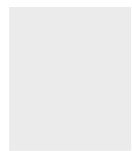


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ISSUE DESCRIPTION



COMMITTEE Security Council

ISSUE The Situation in Myanmar

SUBMITTED BY Thien Kim Tran, President of the Security Council

APPROVED BY Vilmos Eiben, President of the General Assembly

Introduction

The situation in Myanmar has been overshadowed by global challenges despite the enduring legacy of genocide and systemic oppression since the nation's independence in 1948. A long history of military rule and uprisings has underpinned the current situation; the Myanmar conflict has been the longest ongoing civil war, spanning almost eight decades. However, tensions heightened with the coup d'état by the armed forces of Myanmar in 2021, which resulted in mass protests and a brutal civil war, displacing millions and tearing apart ethnic groups situated in the region. This conflict has far-reaching implications for regional stability, with a massive influx of refugees into neighbouring countries. The humanitarian toll is staggering, with ethnic minorities facing prosecution and refugees facing inhumane conditions in camps. At the same time, the international community remains divided, with some condemning the military junta and others prioritizing economic ties. The issue must be addressed urgently through international cooperation and sustainable yet effective approaches. The Myanmar conflict points to a struggle for democracy, sovereignty, and the protection of human rights in the 21st century.

Definition of Key Terms

Burma - the former name of Myanmar, until 1989

Tatmadaw - the armed forces of Myanmar currently leading the nation, led by the Chairman of the State Administration Council, Ming Aung Hlaing

National League for Democracy (NLD) - former ruling party, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, former State Counsellor of Myanmar

Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) - pro-military party in Myanmar serving as the electoral proxy of the Tatmadaw

National Unity Government (NUG) - government-in-exile formed by activists and opposition members, recognized as the legitimate representation of Myanmar by some nations, including the United States and the European Union

Coup d'état / Coup - an attempt to unseat an incumbent leadership

Military Junta - a form of government led by military leaders, where constitutional provisions are suspended

Martial Law - replacement of government by military rule

Four Cuts - a strategy followed by the Tatmadaw which consists of violent collective punishment against those perceived to have ties with insurgent groups

Burmanization - Burma nationalist ideology oppressing ethnic minorities in Myanmar

Burman - the majority ethnic group in Myanmar

Rohingya - Bengali ethnic group in Myanmar

Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAO) - armed groups representing various ethnic minorities in Myanmar

Karen National Union (KNU) - the insurgent group of the Karen ethnic minority group

8888 Uprising - a nationwide series of pro-democracy protests in 1988

Hybrid Political Systems - regimes that have the combination of democratic and autocratic features, often having political repressions and regular elections simultaneously

Bicameral Parliament - a type of legislature which comprises two houses or assemblies

General Overview

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

INDEPENDENCE

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, formerly known as the Union of Burma, was a British colony until it gained independence in 1948. This was the outcome of the 1947 Panglong Agreement, when activist Aung San met with representatives from several ethnic minority groups in Myanmar, promising autonomy for them. The new country became Mainland Southeast Asia's largest country by area, bordered by five nations: India, Bangladesh, China, Thailand and Laos. Initially, a bicameral parliament was formed in Myanmar, and multi-party elections were held in 1951, 1956 and 1960. The Panglong Agreement, however, was overlooked after the assassination of Aung San, and tensions rose with ethnic insurgent groups (EAOs) pushing for independence and autonomy. The two largest opposition groups became the Karen National Union (a Karen nationalist group) and the Communist Party of Burma. Following this, the central civilian government weakened, allowing the military to grasp power.

TATMADAW JUNTA

In 1962, the Tatmadaw took over through a coup d'état, replacing the parliamentary government with a military junta. The military interfered in all aspects of life, from education to healthcare, and responded to all forms of resistance through violence, with over 3000 people killed in demonstrations. A notable example is the 8888 Uprising in 1988, a series of nationwide protests, mostly led by university students, which ended in massacre, imprisonment and torture of protesters. This uprising, however, contributed to the rise of the National League for Democracy (NLD) party, which played a significant role in the following general elections as the largest opposition party. The party's leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, who advocated for a democratic system through powerful speeches, became the symbol of pro-democracy in Myanmar, gaining international recognition as well as receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991.

DEMOCRACY IN MYANMAR

The 8888 Uprising and Suu Kyi's advocacy brought international attention to the situation in Myanmar. Due to this, in 1990, the Tatmadaw staged a coup disguised as an intention to hold free and democratic elections, organizing the first multi-party elections since 1960. However,

the NLD won the supermajority, which the military refused to acknowledge; therefore, they put Suu Kyi under house arrest and remained in power until 2011. In 2008, a new constitution was passed, allowing space for general elections, as an alleged step towards democracy. The Tatmadaw formed the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) in 2010, which served as the electoral proxy of the Tatmadaw.

Still, in 2015, the NLD won an absolute majority of seats, therefore, Myanmar operated in a hybrid political system with democratic governance led by the NLD and the military power led by the Tatmadaw, preserving significant influence for the military. Therefore, the NLD sided with the Tatmadaw on minority issues due to its limited authority.

2021 COUP & STATE ADMINISTRATION COUNCIL JUNTA

Following that, the NLD won 920 seats out of the total 1117 at the 2021 elections, an overwhelming majority, which was met by claims of fraud by the USDP and the Tatmadaw. This allowed for another coup alongside the military declaring martial law. The state of emergency rule has been extended across the nation multiple times since then, holding legal proceedings against opposition members and arresting Suu Kyi. This resulted in mass protests throughout the nation, and the public turned to armed resistance instead of peaceful protests. Since 1948, an estimated 180,000 people have died in the ongoing conflict in Myanmar.

Furthermore, the elected representatives in 2021 and opposition groups formed the National Unity Government (NUG), led by Mahn Win Khaing Than. The NUG is committed to federal democracy and the establishment of an inclusive government structure in Myanmar. They have gained recognition from the United States, the European Union and Canada as the legitimate representation of Myanmar, yet they have failed to receive international legitimacy due to the veto powers of China and Russia in the UN Security Council.

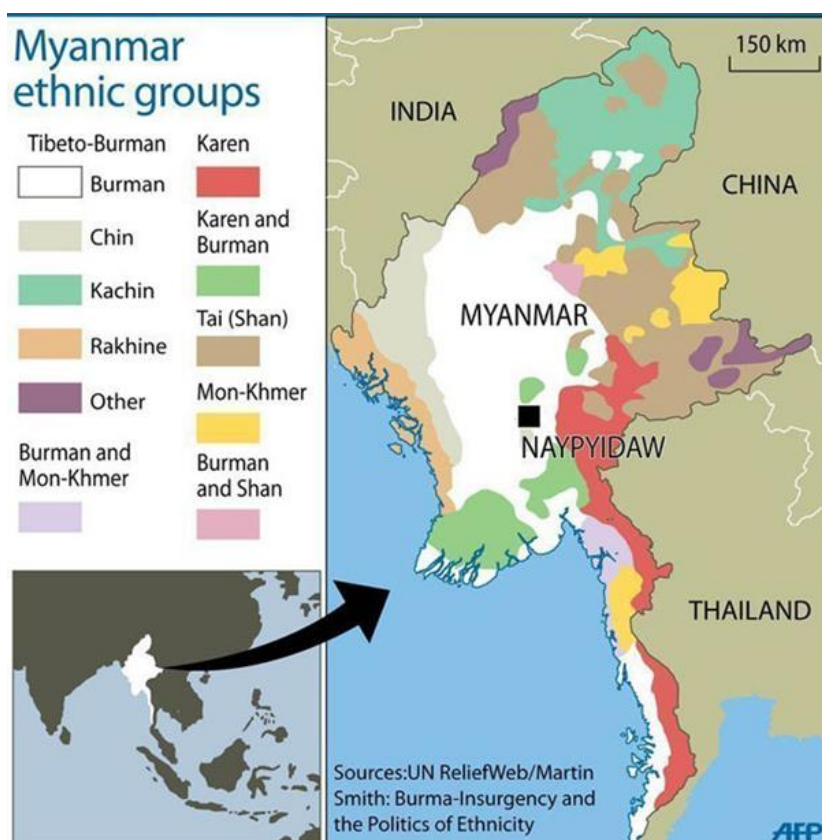
ETHNIC DIVERSITY

Myanmar is a multi-ethnic country, home to 135 indigenous ethnic groups, which has been a source of conflict since the nation became independent. The majority group is the Burmans who are in leading positions in the military and the government.

The Tatmadaw followed burmanization, aiming to assimilate the ethnic minority groups into the Burman population and punish those who followed different traditions. They have been accused of burning down entire villages and using civilians for slave labour. Burma's name change to Myanmar comes down to the brutal breakdown of ethnic groups too. The name Burma refers to the majority Burman population, hence, changing it became a way for the Tatmadaw to improve its image amongst the international community and uphold the vision of ethnic unity.

The Rohingyas, who are Bengalis from Bangladesh, are the most critically targeted group. They are not recognized as a minority group in Myanmar even to this day and were described as the world's most persecuted ethnic group by the United Nations.

Ethnic groups in Myanmar have been seeking the support of the United Nations, yet the terrors they face were overlooked by even the NLD party during their governance, due to the significant influence of the Tatmadaw during that era. Started by the Karen movements in 1949, the ethnic-based conflict in Myanmar has been the longest ongoing civil war.



HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

As of 2023, approximately 17.6 million people required humanitarian aid, yet the government blocked support for the targeted groups. The ongoing civil war has displaced millions of citizens, disrupting regional stability with refugees fleeing to bordering countries such as Thailand and

Bangladesh. Moreover, the Karen National Union and the Tatmadaw have been accused of using child soldiers by the International Labour Organization, despite having signed agreements with UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund).

CONCLUSION

Myanmar has been facing political instability and ethnic conflict since it gained its independence in 1948. The Tatmadaw holds a dominant role in governance with military coups and authoritarian rule undermining efforts towards democracy. The nation's ethnic diversity also fuels the conflict with the prosecution of minority ethnic groups such as the Rohingyas. These events have resulted in a humanitarian crisis in the Southeast Asian region with widespread displacements and human rights violations, including the genocide of ethnic groups. The events followed by the Tatmadaw's latest military coup in 2021 call for international efforts to tackle the horrific civil war that has made millions of people suffer for decades now.

Major Parties Involved

Myanmar: location of the civil war, with the following major parties involved:

- **Tatmadaw:** the armed forces of Myanmar, currently controlling the nation through a junta,
- **National League for Democracy (NLD):** former ruling party,
- **National Unity Government (NUG):** government-in-exile, recognized by the USA, Canada and the EU,
- **Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAO):** e.g. Karen National Union.

China - The People's Republic of China aims to build strategic investments in the region through the Belt and Road Initiative, providing economic support for the Tatmadaw alongside diplomatic support in the UN Security Council, preventing the recognition of the NUG.

Russia - The Russian Federation is a key arms supplier for the Tatmadaw and provides them diplomatic support in the Security Council. They aim to counterbalance Western influence in the Southeast Asian region by doing so.

United States - The United States of America engages with opposition groups and the NUG instead of the military junta, counterbalancing Chinese and Russian influence in the region. They condemn the 2021 coup and aim to promote the values of human rights and democracy in Myanmar.

ASEAN (Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) - The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is facing the consequences of refugees fleeing Myanmar, particularly Thailand, which currently hosts approximately 90,000 refugees. The political and economic union has proposed a Five-Point Consensus on Myanmar, aiming to mitigate the conflict; yet they continue engaging with the Tatmadaw instead of the NUG under their principle of non-interference on domestic issues.

India - Neighbouring Myanmar, India is mainly concerned about border security in the northern states due to the influx of refugees fleeing the conflict in Myanmar. They balance their stance on the civil war by engaging with both the Tatmadaw and opposition forces, securing strategic interests.

Bangladesh - Sharing a border with Myanmar, Bangladesh hosts over 1 million Muslim Rohingya refugees in camps in the nation's southeastern region, the Cox's Bazar, urging action for justice for the Rohingya people.

Timeline of Events

1948 - Burma gains independence from British colonial rule

1962 - First coup by the Tatmadaw

1988 - 8888 Uprising

1990 - General elections followed by military rule

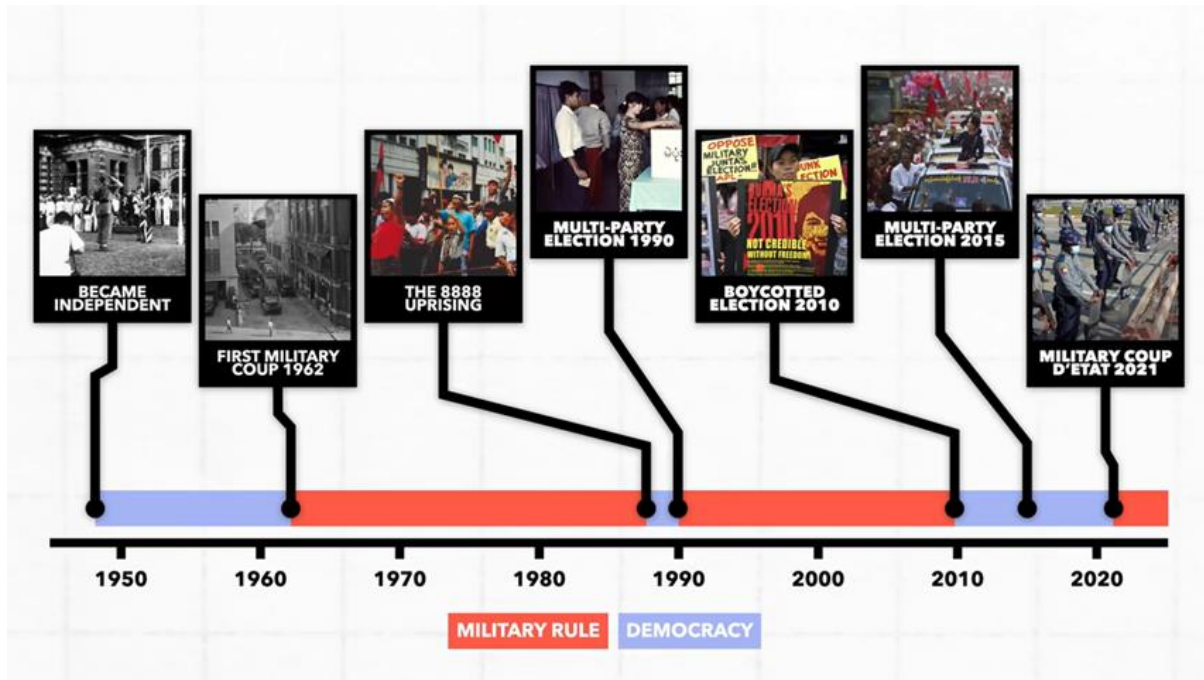
2008 - New constitution passes

2011 - A period of political reforms starts

2015 - Election won by the NLD, a hybrid political system

2021 - The election was won by the NLD with an overwhelming majority, resulting in a coup and martial law.

2021-present - Martial law has been extended



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBTKUzK7fds>

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

CEASEFIRE

In October 2015, the National Ceasefire Agreement was signed by the government of Myanmar and representatives of various ethnic insurgent groups, marking a significant milestone in Myanmar's long-running conflict. This agreement aimed to establish a framework to achieve sustainable peace by paving the way for effective dialogue among the parties. However, this agreement was violated following the 2021 coup, when the Tatmadaw attacked a Shan group camp. This event undermined the prospect of a national peace effort and contributed to the heightening of mistrust among the affected parties.

UNION PEACE CONFERENCE – 21ST CENTURY PANGLONG

In 2016, a conference called the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong was held under the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyu and involved representatives of ethnic groups. It referenced the 1947 Panglong conference, a pivotal event for Myanmar, securing agreements between the central government and ethnic minority groups. Similarly, this initiative aimed to mediate between the government and armed ethnic groups while fostering dialogue. These talks, however, ended without any significant agreement.

UN RESOLUTIONS

Despite decades of conflict and reports of human rights abuses, the UN Security Council has been able to pass only one resolution regarding Myanmar since 1948, Resolution 2669, adopted in December 2022. This resolution called for an immediate ceasefire, an end to violence, and respect for human rights. Previous attempts to tackle this issue have been delayed by frequent vetoes of the permanent members, including those of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation, who provide economic, diplomatic and military support for the Tatmadaw securing strategic interests. The adopted resolution serves as a symbolic step but has lacked strong enforcement mechanisms.

FIVE-POINT CONSENSUS

In 2021, the ASEAN developed the Five-Point Consensus to address the current situation in Myanmar through dialogue and negotiation. The objectives outlined in this framework are the following:

- Immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar,
- Constructive dialogue among all parties to seek a peaceful resolution,
- Appointment of a special envoy to mediate dialogue,
- Provision of humanitarian assistance by ASEAN,
- Visits by the special envoy to Myanmar to meet with all stakeholders.

Despite this, the lack of enforcement has hindered ASEAN's efforts. Still, this consensus remains one of the most comprehensive attempts to solve the ongoing situation and could serve as a starting point for future negotiations.

Possible Solutions and Approaches

GRADUAL DISARMAMENT

Gradual disarmament is the process of reducing and eventually eliminating weapons and military capabilities in a phased or step-by-step manner, rather than attempting to achieve complete disarmament all at once. This approach minimizes the risk of one party becoming disproportionately vulnerable too quickly and could help establish trust between the parties. Confidence-building measures, such as gradual disarmament, could lay the groundwork for more comprehensive peace talks, taking incremental steps towards lasting peace in Myanmar.

ARMS EMBARGO

Nations such as China and Russia are key arms suppliers to the Tatmadaw, even though providing military equipment to any party fuels the ongoing conflict. In order to tackle this issue, pushing for a global arms embargo to cut off supply could contribute to de-escalating tensions.

TARGETED SANCTIONS

Western nations often impose sanctions on countries whose actions they condemn, such as those committing war crimes, with the aim of influencing the target's behaviour. However, these sanctions often fail to affect the leadership of the involved parties and instead have significant impacts on communities. For example, economic sanctions can lead to rising unemployment among innocent civilians. Therefore, strategically targeting sanctions at the leadership of specific parties involved in the Myanmar conflict could help mitigate the crisis while minimizing the impact on the civilian population.

RECOGNIZING AND EMPOWERING ETHNIC GROUPS

The Myanmar conflict is rooted in the tensions between the country's various ethnic groups. Therefore, initiatives aimed at rebuilding communities and dismantling systemic discrimination could help strengthen oppressed minority groups in Myanmar, whose human rights have been consistently violated. Additionally, advocating for the recognition of groups such as the Rohingya could pave the way to more productive dialogue among the parties and reconciliation.

REFUGEE ASSISTANCE

The situation in Myanmar has resulted in widespread displacement in the Southeast Asian region. Assisting bordering nations such as Thailand and Bangladesh by, for example, establishing multilateral funding mechanisms to distribute the financial burden could contribute to improving living conditions in refugee camps, and therefore address the ongoing humanitarian crisis.

CONCLUSION

The conflict in Myanmar is a reflection of the challenges imposed by authoritarian governance, ethnic tensions and prolonged conflict. The 2021 coup has only worsened the situation with horrific crimes committed against marginalized groups and mass displacements, striking the stability of the Southeast Asian region. Sustainable, diplomatic and effective efforts must be taken to mitigate the conflict and restore peace in Myanmar. The ultimate objective is to alleviate suffering and ensure justice through international cooperation in the United Nations Security Council.

USEFUL VIDEOS

Myanmar's Forgotten War Explained: The Military Coup, Revolution, NUG, Rohingya | 2023 Latest News | <https://youtu.be/StDA-aki1gk>

Why is Myanmar Fighting a Civil War? | <https://youtu.be/18rnyTi71ww>

Is Myanmar's Civil War at a Turning Point? | <https://youtu.be/oBTKUzK7fds>

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