer Network and Security from the University of Maryland, he hopes to combat the Tatamadaw and their tactics using technology and limiting communication by democratizing information, allowing for the freedom of the press, and expanding the flow of information and communication.



Soe Thura Tun - Union Minister of Electricity & Energy

Soe Thura is responsible for securing and providing energy to the entirety of Myanmar. They are responsible for securing crude oil and natural gas for the country. The role has become even more important after the 2021 coup because of sanctions placed on the country. Soe Thura has had to find new ways to secure fuel and energy sources for the country.



Khin Ma Ma Myo - Union Minister of Commerce

Khin is in charge of important functions of commerce in Myanmar. This ranges from trade deals, economic planning, and economic development. The focus of the Minister of commerce since 2021 has been establishing trade networks with friendly countries and preserving economic development while bolstering it.



Yawd Serk - Leader of the Shan State Army-South

Shan ethnic and political leader in Myanmar who was chairman of the Restoration Council of Shan State and commander in chief of the Shan State Army - South. He was extremely influential in peace talks between insurgents and the government and has relied on armed conflict to secure power in the government. Today he still acts as a political and armed force work in tandem with the new government.



Gam Shawng - Leader of the Kachin Independence Army

Gunhtang Shawng is a Kachin political and military leader. He is the vice chairman of the Kachin Independence Organisation and the commander in chief of the Kachin Independence Army. Shawng was also previously the chief of staff of the Kachin Independence Organisation. His work has focused on armed resistance in order to secure more autonomy for ethnic groups. In 2021 he took up resistance again and broke the established armistice; since then he's been reestablishing political relations with the Myanmar government.



Bao Youxiang - General Secretary of the United Wa State Party, and Commander-In-Chief of the United Wa State Army.

Bao since 1995 has been the leader of the Wa State party and United Wa State Army. The Wa state he controls is an autonomous state in the northern Shan State. Bao since his time in charge has promoted increased autonomy for ethnic groups in Myanmar and increased involvement in the government. His approach to achieving his goals has been continued armed resistance against Myanmar's government and using strategic ceasefires in order to push for further autonomy. Since the coup in 2021 he has continued pushing for autonomy for the Wa state.



Twan Mrat Naing - Leader of the Arakan Army

Twan Mrat Naing is current commander in chief of the Arakan (Rakhine) Army (AA), an ethnic armed organization that was formed in the Arakan (Rakhine) State. Born of Arakanese descent, Naing had worked as a tour guide in Yangon where he learned English and studied at the Technology University of Sittwe before becoming a founding member of the army in 2009. The AA has developed into a powerful force within its relatively short lifespan, amassing control over a large area of the Arakan state. Only three months before the coup, the AA entered an informal ceasefire with the military, putting hold on a two year war between the two parties. Shortly after gaining power, the military attempted to win the AA's favor through several concessions, though stability broke down after military airstrikes on an AA base in the Kanchin state in August 2022. Naing continues to fiercely advocate for the group's political end-goal, which is to create a sovereign "Arakan Nation".



Tar Aik Bong - Leader of the Palaung State Liberation Front and leader of the Ta'ang National Liberation Army

Tar Aik Bong is the current chairman of the Palaung State Liberation front and commander in chief of its armed contingent the Ta'ang National liberation army. Tar Aik Bong assumed the roles of leadership after helping revive the insurgency group after it was dissolved in 2005. Tar Aik Bong would lead the insurgency into allying with the Kachin Independence Army and Shan State State Army south in order to secure more power in the Shan Region. In 2010 the government recognized Tar Aik Bong's insurgency group and dedicated the Ta'ang people a Self-Administered Zone in the northern Shan State. After the military coup Tar Aik Bong reopened clashes with the government in hopes to gain more power. Now he is placed in a situation of keeping the insurgency intact while also fighting for more autonomy for the Ta'ang people.



Aung Kham Hti - Leader of the Pa-O National Liberation Army

Aung Kham Hti is a Burmese politician and former monk in charge of the Pa-O National Liberation Army. He was responsible for the resurgence of the Pa-O National Liberation Army after he reorganized in 1976. After years of conflict with Myanmar under his leadership he signed a ceasefire with the government in 1991. After the Ceasefire he was able to grant PNO multiple land concessions from the government and secured multiple business deals from the government. After the coup he has worked with the government in order to protect his concessions and further secure the prosperity of the PNO.



Khun Bedu - Leader of the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force

Khun Bedu got their start in protesting government control in 2004 and later 2008. He was vital in these protests for his organization skills and planning to disrupt government actions. He was arrested by the government in 2008 for his actions in the protests. He gained international recognition for his fight for human rights in Myanmar and his imprisonment. It wouldn't be until 2012 that he would be released from prison. After the coup in 2021 he came back to the spotlight after forming the KNDF (Leader of the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force). Under his leadership the KNDF has been resisting the government and promoting armed insurgency. Khun Bedu in his current situation is fighting for increased military action against the government, the protection of human rights, and the dismantling of the coup.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How can the unintended consequences of sanctions and financial restraints placed by nations that fall upon Myanmar civilians be minimized? How can these policies be designed to [better target relevant actors and arms networks](#)?
2. What institutions are valuable in a functioning democracy? How can these institutions be improved upon or implemented in Myanmar?
3. What are the greater geopolitical concerns held for Myanmar, and what significance would Myanmar as a failed state have on the international stage?
4. How can governments and international organizations focus their efforts to have a strong humanitarian impact amidst the militant conflict?

Glossary

- Tatmadaw - military/junta who coup'ed against the National League for Democracy
- National League for Democracy (NLD)
- National Unity Government (NUG)
- People's Defense Forces (PDFs)
- Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM)
- ASEAN
- Karen National Union (KNU)

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