



NOVEMBER 2022

INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION IN MYANMAR

Yashvi Sachdeva

Edited By: Meenakshi Nair, Divyashree Jha

About the author

Yashvi Sachdeva is an undergraduate student at the Jindal School of Liberal Arts and Humanities and is Research Intern at the Centre for Security Studies, JSIA. All views expressed in this publication belong to the author and do not reflect the opinions or positions of the Centre for Security Studies

About the Centre for Security Studies

The Centre for Security Studies (CSS) was established in 2020 as the Jindal School of International Affairs' first student-run research centre under the aegis of Prof Dr Pankaj K Jha. Researchers at CSS – through in-depth analysis briefs and events, reports, policy briefs and print publications – explore both regional and thematic topics in the broader field of international security studies. The concept of international security has been expanded to reflect not merely the study of state security, but also include topics like ethnic, sectarian and religious conflict; civil wars and state failure; cyber and space warfare; resource related security issues; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; defence economics and also the role of ethics or morality in the formulation of security policies. The complexity of these matters is what the Centre for Security Studies attempts to unfold. Please refer to www.cssjsia.com for further details, and follow the Centre's social media platforms for critical news and research updates:



www.linkedin.com/company/jindal-centre-for-security-studies/



www.instagram.com/css_jsia/



https://twitter.com/Css_Jsia

Get in touch with us through email: css@jgu.edu.in

Important disclaimer

All views expressed in this publication belong to the author and do not reflect the opinions or positions of the Centre for Security Studies. While researchers and editors at CSS strive towards any instances, CSS as an organisation does not take any responsibility for any instance of plagiarism committed by any authors. The onus to ensure plagiarism-free work lies with authors themselves.

IB2211008

The country of Myanmar also known as The Union of Burma has had a turbulent history throughout time. To begin with, the country was colonized by the United Kingdom in 1885 and gained independence in the year 1948. Like most newly independent countries it adopted parliamentary democracy, but the period of democracy only lasted for a short period of time. In 1962, a military coup led by General Ni Win subdued democracy and established military rule for the next twenty-six years. The period of Ni Win's arbitrary rule was characterized by internal and civil tensions, inflation, food shortages, protests, and mass killings.

Interestingly, through the history of Myanmar we can observe that even in a military coup rule, people's protest plays an important part as it forced General Ni Win to step down from his position of authority. This by no means meant the end of military rule in Burma another coup took over Burma and changed the name of the country to Myanmar.

Moving a few years ahead, in 2007, there was the emergence of the Saffron movement which was against the political, economic, and social situations of the country. This led to the adoption of a constitution in 2008 which still gave the military immense authority in the parliament and in 2011 the junta military dissolved giving way to a new era of representation and democratic elections in 2015.

This democratic regime couldn't exist for long as recently a triggering point that caught global attention was overthrowing of the democratically elected government on February 1, 2021. This regime has been characterized by poverty, protests, violence, and a lack of basic human rights for healthcare, food, and water. Several interesting stances taken by international organizations and countries will be discussed further in the paper.

The Role of the United States of America (USA) in Myanmar

The United States of America has played a pivotal role in The Union of Myanmar. To begin with, they had cordial relations when Myanmar was a newly independent nation. There was a turning point in the diplomatic relationship after Myanmar started to be ruled by military regimes as it did not support curbing the fundamental rights of citizens. This idea of a diplomatic idea was strengthened by imposing an arms embargo on Myanmar in 1988. After the junta rule dissolved in 2011, the USA has had restricted relations with Myanmar due to the fear of its turbulent political history and dominance of the military. Their fears have been proven true by the recent overthrow of democracy by the Junta government in 2021.

Nonetheless, The United States of America has played an important role to ensure the healthy and safe lives of the citizens of Myanmar: To begin with, The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been working with NGOs, local agencies, and other agencies to propagate health programs, welfare, responses to devastation like Cyclone Nargis of 2008. Such policies have been strengthened after the military rule established by the Junta Government where the USA Government assures to help the minorities and vulnerable problems of Myanmar. Not only this, but an interagency committee to monitor that no funds are being provided by the USA agencies to the Junta military in Myanmar.

The president of the United States, Joe Biden ensured to freeze of all US assets that were given to benefit the Myanmar government, preventing the junta government from accessing the Myanmar funds held in the United States. Such strong measures though do not prevent the United States' ability to support the well-being of citizens via NGOs and other civil societies.

The United States of America has played an important role in pressurising the Junta government from violence and atrocities. In addition to that, within the periphery of the USA, the Department of Homeland Security designated Burma with a Temporary Protect Status on 12th March 2021 for eighteen months as the conditions in Burma prevented the natives and inhabitants of Burma to return to their homes safely.

The Role of the European Union (EU) in Myanmar

The European Union has played an indirect role in the Myanmar conflict. To begin with, over time the European Union has played an important role in Myanmar politics since 2011 and has supported the emergence of democracy and economic reforms within the country. Firstly, with the transition in Myanmar, the EU removed most of the sanctions imposed on the country and signed several agreements like the “Everything but Arms” scheme wherein the imports from Myanmar to Europe would be duty-free and quota-free. Additionally, In June 2016, the EU adopted a strategy to support the reforms taking place in Myanmar where it focuses on cooperation between the EU and Myanmar at several levels: helping in regulating human rights issues, delivering aid, establishing a Joint Peace Fund, and assisting development in the region. Over the years, several more agreements have been signed to support democracy and aid the multidimensional progress of the region.

Post the establishment of the military coup in Myanmar the EU has imposed the fourth round of sanctions on Myanmar where 65 individuals and 10 entities where in their assets have been frozen, prohibiting travel in European territories, ban on the export of goods that the Junta government and military could use to increase the human rights violation within the region.

While the EU has taken steps to restrict and condemn the military coup, experts argue that the *Everything But Arms* scheme with Myanmar shall be revoked but the EU has argued that such a step shall impoverish women in garment industries and push the civilians into a further vicious cycle. Furthermore, the EU believes that the EBA policy doesn't benefit the military and oppressive system but rather is a tool to support the public and residents of Myanmar. An example of the same is that H&M a famous clothing brand is still importing goods from Myanmar but is deciding to close any connections with the same. Thus, there are controversial perspectives on what the European Union shall do regarding the EBA policy for which there isn't a straightforward action as of now.

EU supported the emergence of parliamentary democracy in Myanmar and believes that citizens shall be protected, provided for, and shall have the ability to live a life without restraints. Post, the

junta rule, the EU continued to provide funds to help the displaced communities and conflict-ridden regions of the country. The EU also believes that ASEAN and the EU shall align together for humanitarian assistance and aid.

The Role of China in Myanmar

China and Myanmar have had a cordial relationship throughout history. Initially, Myanmar was one of the first countries to recognize China as a nation in 1949. In 1988, Myanmar underwent several economic reforms that enhanced the two countries' relations. Over course of time, China has become the largest source of trade and weapon supplier for Myanmar and China also imports several essential goods from Myanmar creating a bilateral arrangement and dependency. China is also an important source of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Myanmar and also has invested in several electricity projects in the country.

Amidst the military coup in Myanmar, The Republic of China has decided to support the junta government and military dominance by recognizing its legitimacy in United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Recent reports, it has been showcased that Beijing will install an LNG plant in Myanmar. Additionally, China has agreed to implement the China- Myanmar Economic Corridor to enhance cross-border trade and ensure development in Myanmar. Furthermore, The Chinese government has been supporting autocratic rule by providing military aid and assistance to the junta government.

Yet, this isn't a single-sided intention to support the junta government instead the Chinese government hopes that Myanmar will help China in the ASEAN issue of the South China Sea conflict to increase China's dominance in international waters. Such collaboration between two autocratic countries seems to be dangerous for the democratic order in the world and societal order.

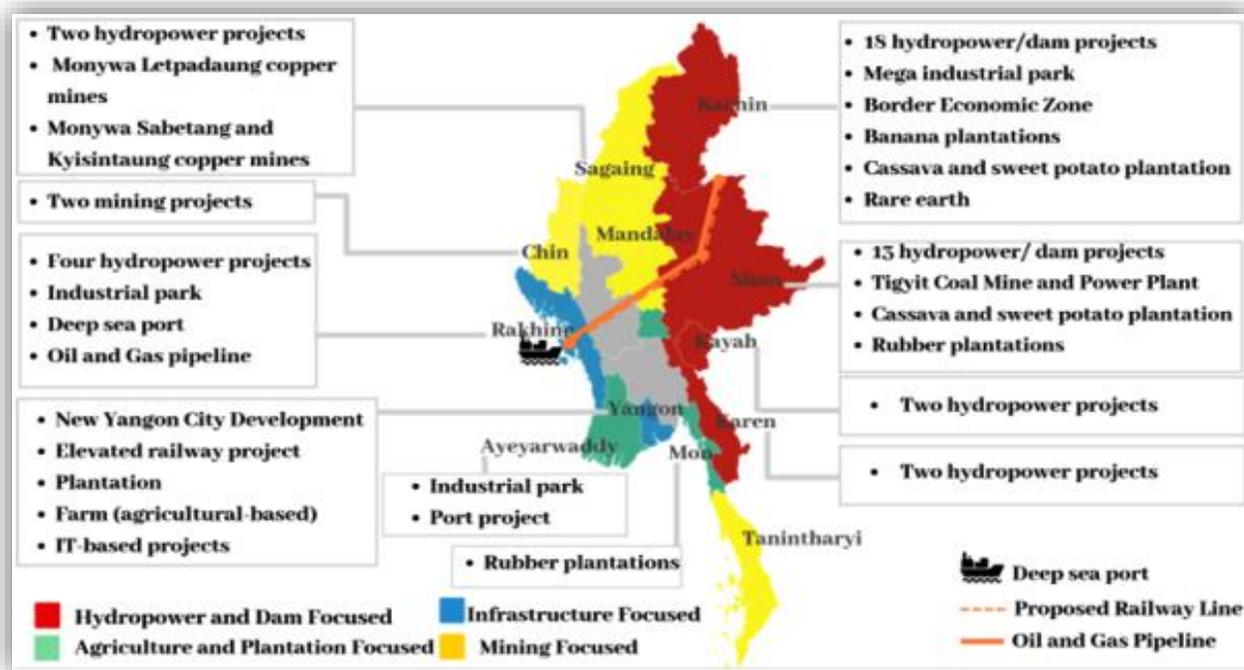


Fig. 1¹

¹ Samsani, S. (no date) Understanding the relations between Myanmar and China, ORF. Available at: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/understanding-the-relations-between-myanmar-and-china/> (Accessed: November 14, 2022).

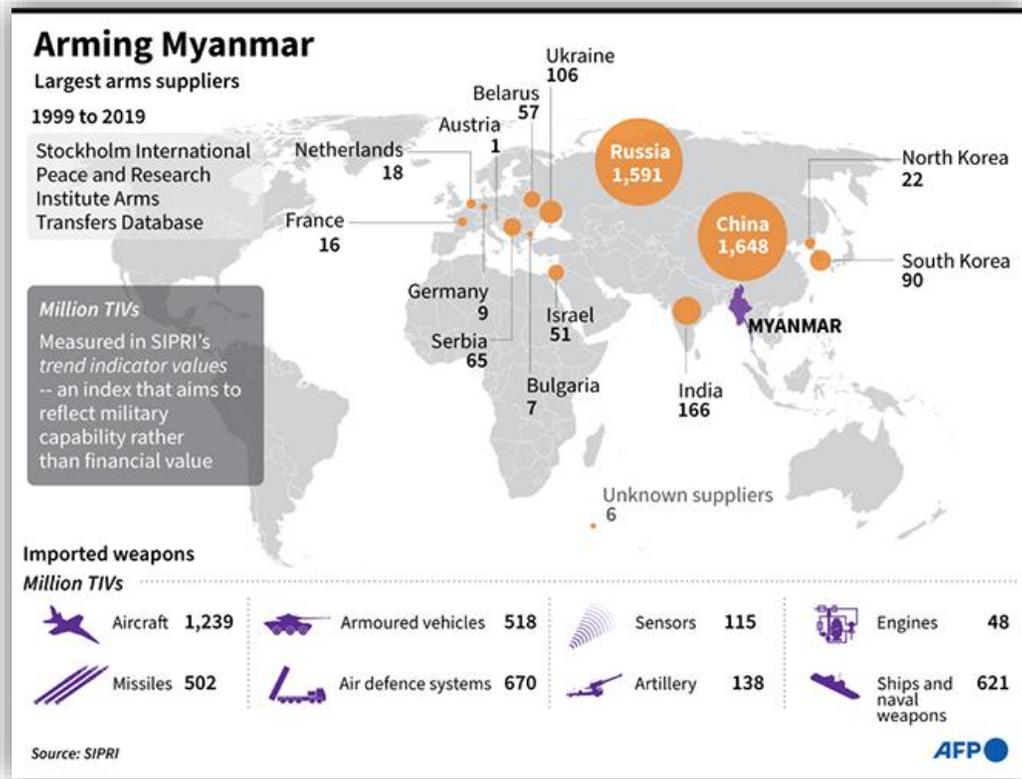


Fig. 2²

The Role of Russia in Myanmar

“The enemy of my enemy is my friend” is often said. The most prevalent and relevant example in recent times is the partnership between Russia and Myanmar. Due to the Russia- Ukraine war and

² Samsani, S. (no date) *Understanding the relations between Myanmar and China*, ORF. Available at: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/understanding-the-relations-between-myanmar-and-china/> (Accessed: November 14, 2022).

the Junta military's takeover in Myanmar, there has been a strong alignment between the leaders of the countries.

It is without a doubt that Russia is the second-highest supplier of arms and ammunition to Myanmar and has also provided postgraduate education to the military men of Myanmar. Certain political events have showcased the solidified relationship between the two. Firstly, Russia was one of the main countries to send representatives to the Armed Forces Day parade in March 2021. Secondly, Myanmar has supported the invasion of Ukraine at the global level. Thirdly, the leaders of the two countries have met frequently over the past year to enhance their cooperation.

Over the time period, several agreements have been signed between the two countries related to the export and import of arms. In January 2021, both countries signed a contract to deliver Myanmar the Russian anti-aircraft system and UAV drones. Such measures have assured that the two autocratic countries are holding each other's back in the international community, especially against the sanctions being imposed by the West.

The Role of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Myanmar

Myanmar has been a part of ASEAN since 1977 which aims to enable and establish cooperation between Southeast Asian countries. With the ongoing crisis in Myanmar, ASEAN tried to bring Junta to the table and discuss the situation, mass killings, and harassment taking place within the nation. On 24 April 2021, the ASEAN tabled a document called the 5-point program which aimed at cessation of violence in the country, dialogue between the military and the National Unity Government, providing humanitarian aid, deployment of ASEAN Special Envoy, and enabling ASEAN delegates to visit the conflicted region.

It has been more than a year since this agreement came into place, yet the Junta government in Myanmar has continued its atrocities and human rights violation completely ignoring the 5-point program. Over the course of the past few months, the Junta regime has refused to attend ASEAN

meetings, declined ASEAN delegates from entering the territory, and denied ASEAN states from meeting the former Prime Minister.

In conclusion, ASEAN shall take stronger and bolder steps against the Junta regime, but a recent statement given by ASEAN reaffirms the importance of a peaceful discussion and agreement with Myanmar. The Myanmar conflict is a major threat to the unity of South Asian countries and their established democratic regimes.

The Role of the United Nations (UN)in Myanmar

The United Nations has played a quintessential role in the Myanmar conflict. Firstly, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) suggested certain guidelines to ensure the delivery of COVID-19 Vaccines to promote general health and well-being.

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) passed a resolution to prevent the supply of arms and ammunition by member states to Myanmar. Yet, despite the ratification of this resolution, it is a nonbinding agreement creating a major hurdle in the implementation of the same. Additionally, it is important to note that Myanmar is still being provided with arms and ammunition by countries such as China and Russia making its resolution unfruitful.

The UNSC has given veto power to the permanent 5 members: USA, China, UK, Russia, and France i.e. the winners of world war two. Passing a UNSC resolution amidst an international situation like this is imperative but this would require Russia and China to not use their veto power in this case. Thus, the veto power is a direct hurdle in saving the lives of many innocent civilians, making the UN less effective in such a situation.

As per the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) report, it has been recorded that 44000 households have been provided with necessities, health care items, and money for survival. UNHRC has also been in contact with other regional organizations such as ASEAN and NGOs to tackle the problem of Rohingyas in Myanmar. In 2022, the UNHRC will focus on the creation of conditions for the return of IDPs.

Yet there is not much has been achieved by the United Nations to prevent the atrocities continuously taking place in the region of Myanmar. A suggestion for United Nations is that it shall deploy UN Peacekeeping forces to prevent the ever-increasing atrocities and brutal murders taking place within the nation. Additionally, I believe that the United Nations shall use its funds to directly country the junta government rather than simply taking a backseat.

The Role of India in Myanmar

The government of India has showcased immense support for the democratic reforms taking place in Myanmar. On the day of the overthrow of democracy in Myanmar, the Ministry of external affairs of India gave a neutral stance and did not condemn the Junta government directly. Yet, the Indian government has taken the necessary steps to reduce the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. On the other side of the coin, India attended Myanmar's Armed Forces Day.

It has also been suspected that the Indian government has supplied weapons and remote-control air defense stations to Myanmar. Another controversial decision is that in the UNGA resolution to ban the flow of arms in Myanmar, the Indian state chose to abstain in that situation. Furthermore, India is also against the UNSC resolution brought forth by the United Kingdom with stringent efforts targeting Myanmar's military force and coup.

The purpose of the Indian State seems to be multifold. To begin with, Myanmar shares a common border and thus the Indian government does not want to instill dispute against a country in such proximity. Secondly, Myanmar is a country bestowed with natural gases, rare earth metals, and other natural resources which are required by the developing nation. One significant factor behind such an action can be the Look East Policy. Thus, many reports and articles have quoted India to be "strangely silent" in this situation. Thus, after looking into such scenarios, it can be concluded that India has taken a safe stance against the Myanmar dispute in the Southeast Asian region.

Another alternative for India can be that it shall hit two birds with one stone, to begin with, India shall provide humanitarian aid to the refugees and affected people due to the Junta rule. It shall

simultaneously take no firm stand against Junta rule as it shall directly impact its relations with a close ally Russia. Furthermore, providing aid to affected people will abide by UNHRC recommendations creating good relations with the West while not threatening the existing ones with the East.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident that the world has divided opinions and stances on the Myanmar conflict. This situation isn't merely a political event but a strategic one involving several layers of diplomacy, trade, economy, growth, global reputation, and social crisis. Countries have either opted for very strong stances like that of the USA or have come forward to support the regime in the case of Russia. While other organizations and countries either haven't taken a definite stance or are unable to implement their actions due to several restraints. It is these actions that shall determine the future of the civilians of the country, the political turnout, and international relations between several countries in the international domain.

Bibliography

- Refugees, United Nations High Commissioner for. n.d. “UNHCR Steps up Aid for Displaced in Myanmar as Conflict Intensifies.” UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2022/2/6206288c4/unhcr-steps-aid-displaced-myanmar-conflict-intensifies.html>.
- Peters, Cameron. 2021. “The UN Condemned Myanmar’s Coup. Will That Matter?” Vox. June 20, 2021. <https://www.vox.com/2021/6/20/22542370/myanmar-coup-united-nations-un>.
- “UN Official: Myanmar People Want UN Sanctions, Peacekeepers.” n.d. AP NEWS. <https://apnews.com/article/global-trade-myanmar-antonio-guterres-united-nations-asia-pacific-ff8fdf32220904941181c5e145704385>.
- Reuters. 2022. “ASEAN Chair Warns over Myanmar Violence; U.S. Urges More Pressure.” *Reuters*, October 26, 2022, sec. Asia Pacific. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/asean-chair-alarmed-over-escalating-myanmar-violence-2022-10-26/>.
- “Myanmar/Burma: Third Round of EU Sanctions over the Military Coup and Subsequent Repression.” n.d. [Www.consilium.europa.eu. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/21/myanmar-burma-third-round-of-eu-sanctions-over-the-military-coup-and-subsequent-repression/](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/21/myanmar-burma-third-round-of-eu-sanctions-over-the-military-coup-and-subsequent-repression/).
- “It’s Time to Help Myanmar’s Resistance Prevail.” n.d. United States Institute of Peace. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/08/its-time-help-myanmars-resistance-prevail>.
- “China’s Support for Myanmar Further Shows the World Dividing into Autocracy versus Democracy.” n.d. Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed November 7, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/chinas-support-myanmar-further-shows-world-dividing-autocracy-versus-democracy?amp>.
- “Myanmar Resistance Movement Calls for More EU Support.” n.d. [Amp.dw.com. Accessed November 7, 2022. https://amp.dw.com/en/eu-support-for-myanmar-resistance/a-63341502](https://amp.dw.com/en/eu-support-for-myanmar-resistance/a-63341502).
- Hutt, David. 2022. “EU Talks Tough but Goes Soft on Myanmar Trade.” *Asia Times*. September 30, 2022. <https://asiatimes.com/2022/09/eu-talks-tough-but-goes-soft-on-myanmar-trade/>.
- “Security Council Appeals for End to Violence in Myanmar.” 2021. UN News. November 11, 2021. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/11/1105642>.

- ABUZA, ZACHARY. 2021. “U.S. Policy toward Myanmar’s Military Junta.” War on the Rocks. November 5, 2021. <https://warontherocks.com/2021/11/u-s-policies-for-ending-myanmars-military-rule/>.
- “U.S. Relations with Burma - United States Department of State.” 2018. United States Department of State. 2018. <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-burma/>.