



**Research Paper**

## **Decoding Myanmar: Military Rule, Dictatorship & Present Situation**

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### **I. INTRODUCTION:**

The role of the military has been dominant in Myanmar and it has ruled the entire nation for decades until the election of 2010. It came to the public eye and also grabbed media attention due to its military actions and have often been reprimanded for the same by other nations and governing bodies. For example, the military action which Myanmar incorporated in the case of the Rohingya ethnic group which forced them to leave Myanmar and flee to Bangladesh was termed as 'ethnic cleansing' by the UN. Even though the nation went out of direct military rule since 2010, but the prevalence of military or the power of the same in the politics of Myanmar remained unchanged.

### **II. METHOD:**

The study adopted the method of content analysis for analyzing and understanding the situation of Myanmar. The literature review includes original published research works on Myanmar as well as secondary reports published based on the same. It consists of articles published in peer-reviewed journals, books, websites, news portals, reports published by organizations and field reports published by independent researchers respectively. The sources accessed for acquiring articles were Google Scholar and Jstor respectively.

### **III. DISCUSSION:**

Reviewing the nature of Electoral Politics & Military Intervention:  
1974"

The military junta in Myanmar adopted a constitution in the year 1974 which was later replaced by the military government led convention. In the multi-party election held in 1990, the government refused to perform the transfer of power to the NLD as they felt a constitution have to be drafted before the same.

2008:

The Myanmar military rule cropped up into the purview again in the year 2007 when it shifted its capital. The shift of the capital to a remote site led to the isolation of the government more prominently from the citizens and raised questions regarding their intent of wellbeing and concern for the citizens at large. In the year 2008, Myanmar experienced a nationwide protest against the military regime and demand was put forward for a democratic election to be conducted. The election was conducted even though the nation was scrapped with a cyclone which reflects the pent up frustration of the citizens who preferred voting even during an ongoing natural disaster. There were reports of electoral frauds happening during this process as no representative were allowed to witness and verify the entire electoral process. This entire process of election was dismissed as a scam by the opposition leaders and the citizens as they didn't find the entire process to be a reliable one.

2011:

In the year 2011 Union Solidarity & Development Party came to power putting an end to the two-decades-long direct military rule. This portrayed the shift of Myanmar from a direct to an indirect military rule where the

military force is stated to have shifted from an approach of domination to that of influence. The party was composed of retired military officers who further continued the military rule under the garb or cover of “democracy”.

*2015:*

In the year 2015, the NLD came into power ending the decade's long military rule. But even during the same, the importance of military power and the presence of the same in Myanmar continued. This election saw the first civilian government where Myanmar's first elected president from a non-military background came to power.

*2020:*

The latest, most recent election saw again the victory of the NLD which was considered to be an electoral fraud by the military and its proxy organizations. They didn't agree to the result of the election and called for an emergency for one year, detaining all the major opposition political leaders as well as government stakeholders.

*Tracing the Voices of Resistance:*

The military regime of Myanmar owes its root to the year 1962 when the then General Ne Win put the entire nation directly under military rule with the aim of ‘unifying’ the country with the same. Following this emergence of the military coup, all the opposition leaders and individuals who could have blamed the coup to be “illegal” were arrested or detained. This met with resistance from the student in which around 100 students were dead from firing initiated by the coup. Along with that Rangoon University which was considered to be an important site of protest was blown up by the military

On March 12, 1988, amidst a fight between few students and a tea shop owner, the military again fired resulting in the killing of several students. This enraged the civilians who again rose in anger and continued demonstrating protests to address their issues. A nationwide protest occurred which reflected the lack of trust of the civilians in the existing government. The coup once again came into play and resulted in killing around 3000 civilians which were justified from their end of the account of controlling a ‘chaotic’ situation.

*The incident of 2007*

The major protest breakdown occurred in the year 2007 when the government raised the price of fuel which met with an array of marches and civil disobedience by the citizens. This period saw the emergence of strong opposition groups consisting mostly of the youth and the students. Individuals who labelled them as ‘social activist’ and the 88 Generation student groups initiated staging protest demonstrations. Several leaders and activists were arrested and taken into custody from these demonstrations and the military even searched their houses to gather evidence against them for legal proceedings. These arrests appeared to be a crackdown on the voices of dissent and an attempt to uproot the voices of criticism from the root.

During this period, to the utmost shock of the government, the Buddhist monks started taking part in the demonstration. During a protest on 5th September 2007 which comprised of the monks in large numbers and it was assumed that due to firing initiated by the military, few monks might have been killed. Reacting to these, the monks took hostage of few local stakeholders for several hours and it was also reported that they ransacked shops which increased the momentum of the movement. In the light of this, the All Burma Monk Alliance was formed which issued several demands and threatened to take to the streets if those left unfulfilled. As the demands were left unanswered, Myanmar experienced series of protest demonstration involving around 10,000 monks as well as students, artists and other notable personalities. The movement took such a huge momentum that it became difficult for the government to avoid the same.

In reaction to this, the military warned to take drastic steps if the demonstrations were not called off and even guarded few monasteries with security officers so that more monks couldn't join the protest demonstrations. This was followed by conscious violence initiated on the part of the military to silence the protesters which included shots fired and injured and even led to the death of many civilians. The nation experienced mass arrests and detentions and the jails became overcrowded with protestors and dissenters.

*Current Situation:*

The recent election that took place in November 2020, further increased the friction occurring between the civilians and the military. Though the National League for Democracy won the elections, still the military and proxy organizations of the same considered the result of this election to be ‘manipulated’ as they accepted a victory. It was further announced that a fresh election would be conducted and those who would come out as victorious would hold power. A state of emergency was declared and the newly elected members of NLD along with chief ministers of many other states were detained by the army. The military is now in the charge of power and has cut almost all communication of the nation from the entire world. Protests have erupted against this military dictatorship and the protestors are met with bullets in which many including a 16-year old died. The protestors are demanding the end of the military rule and want the NLD government to take power as they have

rightfully won the elections of 2020. The attack on the citizens by the military keeps on taking a violent turn whereas reported by the 1st week of March 2021 already more than 100 people have been declared dead.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION:**

Myanmar has struggled since Independence with military rule and is going through the same even in the current scenario. The Military continues to dominant different aspects of the public and private lives despite international condemnation regarding the same. Though there has been the prevalence of voices of dissent in the face of this rule, it is yet to see how the socio-political situation in Myanmar unfolds in the future.

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