



Forum: The Security Council

Topic: Question of Addressing the issue of the Myanmar Civil War

President / Chair

Introduction

Myanmar has had a long history of conflict, since 1948; in fact, the general “Myanmar Conflict” has been ongoing. Myanmar is a nation rich with many cultures and ethnic groups, with rich histories and unique cultures; yet, instead of being a strength, it has proven to be a constant source of instability, with armed ethnic militias seemingly constantly fighting the central government’s military – the Tatmadaw. Moreover, Myanmar, for most of its history, has been under a military dictatorship characterized by political suppression. Yet, when Myanmar began to have elections during the 2010s, it seemed that Myanmar was finally moving in a better direction.

Unfortunately, this trial with democracy came crashing down in 2021 when the election results from the previous year were overturned, sparking protests and a subsequent civil war, which has killed tens of thousands, displaced millions, and razed hundreds of villages. In addition, the UN estimates that 19.9 million people currently require some form of humanitarian aid, with 15.2 million suffering from acute food insecurity, and only 34% of the required funding being provided as of December 2024 (Myanmar Humanitarian...).

Definition of Key Terms

Civil War

A civil war is defined as a violent conflict between two or more parties taking place within a state, typically involving two or more conflicting parties based in the state that seek to gain control.

Stateless

A stateless person is defined as not being a citizen of any country. Most notably, it often refers to the Rohingya Muslims who are not recognized by the Burmese constitution.

Civil Disobedience

Civil Disobedience is defined as intentional and nonviolent resistance by citizens, achieved through the refusal to obey government orders, such as peaceful protests.

Guerilla Warfare

Guerilla Warfare refers to unconventional warfare characterized by using small groups of fighters who employ tactics such as ambushes or traps. Typically, these are rebels with extensive

knowledge of the terrain.

Forced Conscription

Forced Conscription refers to the practice of forcibly making people join the army without their input, also known as a draft.

Influx of Refugees

It is a phenomenon defined by the process of millions of refugees fleeing one nation to go into other nations, usually to escape dangers and violence.

Military Dictatorship

A form of governance where power is concentrated in the military, without civilian input.

General Overview

Early Period

Myanmar was first colonized in 1848. It remained relatively stable until December of 1941, when it was host to the Burma campaign, a part of the Pacific Theater of World War II. By the time the campaign had ended, much of Burma was left in ruins. At its peak in 1944, more than a million troops were in Myanmar (Burma Campaign). Afterwards, Myanmar gained its independence from the United Kingdom (UK) on January 4th, 1948, after a century of colonization.

Myanmar officially enacted a foreign policy of neutrality, but notably remained an ally of China, accepting the People's Republic of China (PRC) and not the Republic of China (modern-day Taiwan). Burma also rejected Western aid during this time in part due to wariness of losing influence in their nation. All in all, Myanmar was a relatively stable nation.

This stability was shattered, however, in March of 1962. When a military coup took place and suspended the 1947 constitution, the goal was to make Myanmar (then Burma) a truly socialist state. As a result, many industries began to be nationalized, and Burma became another cog in the Cold War machine. These changes led to economic stagnation; however, the leader, Ne Win's, willingness to work with Burma's diverse ethnic groups proved vital in

stabilizing the nation. In 1973, a new constitution was created with collaboration from many ethnic groups, with reported 90% of voters voting for it. Burma's economy began to grow, especially as foreign aid was slowly reallocated; however, its debt began to increase.

There was also the issue of insurgencies, whilst many of them did reach agreements with the government, being an insurgent became a way of life, with most continuing to oppose the government after 40 years of oppression, despite government efforts, they failed to suppress them. Many groups were promised internal rights and autonomy over their government finances, but they did, however, express a desire for a unified Burma and promised that these groups would be consulted. However, the replacement of General Aung San after his assassination by General Ne Win broke this promise, as Ne Win did not honor this agreement.

The 8888 Movement

In 1988, Ne Win retired as president amid violent protests, especially among students and workers, known as the 8888 uprising. The intensity was so great that it seemed that the country was on the verge of revolution. These protests were caused in no small part by Burma's rampant poverty, combined with the suppression of civic freedoms and religious beliefs under the atheistic view of Socialism. During this crisis, Aung San Suu Kyi emerged as a national icon against oppression. For her advocacy, she won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. She set up the National League for Democracy (NLD) in 1988, which won the elections set up in 1990 by a landslide; however, those results were ignored by the government.

Over the coming years, the military would draft a new constitution to consolidate more control over Myanmar (the name was changed from Burma to Myanmar in 1989), moreover, it'd form the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) as a means of exerting more control over the populace, by the early 2000s more than one fifth of the population belonged to the USDA. Between 1988 and 2000, the military more than doubled its troops and gained more regional influence.

Due to Myanmar's location, it faces no real existential threats from outside its borders; therefore, the military was carefully crafted to deal with internal threats quickly and often brutally. Simultaneously, it often signs ceasefires with many rebel groups; however, on both sides, these ceasefires are broken quite regularly. Therefore, from the 1980s to the late 2000s, the military was focused on expanding its regional control.

Myanmar was heavily sanctioned by the USA, the European Union (EU), and the UN due to human rights violations, forced labor practices, and refusing to accept the 1990 election

results. Yet, as the region became more important and volatile, Myanmar became more important geopolitically, allowing it to enter the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Easing of Tatmadaw Control

In 2000, the ruling party began secret negotiations with Aung San Suu Kyi, still under house arrest, to release political prisoners. By the end of this process, nearly 200 prisoners were released, signaling more democratic progress. More strides towards democracy came in 2003, when the new prime minister, General Khin Nyunt, took power and pledged to lead Myanmar into free elections and a new constitution; however, he was later placed under house arrest in 2004 due to corruption charges, and much of his progress was lost.

In 2007 came the Saffron Revolution; the driving factor was the easing of the Tatmadaw's fuel subsidies. As they had a monopoly on all fuel sold, this caused the prices of fuel to rise by 66%-100% instantly, and the price for compressed natural gas for buses to rise by 500% in less than a week. This caused mass economic and political protests, despite being mostly peaceful; dozens of protesters were arrested or detained. Unfortunately, there were notable casualties, with estimates ranging from 13 to 31. International reactions were mixed, with most urging the Junta to be merciful.

Later in 2008, a new constitution was written up and planned to begin introducing more aspects of the democratic process from 2011 to 2015. Thousands of political prisoners were released, and the NLD gained more power; However, the NLD failed to remove a clause that prohibited anyone with foreign spouses or children from becoming president, which disqualified Aung San Suu Kyi from being a potential president of Myanmar.

Myanmar's Trial with Democracy

In 2011, Myanmar began to implement many of its reforms, such as releasing many political prisoners. Yet, in the constitution, it outlined that for one to be a citizen of Myanmar, they had to be part of the 130 or so ethnic groups listed in its constitution, which meant not being a part of these groups left one stateless.

In 2015, the NLD won the first elections in the country, making Suu Kyi the de facto head of the government. It was a huge step forward, which made many nations, such as the USA, begin to remove sanctions. However, the military still controlled much of the government and country, but it was a shaky alliance. Yet international opinion shifted greatly due to the Rohingya genocide.

The Rohingya are a Muslim minority who were not recognized as an official ethnic

group and have faced much persecution. Historically originating from the Bay of Bengal since the 4th century, many were encouraged by the British Empire to settle in what's now Myanmar during colonial rule. The genocide was triggered by small-scale Rohingya militant groups in 2016, attacking police outposts, prompting the Myanmar military to begin to launch “clearance operations” in response. From 2017 to 2018, over 700,000 Rohingya fled the country, and hundreds of villages (at least 300) were razed. Mass killings, gang rapes, executions, torture, and landmines placed on escape routes are all examples of alleged crimes against them. The Myanmar government completely ignored it, including key figures such as Suu Kyi, who defended Myanmar at the ICJ.

In 2020, the NLD won its second term; however, the military disputed the results and alleged voter fraud. Later reports by independent observers state that these claims were categorically false.

Myanmar Civil War

In 2021, a military Junta enacted a coup d'état, taking over the democratically elected government of Myanmar. Leaders of that government, such as Aung San Suu Kyi, were captured. This was likely because the NLD, which opposes the Junta, won 81% of the seats, posing a huge threat. In response, protests erupted across the country under the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), while mostly peaceful, the responses by the police forces grew increasingly violent, with arbitrary arrests and even torture. In response, many fled north to train in rebel training camps with the People's Defense Forces (PDF). In September 2021, the National Unity Government (NUG) was formed with the former government before the coup.

Ethnic groups have been working in tandem with the PDF against the Tatmadaw, declaring it a defensive war. Eventually, bombings, air raids, and landmines were more favored than direct armed conflict. In addition, more rural local communities tended to oppose the Tatmadaw and helped those rebel groups. It was an incredibly violent affair, for example, on Christmas Eve of 2021, the Mo So massacre took place, killing 35 women and children (As details of Christmas Eve...).

There are frequent reports of extrajudicial killings, massacres, and sexual assault. By March of 2023, the UN estimated that nearly 18 million people needed humanitarian assistance, The Tatmadaw controlled less than half of the country (Sun) And 40,000 people had fled (More than two...). The Tatmadaw also faced manpower issues with frequent desertions and low morale. This caused them to force mandatory service on their populace, which only further

pushed people to defect to fight for the PDF.

As of now, in 2025, the Tatmadaw is being pushed into its main strongholds, where they are well stocked, meaning ending this war would be difficult. Moreover, frequent attacks and horrible war crimes being enacted by both sides are another barrier. There is some hope, though. In April 2025, the NUG announced a temporary 3-week ceasefire due to an earthquake, Meaning a ceasefire is possible.

Major Parties Involved

Tatmadaw

Tatmadaw is the official Myanmar military and has been a primary factor in the country's politics for decades. It executed a coup in February 2021, which led to the ousting of the democratically elected government and commenced a civil war. The military exercises authoritarian rule over civilians, including arbitrary detainment, airstrikes on non-combat zones, and hindering aid relief. Its stronghold includes the capital and several central parts of Myanmar. It has also lost significant ground in rural areas, concentrating more and more into urban strongholds.

National Unity Government (NUG)

Consisting of displaced members of the National League for Democracy (NLD), ethnic leaders, and civil society activists, the NUG purports to be the government of Myanmar. It has considerable backing from the citizenry and certain international stakeholders. The NUG further works in partnership with armed insurgency groups and advocates for federal democracy in Myanmar.

People's Defense Force (PDF)

The PDF is the military division of the NUG, mainly made up of young civilians who started fighting after the coup. It engages in guerrilla warfare throughout the country and often collaborates with ethnic armed groups. Even though the PDF is lacking in equipment, it has managed to gain control over rural areas and impede military activities in many regions.

Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs)

These are ancient ethnic guerrilla commandos that have struggled with the central government over autonomy or independence for several decades. A lot of them are now also in opposition to the junta. These organizations occupy land and offer to locals the aspects of governance and protection. Others have grouped to make coalitions or coordinate attacks on the junta.

Timeline of Events

Date	Event
1886 / January	Myanmar was officially incorporated into the British Empire.

1937 / April	Britain separates Burma from India and makes it a crown colony.
1941 / December	Japan invades and occupies Burma, marking the start of the Burma campaign.
1945 / September	The UK liberates Burma with the help of the local Anti-fascist party, marking the end of the Burma campaign.
1948 / January	Myanmar gained independence from British rule, led by Prime Minister U Ne.
1960 / February	U Ne's government wins another decisive victory in the elections, but angers the military with its tolerance of separatism.
1962 / March	A military coup led by General Ne Win overthrows the civilian government and establishes the Burmese Way to Socialism.
1974 / January	A new constitution is adopted following a referendum the previous year, further taking away power from minorities and creating a People's Assembly composed of ruling party members.
1982 / October	Burma citizenship law is passed mandating all citizens to be a part of a predetermined ethnic group to be considered a citizen, making the Rohingya effectively stateless.
1988 / August	The 8888 uprising began due to inflation wiping out many people's savings, there were widespread riots, and the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) was formed.
1989	Slorc imposes martial law and arrests thousands of advocates; also, it renames Burma to Myanmar.
1990	NLD wins in the general election, but the results are ignored by the military. Aung San Suu Kyi is placed under house arrest.
1997 / July	Burma joins the ASEAN, and SLORC renames itself to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).
2003 / August	Myanmar's prime minister promises to hold a

	convention next year to draft a new constitution to move towards democracy.
2004 / October	Thousands of political prisoners are freed, including the leader of the 1988 riots.
2007 / January	Russia and China veto a US resolution urging Myanmar to stop prosecuting minority groups.
2007 / September	Anti-government protests sparked, led by Buddhist monks, over high fuel prices.
2008 / April	The new constitution is published and put into effect.
2010 / November	The party backed by the military, the Union Solidarity and Development Party, wins a resounding victory in the first proclaimed democratic elections. Opposition groups call the election a fraud and a sham. Aung San Suu Kyi is also released from house arrest.
2011 / March	Thein Sein becomes president, and limited democratic reforms begin, including the release of political prisoners.
2013 / April	Four private daily newspapers were created after 50 years of government monopoly over newspapers.
2015 / February	The government withheld the temporary voting rights of Rohingya before a constitutional referendum.
2015 / November	NLD wins enough seats to form a government. Suu Kyi becomes the de facto leader.
2017 / August	Military crackdown on Rohingya after ARSA attacks. Over 700,000 flee to Bangladesh. UN accuses Myanmar of ethnic cleansing.
2020	NLD wins re-election in a landslide. The military alleges fraud without evidence. Tensions increase.
2021 / February	After the NLD beats the pro-military candidates, the results are deemed invalid by the military, causing them to overthrow the civilian government.

2021 / February	Protests erupt nationwide, and civil servants, teachers, and health workers go on strike. The military responds with violence and opens fire on protestors.
2021 / April	The National Unity Government (NUG) is made up of ousted MPs, ethnic leaders, and pro-democracy groups.
2021 / May	Armed resistance escalates—the People’s Defense Force (PDF) forms and allies with ethnic armed groups.
2021 / April	The ASEAN Five-Point Consensus was agreed to at the Jakarta summit. The military fails to comply.
2022 / January	Heavy air strikes in the countryside force civilians to flee and hide in churches as shelter.
2022 / July	The Junta executes four political prisoners, the first use of the death penalty in Myanmar since the 1980s.
2023 / April	Myanmar Air Force bombs in Pazigy kill at least 120 civilians.
2023 / December	Chinese-led peace talks failed between the Tatmadaw and various rebel groups. The Araken Army gains major territory near the Rakhine coast.
2024 / January	The border trade hub, the city of Laukkai, is lost by the ruling Junta.
2024 / February	Forced conscription law goes into effect, causing many to flee to join the PDF.
2025 / April	KNLA and PDF groups begin fighting near the capital, concentrating the junta’s power into more concentrated fortresses.
2025 / June	OHCHR – the UN body on this conflict – releases a report detailing the urgent humanitarian crisis in Myanmar.

Attempts to solve the issue

ASEAN Five-Point Consensus (2021/April)

The ASEAN Five-Point Consensus (5PC) was drafted by ASEAN, of which Myanmar is a part, in 2021 in an attempt to end the conflict. It called for cessation of violence, dialogue, appointment of a special envoy, and humanitarian assistance. It was deemed a failure by Human Rights Watch in 2022 due to not taking meaningful steps to pressure the junta (Human Rights Watch).

On ending all forms of violence in Myanmar(2022/December/21) (S/RES/2669)

This resolution demanded the end of all forms of violence in Myanmar and full cooperation with ASEAN special envoys and consistent reports on the matter. This failed mainly due to weak enforcement.

China held peace talks (2024/April)

In 2024, peace talks between the Tatmadaw and Northern Rebel Groups were held; however, they fell apart quickly and could not reach a consensus. One of the main weaknesses is that these talks do not include many of the main groups, such as the NUG or PDF. Moreover, the junta is seemingly very stubborn and unwilling to compromise, according to reports.

External sanctions placed

Swiftly after the 2021 coup, countries all over the world, such as the US and the UK, began to sanction the junta leaders and the nation itself, as well as instituting travel bans. This was to limit the cash flow of the nation. This failed, however, due to support from governments such as China and Russia, as well as the Tatmadaw's diversified income streams, such as running scam centers.

Possible Solutions

1. Creating open dialogue

As this war has been going on for a long time, with longstanding ethnic tensions, it is unsurprising that neither simply wants to nor can communicate. However, as the war escalates, using Track II diplomacy becomes more and more necessary. For example, a direct phone line can be established between the NLD and the Junta in the case of mass unrest, similar to the USSR and US phone line established after the Cuban Missile Crisis. As the war becomes more

and more concentrated in well-fortified strongholds, negotiating for peace is simultaneously easier, having to manage less land; yet, it will be harder to come by due to having many more resources for defense. Therefore, ensuring consistent communication is a necessity.

2. Promoting free and fair elections

It is quite obvious from the protests that many civilians want a democratically elected government; therefore, there will continue to be conflict, especially between the NLD and the Junta, until such elections are held. It is important that there are independent watchdogs and that the results are respected (unlike in 2021). Moreover, people must be enfranchised to be active in politics to help improve their nation.

3. Respecting the sovereignty of certain ethnic claims

Many of the grievances of these ethnic groups come from the Panglong treaty of 1947, which promised them more autonomy, but was not respected. Therefore, it is important that they are actively included in peace proceedings, and if needed, can be autonomous zones of the nations. This can help soothe ethnic tensions and open the doorway for stronger, long-lasting peace, in order to rebuild the nation. Without this, the country risks falling into perpetual warfare with generations whose only skills are warfare.

4. Promoting national unity

Much of this conflict is the byproduct of ethnic groups feeling fundamentally disconnected from one another and the nation as a whole. Therefore, promoting civil nationalism and national unity can help unite Myanmar and assuage the ethnic tensions, opening a pathway for peace in the short and long term.

Guiding Questions

1. Does your country face any internal issues with rebel groups?
2. Has your country made any statement supporting the NLD or the military Junta?
3. Has your country faced any coup d'état recently?
4. How can Myanmar make peace with so many rebel groups?
5. What humanitarian and social problems need to be urgently addressed in the short term?
6. How can former soldiers be reintegrated into society once this conflict is over?
7. How can a new democratic Myanmar re-enfranchise its citizens in the democratic process?
8. What can be learnt from Myanmar's 2021 coup d'état to help ensure that it does not happen again?

9. How can the proper enforcement of the terms of treaties be ensured?
10. What economic issues help keep Myanmar in a cycle of dictatorship?
11. How can war criminals be properly prosecuted for their war crimes?
12. What major imports and exports of Myanmar have been affected by this conflict?
13. Which regional actors benefit from this conflict, if any?
14. Has your country hosted any refugees from this conflict?
15. How did your country react to the Rohingya genocide?

Appendix

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hoL2sKowUk>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18rnyTi71ww>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvpLvY9GnJ0>
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Contact Information

President

Name: Laith Al-Wir

Phone Number: +962799597311

E-Mail: laith_alwir@abs.edu.jo

Chair

Name: Abdullah Sweidan

Phone Number: +962798003505

E-Mail: abdullah_sweidan@abs.edu.jo