

Forum: United Nations Security Council

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Introduction

After Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy won the general election in November of 2020, the Tatmadaw or the armed forces of Burma, who were supporting the opposing political party, demanded a rerun of the election, claiming that irregularities had led to an unfair election. However, the military supported this claim with no evidence, and both national and international observers of the election said that it was done in a fair manner and the Union Election Commission decided that there would not be a rerun. The military staged a coup at the next session of parliament and arrested Aung San Suu Kyi. After taking her to an undisclosed location, the military said they were holding her for various legal charges, including possession of 7 walkie-talkies which she was not authorized to have. Additionally, the military declared a state of emergency that will last for a year. The military's prevention of access to the internet has led to record-breaking protests due to potential misinformation. National security forces have been trying to hold back the protestors using a variety of weapons, including live ammunition. Over 400 people have been killed during the protests, over 100 of them in one

day. The military has stated that once they would hold a free and fair election once the state of emergency ends. It is crucial that this situation is addressed immediately in order to prevent more people's lives from being put in danger.

Definition of Key Terms

Coup d'etat

The sudden, violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group.

National League of Democracy

A political party in Myanmar led by Aung San Suu Kyi, which advocates a non-violent movement towards multi-party democracy. The party was founded in 1988, and after winning the 1990 elections, members were placed on house arrest after the military claimed the elections were fraudulent. The party won again in 2015 in a landslide victory but was overthrown in 2021.

Tatmadaw

The official name of the Burmese military. It was founded in 1941 and is led by Senior General Ming Aung Hlaing.

Union Solidarity and Development Party

Myanmar's main opposition party that is backed by the military. As of 2020, they only have 33 seats in the parliament. The USDP was founded in 2010 by the previous military junta. The link to the military is due to powerful economic

interests and resources that may shape the party's presence in the future.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

ASEAN is an economic union between 10 member states in Southeast Asia with the purpose of accelerating economic growth, social progress, and cultural development in the area.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw is the formal name for the parliament of Myanmar. It was established in 2008 and is divided into two sections; the Amyotha Hluttaw (House of Nationalities) and the Pyithu Hluttaw (House of Representatives). After the coup d'état, the assembly was dissolved by the acting president because of the nation's one-year state of emergency.

Stratocracy

A government based on and led by the military.

Internet Blackout

The complete or partial failure of internet services. It can occur due to cyberattacks, censorship, police service actions, or disasters.

Rohingya Muslim

An ethnic group who mostly follow Islam and live in Rakhine State, Myanmar. Before the displacement crisis in 2017, 1.4 million Rohingya Muslims lived in Myanmar. However, 740,000 fled to Bangladesh because the Tatmadaw

were committing the crime of ethnic cleansing.

Fraudulent Elections

Illegal interference in an election by manipulating or rigging the results for a candidate.

Sanctions

Penalties are placed on countries by other nations to enforce obedience towards international laws, rules, and regulations.

Arms Embargo

A sanction placed on weaponry.

General Overview

Myanmar, also known as Burma, is a country in Southeast Asia bordered by Thailand, Laos, India, and Bangladesh. The country has been politically unstable since its independence from Britain in 1948. Myanmar was ruled by the Burmese military, the Tatmadaw, up until 2011. In 2008, after decades-long sanctions, the military decided to shift towards creating a democratic government. The Tatmadaw drafted the constitution which was ultimately accepted, and it allowed for a freer Myanmar. This new government consisted of the military having 25% of the seats as amendments to a new constitution needed to be passed by 75%. Apart from that, the Burmese military also had the power to veto anything they didn't agree with.

On the opposite side of the political spectrum, there were many people and figures against the military regime, Aung San Suu Kyi a Burmese politician and activist who is most well known for winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. She was detained and placed on house arrest by the junta from 1989 until 2010 under the conditions that she could never be president. However, in 2015 San Suu Kyi's political party the "National League of Democracy" won 77% of the seats in the Burmese Parliament, and she was therefore given the title of "state counselor" because of the underlying conditions of her liberation. Aung San Suu Kyi's relationship with the Tatmadaw, the Burmese military, satisfied both parties. She condoned and supported the military's killing and raping of Rohingya Muslims, resulting in thousands of deaths and the displacement of over 1 million people. Her reputation as an advocate of peace and a human rights leader was ruined, and international awards, excluding her Nobel, were revoked. In 2020, Aung San Suu Kyi decided that the military's power in Myanmar should end as she proposed to amend the constitution. Although the new constitution was popular among members of the Parliament, the Tatmadaw felt betrayed by Suu Kyi's actions and ended up vetoing it.

The Tatmadaw needed to find a way to maintain power in the Burmese government. Under the constitution, the military could take action if they believed that the country's sovereignty was threatened. On February 1, 2021, the coup d'etat was launched. The military took over the government, arrested Aung San Suu Kyi and other members of the National League for Democracy in a raid. The military then announced that they would remain in

power for one year, being led by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. TV signals, phone signals, and internet access were all cut in the capital city, Naypyidaw. The country was blocked; no one could leave as passenger flights were stopped. Although in other parts of the country, internet usage was available, phone service was down. In Yangon, Myanmar's largest city, barbed wired roadblocks were set up as the Tatmadaw began to appear in government buildings such as City Hall. The Burmese people are terrified and fear that the stratocracy they lived through for decades is now back.

Major Parties and their views

China

Mainland China has presented mixed perspectives in this conflict. They vetoed attempts to condemn the coup; however, they have supported requests for Aung San Suu Kyi's freedom. They believe that sanctions would only serve to worsen the situation. China believes that because it is a domestic issue, it should be solved on a national level.

ASEAN

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is strongly against international military action and sanctions. They believe in Myanmar's independence, and they are more in favor of a peaceful, diplomatic solution.

Tatmadaw

The Tatmadaw believe that the recent election was rigged and unfair and

therefore the results of the election should not be considered. They believe that Aung San Suu Kyi is a criminal and that she should be arrested and charged with various crimes. The Tatmadaw is against international involvement because it would result in them losing power.

People of Myanmar

The civilians of Myanmar have been negatively affected by the coup, and therefore, thousands of civilians have protested and demonstrated against the military. Civilians are against the military ruling of the nation and have in the past forced constitutional reformations in order to prevent the military from having total control over the country.

Timeline of Events

1824-1826	First Anglo-Burmese War. British powers took control over certain coastal portions of Burma. This military campaign was the longest, and most expensive of its type at the time. More than 15,000 British soldiers died.
1852	Second Anglo-Burmese War. Seeking more natural resources, the British empire provoked a second war and took control of the entirety of Lower Burma
1885	Third Anglo-Burmese War. Britain took control of Upper Burma in less than 2 weeks due to their diplomatic relationship with France.
1 January 1886	Burma became an official province of British India

1937	The British separated the Burman province, which became its own, individual colony. The new colony had its own democratically elected assembly. Some viewed the separation from British India as a ploy from the British to ensure that they do not go through the same reform that India was passing through
1942	During WWII, Japanese forces invaded Burma and secured control over portions of the colony, however, towards the end of the war, troops from the British Indian army regained control over the region.
January 4, 1948	Burman independence from the British Empire
1962	Burmese General Ne Win took power through a coup. Control over Burma was given to the military, creating the Military Junta.
1988	Protests against the totalitarian regime across the country were violently stopped leading to the death of up to 3,000 people.
1990	In the general elections, Aung San Suu Kyi won an overwhelming 72.6% of available votes. The Tatmadaw refused to recognize the results and instead placed Aung San Suu Kyi on house arrest.
2011	The Military Junta Government was abolished. A civilian government followed.
February 1, 2021	Coup d'etat. The Tatmadaw arrested both the president and state councilor the day before they would be sworn into office, thereby preventing the results of the election from being realized.
March 27, 2021	114 pro-democracy protesters were killed by Myanmar's security force.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The United Nations has expressed its concern surrounding the Myanmar Coup. The UN Security Council held an emergency meeting where the United Kingdom drafted a resolution urging for the restoration of democracy in Burmese society that includes condemning the Tatmadaw's actions as well as the releasing of detainees. However, this resolution did not pass as the representatives of China and Russia relayed the draft resolution to confer with their respective governments. India and Vietnam also acted in a reserved manner in the meeting. On March 10, 2021, after countless condemnations from the international community and multiple threats of sanctions, the 15 members of the Security Council reached a consensus with a presidential statement. This statement included the condemnation of violence, called for the end of the conflict, restraint by the military, the release of the detained government officials and figures, and a settlement between both political parties of Myanmar. In addition, the United Nations Security Council further encouraged the Burmese government and its distinct parties to cooperate with the efforts proposed by the ASEAN, the U.N envoy to Myanmar, and to ensure access to humanitarian aid for all Burmese citizens. On April 24, 2021, ASEAN leaders met in Jakarta to discuss the recent events in Myanmar. Min Aung Hlaing, the leader of the Tatmadaw, was not referred to as Burma's Head of State. In this summit, the ASEAN released a statement about how there was a "five-point consensus" between Min Aung Hlaing and the group.

In addition to the Security Council, the United Nations Human Rights Council also participated in the condemnation of the coup. They renewed the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and extended it for a period of one year. The council also urged the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to monitor and assess the human rights situation with a focus on accountability regarding the violations of international human rights law, international humanitarian laws, and law and security sector reform starting February 1, 2021. A resolution drafted by the Human Rights Council on the situation in Myanmar, in addition to the Special Rapporteur, also asked for the following of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, collecting evidence of the human rights violations.

Past Action

Various nations have already issued sanctions against Myanmar since the coup, including The United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and the EU. Most of the sanctions have targeted specific military leaders, including the Commander-in-Chief of Myanmar's armed forces, Min Aung Hlaing. However, problems have arisen because although most western nations have issued these sanctions, many Asian countries have not. This limits the effectiveness of sanctions that have been implemented. The largest foreign investors in Myanmar are Singapore with 34% of all foreign investments, and Hong Kong with 26%. Neither of these nations has implemented sanctions yet.

Singapore is one of the countries with the most at stake if sanctions are implemented against Myanmar due to their high volume of investment there. The nation has nearly 2 billion USD invested, all of which is at risk of being lost due to sanctions. Sanctions can reportedly lower a country's GDP growth rate by up to 2% per year. This may initially sound small and inconsequential, but Myanmar's GDP growth in 2020 was 3.3%. According to Asian Development Bank, Myanmar's GDP is going to drop by nearly 10% in 2021. This economic contraction would negatively impact foreign investors, meaning that these investors would want to avoid sanctions at all costs.

Additionally, in the past, Myanmar has made efforts to lower the military's control over the country. Multiple reformations of their national constitution have occurred, leading to the dissolution of the military junta in 2011 in an effort to become a more democratic nation. This effort was successful but not perfect as democratic elections were held, however, corruption was still present.

Possible Solutions

Because of the intensity of the situation, many countries are scrambling to find the best solution to end this crisis. Suggestions include finding solutions that benefit both the Tatmadaw and the NLD. This can include a ceasefire, treaty, etc. This allows both parties to remain in power, and for the citizens of Myanmar to be safe. Another option could be to pressure the Tatmadaw to stop, by sanctioning Myanmar. Sanctioning Myanmar has worked in the past

to restore democracy which can be seen between the years 2008-2010 when a democratic government was introduced because of an economic crisis due to the sanctions. However, because sanctions impact the innocent civilians and the infrastructure of Burmese society, the international community must sanction the military, not the population and economy. This means that an Arms Embargo is a very good way to stop the violence from the Tatmadaw, as most of the weapons are supplied by countries such as the United States, Canada, the European Union, etc. The Burmese people are victims of power-hungry groups, solutions must take into account the innocent lives as well.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

One of the most important factors in a democracy is the equality of its constituents. In Myanmar, equality does not exist. The Tatmadaw has too much power and control over the government, especially during the current state of emergency. Their power has allowed them to oppress and control Myanmar's people. The UN's Sustainable Development goal number ten "Reduced inequalities within and among countries" encompasses this quite well. There are significant inequalities between the people of Myanmar, and the military which is in control. Returning to a civilian government, similar to that which existed before the military's coup would help restore equality. This can be possible by diplomatic and international pressure. However, a different system of government entirely may be necessary to prevent this same situation from happening again in the future.

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Appendix

- I. Article explaining the general overview of the Myanmar situation and the historical implications that have led the country and its government to their current status.
<https://www.vox.com/22260076/myanmar-coup-military-suu-kyi-explain>
- II. Article explaining and stating the sanctions that have been brought upon Myanmar.
https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/18/myanmar-sanctions-and-human-rights#_What_sanctions_have_1
- III. Article describing the internet blackout which has caused national and international outrage as suppression of civilians voices is occurring.
<https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Myanmar-Crisis/Myanmar-shutdown-of-wireless-internet-fuels-fears-of-news-blackout>
- IV. Article explaining the different points of view in the Myanmar situation in a brief but coherent manner.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55902070>