

# CHINA CALLS FOR ALL PARTIES TO SAFEGUARD MYANMAR'S STABILITY

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

Wang Wenbin

China on Tuesday called for all parties to help maintain stability in Myanmar, as it refrained from criticising the military leadership for seizing power in a coup and urged the international community to not interfere.

Beijing said it was not in favour of external powers "taking actions that would raise tensions", the Foreign Ministry said, with analysts in Beijing expressing concerns over possible sanctions from the U.S., which strongly criticised the military-led coup that threatened to undo the transition to democracy that has been under way since 2011.

China had on Monday said it "hope[s] all parties in Myanmar can properly handle differences under the constitutional and legal framework and safeguard political and social stability", not mentioning the democratic transition, which, a number of countries, including India, had voiced support for in their statements following this week's developments.

Even prior to 2011, China maintained close relations with the Myanmar military leadership and often backed the country from the threat of sanctions as a permanent member of the UNSC.

On Tuesday, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said "the international community should not take any action that would raise tensions in Myanmar."

"We have maintained communication with all relevant parties with regard to the matters to be discussed at the UN Security Council," he said. "Any action taken by the international community should be conducive to political and social stability in Myanmar and beneficial to a peaceful resolution, instead of worsening tension and further complicating the situation."

## 'Cabinet reshuffle'

China's State media outlets have refrained from calling the seizing of power a coup. The official Xinhua news agency on Monday only reported the "Myanmar military announced a major cabinet reshuffle hours after a state of emergency was declared." The Communist Party-run *Global Times* quoted an unnamed expert in Beijing as saying the military's actions "can be viewed as an adjustment facing Myanmar's imbalanced power structure," referring to the declining popularity of the military and the growing political power of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD).

Fan Hongwei, director of the Center for Southeast Asia Studies at Xiamen University, told the newspaper, "the U.S. may impose sanctions on Myanmar, and military pressure cannot be rolled out", a prospect that concerns China, which neighbours Myanmar and is a major investor there in projects, including a gas pipeline that links the two countries. China is Myanmar's largest trading partner and accounted for one-third of its total trade last year.

"The situation in Myanmar is likely to be an opportunity for the Biden administration, which has multiple members from Team Obama, to repair relations with Myanmar, to make Myanmar

problematic and use Myanmar to put pressure on China,” Mr. Fan said. “Myanmar is a country that does not welcome interference by big powers. China has maintained good relations with both the current government and the military, so it still hopes that the two sides can negotiate a compromise to maintain peace and stability.”

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