

THE WAY FORWARD: ON MYANMAR'S POLITICAL SITUATION

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

Ever since the [military captured power in Myanmar seven weeks ago](#), the country has steadily descended into political and economic chaos. When the Generals toppled the democratically elected government, detained its leaders, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint, and declared a state of emergency with prohibitory orders, they may have thought that they could quickly consolidate power through force. But they were proved wrong as tens of thousands of people stood up against the junta. Faced with strong challenges in their path towards absolute power, the Generals responded with brutal force. At least 247 people have been killed since the February 1 coup, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, a non-profit. The crisis had its spillover impacts on the borders as well. At least 300 Myanmarers, including police officers, are estimated to have since crossed into India. Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga took up the issue with the Foreign Minister and [India has shut the border for now](#), but it would be difficult for New Delhi to turn a blind eye to the border if the situation in Myanmar turns worse.

The military, which controlled the country through direct rule for almost 50 years until former junta ruler Than Shwe initiated the transition into partial democracy in 2010, is one of the most consistent enemies of democracy and human rights. In 1988 and 2007, the Generals unleashed violence to quell protests. But in the past, they managed to restore order quickly through fear and violence. Now, neither the junta's bloody track record nor the actual use of force is dissuading the protesters who, after experiencing limited liberties for 10 years, refuse to recognise the junta. Mostly youngsters, they use VPN and encrypted messenger apps to organise protests, and are joined by thousands, including bank employees, port workers and medics, bringing the battered economy to a halt. As protests and violence continue, international pressure is also mounting on the Generals. In the past, the Myanmar military paid little attention to international opinion or targeted sanctions. They are unlikely to be different now. But the Generals now find it increasingly difficult to consolidate power and restore order. The public remains defiant. How long will the Generals continue to kill their own people? And even if they quelled the protests through more bloodshed, what kind of a Myanmar would they be left with? Surely, no one wants an extremely poor, isolated country with a broken society and a shattered economy. The Myanmar Generals should, without further bloodshed, heed the public's demands, end the coup, respect the election results and restore the country's democracy. That is the only way forward.

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

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