

Topic #2: The War in Myanmar

I. Background Information

Myanmar, a Southeast Asian country with over 54 million inhabitants (2023), has been in conflict for decades, however it escalated into a civil war in 2021, rooted in decades of ethnic tension and political instability. A military coup on February 1, 2021 forced the democratically elected government led by Aung San Suu Kyi to step down, to which the people responded with protests and armed resistance. The State Administration Council (SAC) (a military government - military junta) intervened, using airstrikes, artillery and other brutal techniques against the resistance fighters and civilians.

The conflict has led to a significant humanitarian crisis, with millions of people displaced and facing severe food shortages, lack of medical care, and often being victims of violence. Government tactics, including the burning of villages and the use of violence that is totally unprovoked, have resulted in widespread human rights abuses and war crimes.

The Myanmar military, also known as the Tatmadaw, is known for human rights abuses, for example the persecution of Rohingya Muslims, which led to mass migration in 2017. The migration in 2017 has caused a crisis in the bordering countries that struggled with the high amount of Rohingya refugees.

II. UN Involvement

The UN has repeatedly criticized the violence in Myanmar and called for a peaceful resolution to the crisis. The UN Security Council has passed several resolutions urging the military to end the war and restore democracy.

Resolution 2669, which was adopted in December 2022, is probably the most significant UN resolution on Myanmar. It strongly criticized the military coup and the subsequent violence, demanded an immediate end to violence against civilians, and called for the release of all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi and other detained leaders. The resolution also urged member states to impose targeted sanctions on individuals and entities that are responsible for human rights abuses and the obstruction of the democratic transition. However, the UN's efforts have been hindered by the lack of consensus among Security Council members, particularly China and Russia, which have often blocked stronger measures.

III. Bloc Positions

The conflict in Myanmar has two main blocs:

1. **The Military Junta (SAC) and its Allies:** The Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) and its allied ethnic armed organizations, such as the Pa-O National Organization and the Arakan Liberation Party, support the military junta. They aim to maintain military control over the

country and suppress the opposition. The junta has used brutal tactics, including airstrikes, artillery, and ground assaults, to target resistance fighters and civilians. They also have strict censorship and restricted freedom of speech and assembly.

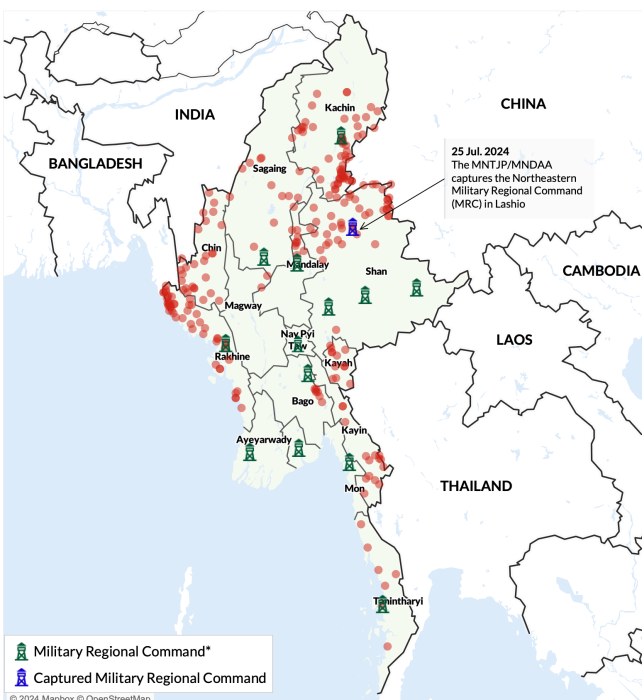
China is a major investor in Myanmar, and has significant influence over the conflict. It has been trying to maintain stability in bordering regions and prevent a complete collapse of the military junta.

2. The National Unity Government (NUG) and its Allies: The NUG, formed by ousted lawmakers, and a coalition of ethnic armed organizations, including the Karen National Union (KNU), the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), and the Arakan Army (AA), oppose the military junta and seek to restore democracy and federalism in Myanmar. They have been fighting against the military junta and have gained significant ground in several regions. The NUG has established a shadow government and has gained international recognition from some countries.

Over 2,600 new armed groups have been formed since 2021, many by anti-coup protesters. A key aspect of the conflict are the complicated relations between those resistance groups. Collaboration between Ethnic Armed Organizations (EOs), People's Defense Forces (PDFs), and Local Defense Forces (LDFs) has led to quite important victories against the military junta. However, they have slightly different goals, and tactics which has limited their potential for deeper and effective cooperation. Competition for resources and territory has also led to occasional fights between resistance groups causing harm to civilians.

Locations captured by resistance forces

February 2021 - October 2024

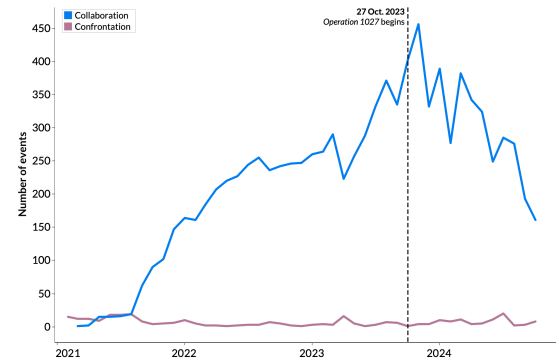


*Source: ISP-Myanmar



Violent confrontation and collaboration between resistance groups in Myanmar

February 2021 - October 2024



*Operation 1027, started in late October 2023, aimed to gain territory from the military junta in northern Shan State. It consisted of multiple attacks on military targets and resulted in important gains for the Three Brotherhood resistance alliance.

IV. Questions to Consider

Consider the questions below when doing your research and preparing for the conference.

1. What is your country's official stance on this conflict?
2. Is your country affected by the conflict?
3. What steps can be taken to address the urgent humanitarian crisis and protect civilians?
4. How can the UN Security Council ensure accountability for human rights abuses and war crimes committed by the military junta?
5. What role can regional organizations, such as ASEAN, play in resolving the crisis?
6. If that is within your country's policies, how can international support be provided to the National Unity Government and other resistance groups?
7. How can the international community address the root causes of the conflict, such as ethnic tensions and political instability?

V. Useful Links and Sources

- UN News: <https://www.un.org/news/>
- UNSC resolution 2669: http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2669#google_vignette
- Amnesty International - Human rights in Myanmar: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/myanmar/>
- Crisis Group - most recent updates: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar>
- Myanmar Now - most recent updates: <https://www.myanmar-now.org/>
- World Political Review: <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/myanmar-civil-war-junta/>
- Geopolitical Monitor: <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/new-season-new-opportunities-in-myanmar-civil-war/>
- Asia Media Centre - Who's fueling the war: <https://www.asiamediacentre.org.nz/who-s-fuelling-myanmar-s-civil-war>
- ACLED data - data source, images: <https://acleddata.com/2024/11/26/between-cooperation-and-competition-the-struggle-of-resistance-groups-in-myanmar/#s3>