

Forum: United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Issue: The Situation in Myanmar

Student Officer: Mina Atak

Position: President Chair

Introduction

After gaining its independence in 1948, Myanmar has suffered from many political and socio-economic problems including military coups, poverty, economic crises, and a civil war (Amnesty International). The military named Tatmadaw has prevented democratic attempts and has not handed the regime to the “National League for Democracy” (NLD), who actually won more than 80% of the parliamentary seats both in 2015 and 2020 (BBC). The forceful governance of the military, which in essence is due to the “Union Solidarity and Development Party” (USDP) -the electoral proxy of Tatmadaw- being defeated by NLD in the elections, has received many condemnations, including those from the United Nations (Al Jazeera). The most recent coup staged by the military on February 1, 2021 and the arresting of democratic politicians has resulted in protests and civil disobedience movements in the country. From the humanitarian aspect, according to the UN rights chief, people of Myanmar are “trapped in a cycle of poverty and displacement, human rights violations and abuses” after the coup (UN). International human rights laws have been violated, entire villages -including schools and residences- are burned, and food stocks are destroyed (UN). People were forced to get displaced and leave their homes, hoping for survival. The issue relates to this year’s RCIMUN conference theme, as delegates will be formulating ideas of solutions to reduce the negative consequences of the Myanmar situation, a political and socio-economic crisis going on for more than seventy years.



Encyclopædia Britannica. “Myanmar.” <https://www.britannica.com/place/Myanmar#/media/1/400119/223463>. Accessed 28 Feb. 2025.

Definition of Key Terms

Military Coup (Coup d'État): Military coup, or in other words, coup d'état, indicates “a sudden illegal, often violent, taking of government power, especially by part of an army” (Cambridge Dictionary).

Civil War: A “civil war refers to a violent conflict between organized groups within a country that are fighting over control of the government, one side's separatist goals, or some divisive government policy” (Fearon).

Proxy: A person or a party “authorized to act on behalf of someone else” (Collins Dictionary).

Socioeconomic: The term “socioeconomic” illustrates a “[relation] to society and economics”, referring to “factors such as income, education, employment, [and] community safety” (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, Country Health Rankings).

General Overview

The “Union of Myanmar” was named as the “Union of Burma” formerly, until the name officially changed in 1989. The country gained its independence from British rule on 4 January 1948. Since then, the nation has been facing political conflicts which have also had socioeconomic consequences, and resulted in civil wars and protests all over the Member State. After becoming an independent, democratic nation in 1948 with Sao Shwe Thaik, Ba U, and Win Maung being the presidents, respectively, Burma has faced its first coup d'état in 1962. With “several ethnic armed organizations” fighting for greater power, the military (Tatmadaw) took over the country with the 1962 coup, Ne Win as the leader, and this military dictatorship lasted for 26 years, until 1988.

Within his time of power, Win has “instituted a new constitution in 1974 based on an isolationist foreign policy and a socialist economic program that nationalized Burma's major enterprises” (Maizland). As a result, corruption, sudden changes in economic policies and food shortages occurred, leading to the 8888 Uprising –a group of massive protests around the country. As a response, the army has “killed at least three thousand” protesters, and “[displaced] many others”, which have initiated a humanitarian crisis (Maizland). In the aftermath of the 1988 protests, a new military regime came to power, changing the nation's original name of the “Union of Burma” to the “Union of Myanmar”, and renaming the capital to “Yangon” from “Rangoon”. Meanwhile, “State Law and Order Restoration Council” (SLORC), currently named ‘State Peace and Development Council’ (SPDC)” was established in 1988, aiming to “eliminate all forms of internal dissent or rebellion” (UNHCR). At the same time, although Ne Win had resigned, he continued to take part in the political actions from the background.

Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of the country's modern founder, Aung San, was an activist fighting for democracy in the country. In 1990, when the military allowed elections in the country, Aung San

Suu Kyi’s political party, “National League for Democracy” (NLD) won the parliamentary seats with 72.6% turnout (Inter-Parliamentary Union). The electoral proxy of the military, the “Union Solidarity and Development Party” (USDP) lost the elections. Nevertheless, Tatmadaw refused to yield power to the NLD, and Suu Kyi was kept in home imprisonment until 1995 (Human Rights Watch).

The military stayed in power until 2011, until when Suu Kyi had faced a total of four house imprisonments, including unlawful detentions, between the following years: 1989-1995, 2000-2002, 2003-2009. She was put in trial in 2009, and her house arrest was extended by eighteen months, making her unable to legally represent a political party until 2010 (Human Rights Watch). In 2015, another election was held, which “was the country’s first national vote since a nominally civilian government was introduced in 2011, ending nearly 50 years of military rule” (BBC). The NLD won the elections with a great majority, yet the military still held an important power.

In 2020, the NLD once again won the elections, gaining “396 seats across both houses” (UK Parliament). However, in February 2021, the military once again took political power with a coup d’état, which “was rejected by the civilian population and sparked civil disobedience, protests, and enduring armed resistance to military rule” (McKenna). The political representatives of the NLD have been treated with force since then, illustrating the military dictatorship in Myanmar.

As a result of this political conflict, a humanitarian crisis has also been taking place in Myanmar. “Violence against civilians and the intensified armed conflict following the [coup] caused tens of thousands of refugees to flee into neighboring countries and displaced over 982,000 people within Myanmar” (UNHCR). Millions of people in Myanmar were also in “urgent need of protection and humanitarian assistance in 2023” (UNHCR).



“WFP/Saikat Mojumder Taking only what they can carry, thousands of Rohingyas flee the violence in Myanmar’s northern Rakhine State and seek shelter in the Bangladeshi border district of Cox’s Bazar.” United Nations, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/06/1120362>. Accessed 28 Feb. 2025.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

National League for Democracy (NLD): The National League for Democracy (NLD) was established 1988 by Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of the country’s modern founder, Aung San. It has won the 1990, 2015, and 2021 elections with a great majority. However, the opposition, that being the military and its electoral proxy, did not allow the political party to lead the country with democracy; and has punished the leaders of it forcefully, and in times, illegally.

Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP): The “Union Solidarity and Development Party” (USDP) is a military-aligned political party in Myanmar --the electoral proxy of the Tatmadaw. It is the main opponent of the “National League for Democracy”, and is the representative of the Myanmar military in politics.

State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC): “The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), and later, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) is the military government that has ruled Myanmar since 1988. From 1988-1987, the government used the acronym SLORC; since then, their preferred term has been SPDC” (Harvard Divinity School). It has political views directly aligned with the military.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): “Established in 2002, the office acts as an expert resource and plays a catalytic and convening role” in Member States, including Myanmar (OHCHR). The United Nations (UN) has also worked to implement the Sustainable Development Goals in Myanmar, and the UN Secretary-General António Guterres has “called for Member States to urge the military leadership in Myanmar to respect the will and needs of its own people, as risks to regional stability grow” (UN).

Timeline of Events

4 January 1948	Burma gained its independence from British Rule.
2 March 1962	Burma faced its first military coup. Ne Win became the nation’s leader until 1988.
18 September 1988	State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), currently named State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)” was established.

27 September 1988	National League for Democracy (NLD) was established by Aung San Suu Kyi.
18 June 1989	The “Union of Burma” was renamed to the “Union of Myanmar”.
27 May 1990	The 1990 election, the first democratic election since 1960, was held in Myanmar, resulting in the NLD’s win.
8 November 2015	The 2015 election was held in Myanmar, once again resulting in the NLD’s win.
8 November 2020	The 2020 election was held in Myanmar, resulting in the NLD’s major win.
1 February 2021	The 2021 coup d’état occurred in Myanmar, as a result of the military dictatorship.
The political and humanitarian instability in the area continues.	

UN Involvement

The UN has been involved through providing humanitarian assistance and establishing the resolutions mentioned in the following section.

Relevant UN Documents

Resolution A/RES/75/287

Resolution A/RES/75/287, adopted by the UN General Assembly, approaches “the situation in Myanmar.” While expressing concerns about the coup and arrest of political leaders in Myanmar, the Resolution “calls upon the Myanmar armed forces to respect the will of the people as freely expressed by the results of the general election of 8 November 2020”, the release of the arrested government officials and politicians, and the stopping of all violence against the vulnerable ones (UN).

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The United Nations (UN) and the Western countries including the United States of America and the United Kingdom have condemned the military for their forceful acts. At the same time, the Association

of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) “[called] for dialogue and a ‘return to normalcy in accordance with the will and interests of the people of Myanmar” (Al Jazeera). Meanwhile, the United Nations has continued working on to implement its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including “No Poverty” and “Zero Hunger” in the area, approaching the humanitarian crisis. The UN General Assembly has also adopted Resolution A/RES/75/287 on “The situation in Myanmar” (UN).

Possible Solutions

The crisis in Myanmar has been going on for many years. For the political aspect, an agreement between the military and the democratic party is essential, which can require the interference of the United Nations after a certain point. Considering the civil war, the agreement would also help monitor the uncontrolled weapons and presence of child soldiers in the country and establish both national and international peace and security, preventing more deaths. For the humanitarian aspect, delegates can request for the UN’s specific organizations’ or offices’ further help, in ways including but not limited to providing food and clean water to the area, hosting sustainable services for quality health and education services, making support available for those who are displaced, and ensuring employment opportunities in the country. Conferences and events raising awareness can also be organized. The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should be considered while formulating any possible solutions.

Notes from the Chair

The conflict requires international cooperation as well as the consideration of different perspectives. Delegates should keep in mind the controversies, and develop clauses that address multiple perspectives. However, the level of international involvement should be to a degree that does not interfere with the national sovereignty of the Myanmar government. The importance of involving different ethnic groups’ views throughout the resolution process should be underlined. While political instability can be the focus, the economic and humanitarian aspects of the issue should be kept in mind. Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations can be taken as a reference while providing suggestions for humanitarian assistance to the region. The previous resolutions adopted by the Security Council should be researched in order to gain a better understanding of the issue.

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