



The Burmese Spring Revolution

SC - Carl Matei Lindell



Forum: Security Council (SC)

Issue: The Burmese Spring Revolution of Myanmar

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Position: President

Introduction:

A most essential challenge when establishing a state is ensuring that its people feel a sense of unity and camaraderie under one nation, especially when that state includes a diverse array of ethnic groups. In cases where such diversity instead breeds division, the nation will helplessly and inevitably be headed to tensions, turmoil, and internal conflict. When such internal conflict and turmoil happens, it is the duty of the UN to establish a peaceful and stable *resolution*. One such case is Myanmar, the largest Southeast Asian nation but also the most fractured country on Earth. Ever since its founding in 1948 under the name of Burma, this Southeast Asian nation has been in an almost constant state of instability and disarray – most recently after its coup d'état in February 2021. The bloodiest of all those that have touched this nation, the still ongoing conflict induced by the 2021 coup has led to 180,000+ killed, 1 million displaced, and an estimated 18.6 *million* people requiring humanitarian aid. With these figures in mind, there may be no doubt that this issue is a most pressing situation requiring urgent and decisive action from the UN.

Key terms:

MEDC: More economically developed nation

LEDC: Lesser economically developed nation

Coup d'état: a sudden, violent, and unlawful seizure of power from a government; a coup

Junta: a military or political group that rules a country after taking power by force.

NCA: a landmark ceasefire agreement between the government of Myanmar and representatives of various ethnic insurgent groups in 2015

EAO: Ethnic armed organisation (Burmese: တိုင်းရင်းသား လက်နက်ကိုင် အဖွဲ့အစည်း)

PDF: People's Defence Force – the main enemy of the military – representing the elected and subsequently detained 2021 government, allied with most EAOs

(Burmese: ပြည်သူ့ကာကွယ်ရေးတပ်မတော်)

Bamar: The majority ethnic group of Myanmar, accounting for 68% of its population (~35 million people)

Burma: Synonymous with Myanmar, it was the official name of Myanmar until 1989. Out of recognition for the other ethnic groups, this report will refer to the state as Myanmar – however, it will refer to things pertaining to Myanmar as Burmese, for lack of a better word

Rohingya: A predominantly Muslim ethnic minority group (1.4 million inhabiting Myanmar in 2017, 600,000 in 2019) in Myanmar who have suffered great persecution and are denied citizenship in that nation

Rohingya genocide: a series of ongoing persecutions and killings of the Muslim Rohingya people by the military of Myanmar in 2016–2017

ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a supranational organisation

NLD: The National League for Democracy (Burmese: အမျိုးသား ဒီမိုကရေစီ အဖွဲ့ချုပ်) is a liberal democratic party of Myanmar

Aung San Suu Kyi AKA the Lady: Nobel prize laureate and leader of the NDL, she represents the democratic reforms of Myanmar and has been incredibly popular within the nation as an icon of democracy and freedom

National Unity Government: The government that was in place and dethroned by the coup in 2021, composed in part of NLD representatives

Arms embargo: Sanctions on weaponry

Background of the Burmese Spring Revolution of Myanmar:

Myanmar was declared independent from the UK's claws in 1948, a few years after the most devastating war history. The largest nation by landmass in Southeast Asia, it officially contains 135 ethnicities within its 676 million kilometres of area. However, bringing such ethnic diversity all under one nation can often lead to internal tensions. In effect, most of Myanmar's history has been one of military rule, protests, inequality, oppression, and only small windows of equality and freedoms. One of these windows had been opened in 2011, when the ruling military of Myanmar began political reforms, including the release of (soon to be) Nobel prize laureate and leader of the NLD party: **Aung San Suu Kyi**.



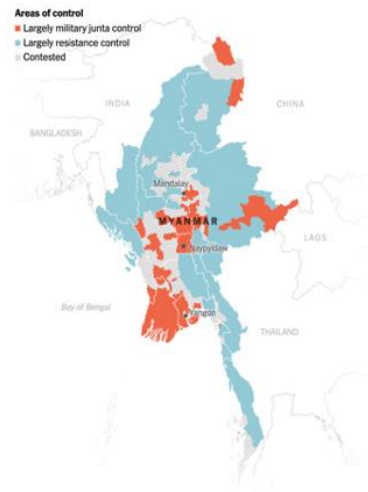
In order left to right: U.S. president Barack Obama, Aung San Suu Kiy, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton; 2012

In 2012, the first internationally monitored elections of Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD party won 43 of the 45 available vacant seats that were being voted upon. This landslide victory was a shining light of prosperity and of a bright future for the nation, leading to its bid for ASEAN chair in 2014 being approved and symbolic visits from world leaders. Similar good omens were shown in the 2015 elections where

the NLD won an absolute majority of seats in both chambers of parliament. An NLD member was elected as and became the first non-military president since 1962, and Aung San Suu Kyi was de facto given the role of prime minister under the role of State Counsellor (it must be noted that Aung San Suu Kyi in fact had had been constitutionally barred from presidency).

In the 2020 parliamentary election, the NLD won once more and by more than ever before while handing a "humiliating" defeat to the military-affiliated parties. And yet, such began the downfall of Myanmar's modern age of prosperity.

The vote was fair, as attested by election observers. The military had lost the election. The military doesn't lose. Soon thereafter, the USDP – the Burmese military's proxy party – alleged fraud, rejected the results, and demanded a new election to be held with a more "acute" observer: the military itself. The NLD wanted none of that. So on the 1st of February 2021 – the day the NLD was set to convene for the first time – the military detained important members of the NLD and seized power; declaring a yearlong state of emergency, closing borders, restricting communication, and plunging the nation back into what had been until now an almost forgotten yet despairingly familiar state of military oppression, civil war, and turmoil. Soon thereafter, protests have surged in the nation demanding the ousting of the militia, but to no avail.



Map of Myanmar's areas of control as of 20 April 2024; areas largely controlled by the military are highlighted in red and those largely controlled by the resistance are shown in blue (The New York Times, 2024)

Three years later, the state finds itself fractured, with constant warfare between the militia and the resistance force composed of the PDF and its allied EAOs. The war has seen countless bombings of villages from the military and over 180,000 killed from all sides. The war's economic consequences may also not be understated; with hyperinflation, foreign currency shortages, and one in four people within the country experiencing food insecurity. The Burmese military has also taken to committing war crimes such as "murder, sexual violence, torture, attacks on religious buildings, and the targeting of civilians".

With such tragic figures and events, the situation in Myanmar may easily be described as hopeless. However, hope is one of the key tenets of the UN, and it is your duty as the chosen delegates of your respective nations to instill a hopeful, peaceful, and free future for the people of the world; for the people of Myanmar.

Comprehensive timeline of key events:

1948: Burma gains independence from British rule

1989: Burma changes name to Myanmar so as to represent its diverse background of people more

2011: Start of Myanmar's age of reform with political pardon for over 200 prisoners and the release of Aung San Suu Kyi

2012: NLD wins 43 of 45 available seats in the nation's first fair elections

2015: Another landslide election victory for the NLD, Aung San Suu Kyi is now appointed as de facto prime minister

2016-2017: First Rohingya Genocide of Myanmar. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims are displaced and persecuted by the Burmese military while the NLD stands and does nothing

November 2020: The USDP suffers a "humiliating" defeat to the NLD. They demand a redo.

February 2021: Coup d'état by the nation's military, Min Aung Hlaing is appointed to power and the nation is declared under a yearlong state of emergency. Protests ensue soon thereafter, on the second day of the coup

March 2021: Protesters are slowly arming themselves and joining EAOs, they will not give up their liberty without a fight

April 2021: ASEAN proclaims the five-point act.

May 2021: People's Defence Force (PDF) is formed by the National Unity Government

June 2021: The General assembly adopts resolution 75/287, calling to cease hostilities. The junta promptly ignores them

October 2021: After their failure in implementing the five-point act, the ASEAN excludes Burmese leader Min Aung Hlaing from their conference

September 2022: More than a year after the start of the war, the military is still relentless in its warfare. In a region where it is facing sustained resistance, the military bombs a school, killing 11 children

December 2022: The Security Council adopts resolution 2669, with similar demands and results as that of the General assembly

April 2024: An ambassador of the Union of Myanmar delivers a speech to the UN Disarmament commission, requesting an arms embargo and calling out the junta's crimes against humanity and war crimes, UN underscores commitment to stay and deliver in Myanmar.

Major parties involved:

Myanmar: Myanmar is the nation at the heart of this conflict and has suffered great losses, economically and humanitarially

Russia: Russia has been providing military aid to the junta of Myanmar, and recently Myanmar's military has been providing aid to Russia in their very own war against Ukraine. They do not consider Myanmar to be a threat to international security. Russia – together with China – vetoed a UN resolution condemning the coup.

China: China holds strategic ties with Myanmar and has been supporting and working together with the junta. China – together with Russia – vetoed a UN resolution condemning the coup.

UK: The UK used to have Myanmar as one of its colonies, now its ties with nation have largely deteriorated since 2021 with the UK imposing sanctions and demanding a resolution to the conflict.

US: The US has been terribly critical of the regime's coup and has called for the regime's end as well as for a peaceful resolution.

France: France has condemned the coup.

Bangladesh: Bangladesh are seemingly afraid of Myanmar's military and have attempted to remain neutral regarding the conflict, even after the military of Myanmar violating its airspace and territory. They have been host to over 700,000 Rohingya refugees since the start of the Rohingya genocide.

India: India continues to trade with and recognise the junta, with some state-owned and private Indian companies supplying arms and raw materials to it.

Laos: The Lao PDR is the chair of the ASEAN and is not in support of the war.

Previous attempts to solve the issue:

ASEAN:

–The ASEAN instated a five-point act which demanded immediate cessation of violence and constructive dialogue. Due to the ASEAN's "non-interference in the internal affairs of one another" policy, this act unsurprisingly led to nowhere (as often is the case with the ASEAN).

UN:

– The General Assembly adopted resolution 75/287 in June 2021, calling upon the junta to adhere to the results of the election, also calling upon the junta to unconditionally release the detainees of the elected 2021 government, and calling upon implementation of the five-point act. This optimistic resolution was naught more than some sort of a statement and saw very little follow through from the parties involved.

– The Security Council adopted resolution 2669 on 21 December 2022, demanding an end to all hostilities, urging for the release of all arbitrarily-detained officials, and deciding to remain actively seized in the matter. This resolution was considered weak and did not get much implementation either

Worldwide:

Nations worldwide have been imposing sanctions on the junta.

Possible resolutions to the issue:

Immediate cessation of all hostilities: The Burmese Spring Revolution has been one of the bloodiest internal conflicts of the century and requires an immediate ceasefire.

Properly backed clauses: Most clauses failed due to the lack of implementation and of an incentive on other nations to act upon these resolutions.

Military interference: The junta of Myanmar seem to be having the upper hand in the war against the PDF and its allied EAOs, the latter forces may require some assistance if they are aiming to defend Burmese liberty.

Partition: The diversity of Myanmar may have led to it becoming the most fractured state in the world, perhaps one way to avoid this tension is to divide the state into more comprehensive nation-states with more of a shared identity.

Supranational organisation: The ASEAN's failure to do any meaningful progress regarding the civil war in Myanmar may be just one more exhibit of its flop as any sort of a regional supranational organisation when compared to its peers (EU, Arab League, AU). Perhaps what Southeast Asia needs is a more decisive body which is not afraid to interfere in internal affairs.

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