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Stabilising the situation in the Myanmar region

Security council





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Introduction

The Myanmar region has been dealing with some major issues such as ethnic tension and political instability. This culminated in the (failed) military coup of February 2021, which led to a huge humanitarian crisis. The need for stabilizing the situation is urgent, so that this crisis can be solved as soon as possible.



Definition of key terms

Civil Disobedience Movement

A protest movement in response to the military coup that had citizens in all sectors refusing to work which led to major economic instability, this played a huge part in the coup failing.

Coup d'État

the sudden, violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group, generally military forces.

Genocide

The systematic extermination of ethnic, racial or religious groups.

Military Junta

A government led by military leaders, often characterized by authoritarian rule. The current military junta in Myanmar is led by Min Aung Hlaing.



General Overview

Historical context

Myanmar has had a very turbulent and complicated history. While things were looking good when they achieved independence from the United Kingdom in 1948, this region still hasn't seen much stability, as ethnic conflicts and military coups have kept it in constant turmoil. A military group that is widely known as the Tatmadaw has dominated the nation's political landscape and held power for much of the country's modern history. After these decades of tyranny, a turning point came in 2011 when the military junta made some political reforms which resulted in the partial democratization of the country. This move to democracy, however, has caused many more difficulties.

Ethnic and Religious conflicts

The general, yet most persistent problem in Myanmar, is ethnic and religious conflicts. Myanmar is a very diverse country; with over 135 recognized ethnic groups, all having very different cultures, languages, and traditions. The largest ethnic group, the Burmans (Bamar), consists of about two-thirds of the population. However, many other ethnic groups, like Karen, Kachin, Shan, and Rakhine, have fought for greater autonomy and recognition of their rights.

These have, over time, culminated in (armed) conflicts between different ethnic groups and the Myanmar military. In turn, these often create massive displacements, human rights violations, and generally a huge humanitarian crisis. One of the largest conflicts involves the Rohingya, a Muslim ethnic group from the Rakhine State. This military crackdown has since come to be known as the Rohingya Crisis: In August 2017, there was a crackdown by Myanmar's military in the Rakhine state after some police posts were attacked by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army; the military's response included killings, rapes, and burning of villages. This has been highly condemned and is by many considered genocide.

Due to all these issues, more than 700 thousand Rohingyas fled to neighboring Bangladesh where many are still living in refugee camps. The Myanmar government denies all the allegations of ethnic cleansing and denies giving the Rohingyas citizenship, labeling them illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.



2021 coup d'état

Another major problem in Myanmar includes political instability; there have been many military coups within the country, with the most recent one happening on February 1, 2021. It happened after the military forces alleged fraud in the 2020 elections, which had been won by the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi.

This coup has triggered widespread protests all over the country, with millions of people refusing to go to work (The Civil Disobedience Movement) and thus destabilising the economy. The Myanmar military responded with a harsh crackdown using lethal force to suppress opposition. Thousands of people were arrested, and hundreds more were killed. The coup has resulted in major political and economic chaos; there is rising inflation, unemployment, and poverty. The coup also paved the way for more clashes between the military and other ethnic armed groups, further exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.

Economic challenges

Myanmar deals with many economic challenges which have only been furthered by the political instability and conflict. Although the country has an abundance of natural resources such as oil, gas and minerals, they still have a very underdeveloped economy. This has been hindered by decades of corruption and conflicts. The 2011 political reforms did lead to some economic growth, with foreign investments coming in. However, the 2021 coup immediately reversed this whole progress. At this point millions of people have fallen into poverty, further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Myanmar's regime has faced international sanctions and isolation due to its human rights abuses. This has a further negative impact on Myanmar's economy, particularly in its banking and trade sectors.



Major Parties Involved

ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)

A regional intergovernmental organization consisting of ten Southeast Asian countries, including Myanmar, focused on promoting political and economic cooperation.

Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH)

The CRPH is a group of democratically elected lawmakers that oppose the military coup and strive for a democratic Myanmar.

National League for Democracy (NLD)

The NLD is the main pro-democracy party in Myanmar, they are led by Aung San Suu Kyi. They won the 2020 general elections after which their leadership was overthrown by the military coup.

National Unity Government (NUG)

A shadow government formed by the CRPH, it seeks international recognition as the legitimate government.

Tatmadaw

The Tatmadaw is the national military of Myanmar, they are the ones that committed the February 2021 coup. Their roots can be traced back to the Burma Independence Army (BIA) which was founded by a group of revolutionaries that included Aung San (Aung San Suu Kyi's father) in 1941. During the following years the BIA had already formed with other militias from the national army eventually forming what is now known as the Tatmadaw. They quickly gained more power and influence and in 1962 it had seized power over the country with a coup, it would remain at power for the next 50 years virtually undisputed. They are internationally renowned for their human rights violations such as ethnic cleansing.



Timeline Of Key Events

- 1057** King Anawrahta founds the first unified Myanmar state at Pagan and adopts Theravada Buddhism.
- 1852** Britain annexes lower Burma
- 1885-1856** Burma becomes a province of British India
- 1937** Britain separates Burma from India and makes it a crown colony
- 1942-1945** Burma is briefly invaded by the Japanese. Britain helps liberate Burma together with the AFPFL (used to be the BIA), led by Aung San.
- 1947** Aung Sang is assassinated by political opponents,
- 1948** Burma becomes independent, with U Nu (a former AFPFL member) as prime minister.
- 1962** U Nu's government is overthrown in a military coup led by Gen Ne Win, who inaugurates the "the Burmese Way to Socialism", nationalising the economy, forming a single-party state and banning independent newspapers.
- 1989** Burma is renamed Myanmar.
- 1990** The NLD wins the elections by a landslide but this is ignored by the government.
- 2020-2021** The NLD again wins the elections but the military alleges fraud and overthrows the government in a coup.



Relevant UN treaties and events

S/RES/2669; Security Council demands immediate end to violence in Myanmar, urges restraint, release of arbitrarily detained prisoners, 21 December 2022.

A/HRC/52/31; Reaffirming all relevant General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions and decisions on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, 4 April 2023.

A/RES/72/248; Condemns the widespread violations of human rights in Myanmar, particularly in the Rakhine State. It called for the Myanmar government to grant access to UN agencies to ensure the safe return of displaced persons, 24 December 2017.



Previous attempts to solve the issue

Restoring democracy, National League for Democracy

The National League for Democracy has put in much work to restore the democracy in Myanmar. They won the 2020 general elections by a landslide, all their hard work however, was overthrown by the coup that was committed in 2021.

Sanctions, The European Union and the USA

The European Union and the USA have imposed sanctions on the military junta to try and discourage their inhumane endeavours, these came in the form of financial sanctions and cutting off logistical support.

Mediation, China and India

China and India have tried to help mediate this issue, leveraging their regional influence. These efforts often prioritize stability.



Possible solutions

This is a very complex issue with a lot of factors at play, here you can find some of the possible solutions.

Mediation

These issues have long been fought out with violence, that is why now it should try to be resolved with words. There could be a UN backed mediation team that could facilitate inclusive and proper dialogue between the junta, and representatives of the ethnic groups. Clear timelines and benchmarks should be imposed so all measures can have a clear timeframe.

Regionalisation

Another solution could be to decentralize the government and impose a federal system where regional governments control their finances so that all resources can be divided equally and these regional governments can handle in the best interest of their own people, inspiration for this system can be taken from how the USA operates in this federal system.

Safe zones

And finally a solution that is more for the short term could be setting up safe zones within Myanmar to protect innocent civilians and to deliver humanitarian aid. Investigators should also come along to these safezones to document all crimes that the government has committed to prepare for future trials.



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