

MAYHEM IN MYANMAR: ON THE VIOLENCE DURING MYANMAR'S ARMED FORCES' DAY

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

The violence of March 27, Myanmar's Armed Forces' Day, in which over 100 protesters were killed, has sent shockwaves. India, which initially expressed its "deep concern" and called for the "rule of law" and "the democratic process" to be upheld, had stopped short of directly condemning the junta's violence. It had also sent a representative to attend Saturday's celebrations. But on the day India's defence attaché, along with the representatives of seven other countries, including China, Pakistan and Russia, was attending a massive military parade in Naypyidaw, the junta was gunning down its people. The violence and the prolonged crisis seem to have triggered a stronger response from several capitals, including New Delhi. On April 2, India, which has cultivated deep ties with Myanmar's civilian and military leaderships, condemned "any use of violence" and called for "restoration of democracy". There is growing international appeal for ending the bloodshed, but the junta seems unperturbed. Even after the March 27 killings, protests and regime violence continue. According to independent agencies, the junta has killed over 570 civilians, including 46 children, since the February 1 coup.

When the regime resorted to violence, it may have calculated that swift repression would extinguish the fire for freedoms, like in 1988 and 2007. But there is a fundamental difference this time. If in the past the protests erupted against the continuing military rule, in February, the military usurped power from an elected government after a decade of partial democracy. Those who enjoyed at least limited freedoms, first under the transition government and then under Aung San Suu Kyi, have built a stronger resistance to the junta this time. Street protests are not the only challenge the Generals are facing. The banking system is on the brink of collapse with most staff on strike. Cash is scarce and prices of essential goods are rocketing. Industrial workers are also on strike, bringing the pandemic-battered economy to its knees. The Generals' efforts to bring bank and government employees and port and industrial workers back to work have been unsuccessful so far. Worse still, armed insurgent groups have thrown their weight behind the protesters, triggering fears of a wider civil conflict. The Generals are unlikely to give up power on their own. They should be nudged to end the violence and make concessions. Initially, India and China, both vying for influence in Myanmar, were ambivalent in condemning the junta's violence because they did not want to antagonise the Generals. But an unstable Myanmar is not in the interest of any country. India, China and other countries in ASEAN should heap pressure on the junta and work towards restoring democracy in Myanmar, which is the only way forward.

Please enter a valid email address.

From the abrogation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, to the landmark Ayodhya verdict, 2019 proved to be an eventful year.

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com