

**Burma Democratic Futures Working Group (BDFWG)
University of Virginia**

March 2023 Report: Myanmar

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Escalation of Chinese Government Relationship with Illegitimate Myanmar Military Council

March 2023 marked the continuation of the Chinese government taking steps to establish a closer relationship with the illegitimate governing Military Council. The overriding priority for China is stability in the region, though for the first two years after the coup, the government appeared unsure of which party, or parties, might prevail. Now however, they are advancing an agenda to counter US influence, while maintaining their own position, with a focus of maintaining contact with the illegitimate governing Military Council and ERO's from the border areas with China. These current efforts first emerged in December of 2022, when the Chinese government appointed Deng Xijun as the Special Envoy to Asia, replacing Sun Guoxiang. Despite his region wide mandate, Special Envoy Xijun's primary focus appears to be Myanmar Affairs. During his first twelve weeks in the position, he has undertaken the following actions:

On December 24th and 25th, he invited the following organizations to Yunnan Province: Select members of the Federal Political Consultation Committee (FPNCC) as well as UWSP/UWSA, KIO/KIA, PSLF/TNLA, ULA/AA, MNTJP/MNDAA, NDAA, SSPP/SSA leadership to the Yunnan Province. During their visit, he also met with the following individuals in one-on-one meetings: Chairman of the Military Council, General Min Aung Hlaing, the Foreign Minister, U Wunna Maung Lwin, and Chairman of the National Solidarity and Peacemaking Negotiation Committee, Lt. Gen. Ra Pyae.

On December 29th, in Nay Pyi Taw, Xijun met again with FPNCC members UWSP/UWSA, PSC/NDAA, and KIO/KIA.

On February 18-19, 2023; he met again with General Min Aung Hlaing, Foreign Minister Than Swe, and Chairman of the Peace Committee, Lt. Gen. Ra Pyae.

On March 8th, China's Ambassador to Burma met with the Union Election Commission, established by the Military Council and the Union Solidarity and Development Party, aligned with the Military Council. This meeting was followed on March 15, 2023, in Beijing, China, with Special Envoy Xijun meeting with Myanmar's Military Council's Ambassador to China, U Tin Maung Swe. Notably, Special Envoy Xijun's appointment coincided with the resolution of the 15-member Security Council as well as the renewal of the United States' National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

FPNCC Meeting and Nay Pyi Taw Trip

After the actions of Special Envoy Xijun, the Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee (FPNCC), also known as the Northern Alliance, convened on March 15th and 16th at Panghsang, the headquarter of UWSP/UWSA. The FPNCC issued a statement that featured two notable inclusions:

Point 4 states the FPNCC will eventually build a federal democratic union with mainland Myanmar through a comprehensive peacebuilding effort.

Point 6 states that “We welcome and support the intervention of the People’s Republic of China to resolve the internal conflicts in Myanmar.”

Given the frequent visits that Special Envoy Xijun has been making to Myanmar, Point 6 clearly indicates Chinese influence on the Northern Alliance. Indeed, FPNCC EROs members went to Yunnan, China to meet with Special Envoy Xijun the next day. USWP/UWSA, SSPP/SSA and PSC/NDAA met with the peace committee of the Military NSPNC where an agreement was signed, but no details were released.

General Zaw Min Tun had said in earlier interviews that the military agreed to agree with UWSA's demand of Wa statehood as well as NDAA's demands of a self-administered zone. According to General Zaw Min Tun statement after the peace conference, it can be inferred that the Military Council is preparing to hold an event showcasing peace agreements made with other EROs. Other FPNCC members such as KIO/KIA, ULA/AA, and MNDAA are also holding talks with the Military Council. However, it should be noted that minority ethnic groups in the border regions are seeking to establish their own version of a federal democratic union, without the aid of established powers such as the Military Council or China. In addition, KIO/KIA are still engaged with fighting the military and remain aligned with the NUG.

Seven National Ceasefire Agreement Signatories hold an informal meeting with National Unity and Peace Coordination Committee of the Military Council

Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) signatories RCSS, PNLO, LDU, NMSP, KNU/KNLA(PC), DKBA and ALP held informal talks with the Military Council's National Solidarity and Peace Negotiation Committee (NSPNC). Colonel Saw Kyaw Nyunt, the spokesperson of the NCA signatories, informed the Voice of America that the meeting was intended “to create a framework for political dialogue involving all stakeholders; peace process steps; basic principles for the federal union we want to build. Issues related to the protection of civilians and ongoing humanitarian assistance to civilians, regional stability issues, holding of the election holding of peace conference were discussed.” Such efforts by Military Council’s NSPNC are not new. Military Council had previously discussed holding a peace conference with three Northern Alliance members (UWSP/UWSA, SSPP/SSA, and PSC/NDAA). It is ironic that the NSPNC is so urgently calling for “peace” while the Military Council is committing atrocities across Myanmar, especially burning down houses and killing innocent civilians in Sagaing. Holding a peace conference should be considered a tactic to distract the international community from the airstrikes, the burning, and the killings of military soldiers. It is within this context that the NSPNC’s insistence on a peace conference with those EROs not actually engaged in armed resistance. Such a conference is just an attempt to be seen as a “peacemaker” while raging a brutal campaign against Myanmar citizens and resisting ERO’s.

The Dissolution of 40 Political Parties by the Military Council and the International Response

March 28th marked the Military Council dissolving 40 political parties. Previously, on January 26th, 2023, the Military Council had announced a new law stating political parties will have to re-register for the upcoming elections. The purpose of the law was to restrict and suppress political parties. The National League for Democracy, which won the 2020 election, and Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, which won the third most seats in the last election, did not register and were dissolved. Although the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and France protested the dissolution of 40 political parties, the nations surrounding Myanmar have not expressed concerns about the new election law. It should be noted that disbanding political parties that have traditionally strong public support is clearly undemocratic. Myanmar's political problems and conflicts will not be resolved through an unfair election. As such, the promised election of the military council is illegitimate, a “show.

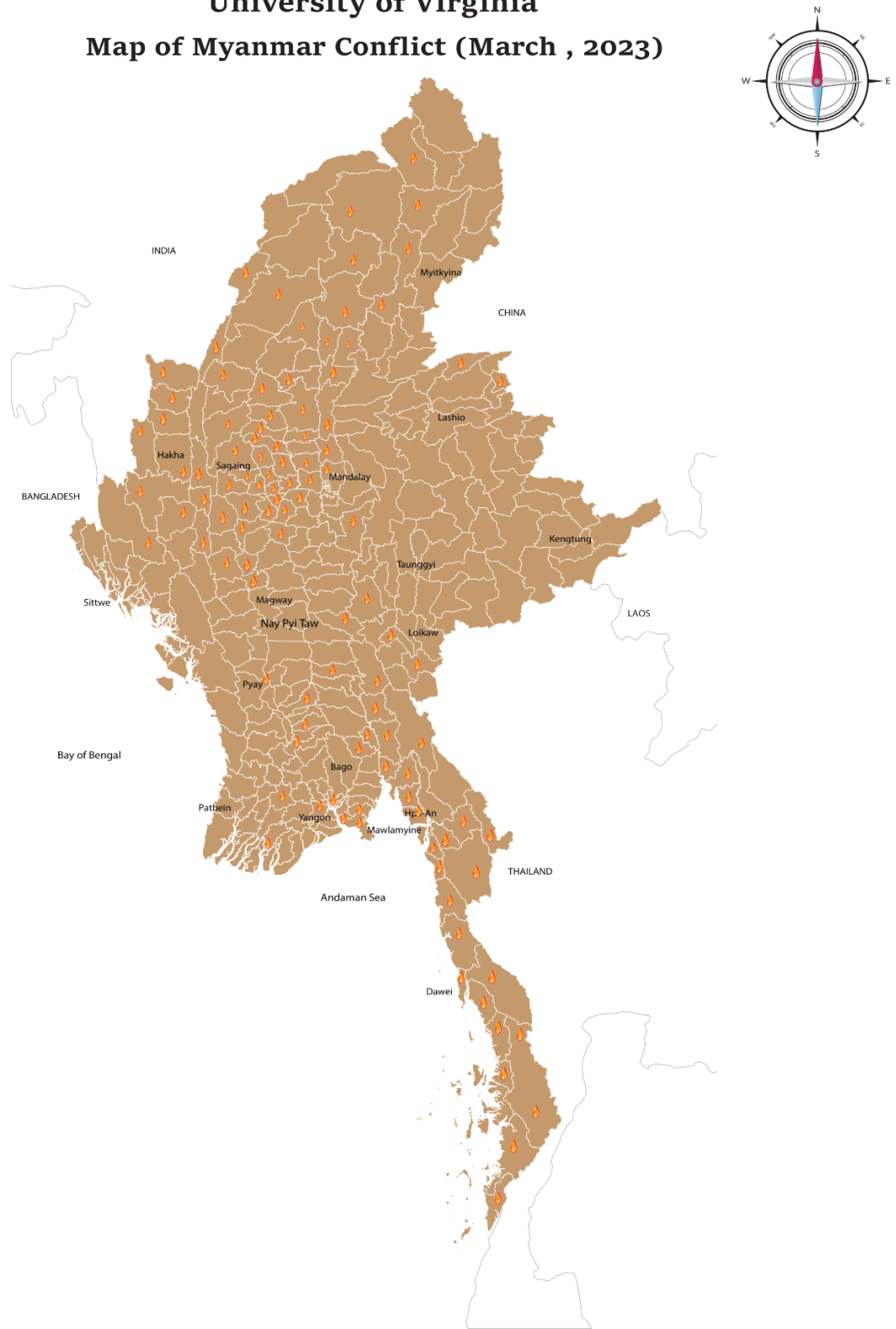
Armed Conflicts

March witnessed a total of 133 armed conflicts taking place in all regions and states in Myanmar, with exception of the Yangon region, Irrawaddy region and Rakhine state. The Sagaing Region had the highest frequency of conflicts with 37 clashes, followed by the Magway region with 18 clashes, then the Chin State with 16 clashes, the Kachin State with 13, Kayah State with 12, and the Tanintharyi region with 11. In addition, 639 Military Council soldiers and 36 PDFs were killed in the attacks across the country. (See Table 1 for location of each event and specifications, and Figure 1 for where the events occurred on a map)

States	Clashes between SAC and PDF/EAOs	SAC's soldiers killed	PDF killed
AYEYARWADY			
BAGO	6	23	
CHIN	16	58	
KACHIN	13	43	
KAYAH (Karenni)	12	117	2
KAYIN	9	50	
MAGWAY	18	90	6
MANDALAY	2	38	
MON	8	20	
SAGAING	37	148	15
SHAN (North)	1	8	
SHAN (South)			
TANINTHARYI	11	43	13
YANGON		1	
TOTAL	133	639	36

Figure 1

Burmese Democratic Futures Working Group - BDFWG
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Map of Myanmar Conflict (March , 2023)



Atrocities and Human Rights Violations of the Military Council

Tragically, March can be referred to as the month of massacres at the hands of the Myanmar military. It started with massacres and ended with massacres. Throughout the month of March, atrocities and other human rights violations have been rampant.

In February, martial law was declared in 40 of the country's 330 townships and the military council escalated its campaign of suppression in a scorched earth policy attacking the democratic forces and civilian communities alike.

From the end of February, through the entire month of March, the battalion named the "Monster column" under the 99th Division entered multiple villages in the townships under martial law in the Sagaing Region. They burned houses, raped women, and tortured and killed villagers.

This horrific offense included the massacre of 17 people in Tatai Village, Myemu Township, on March 1, and the massacre of 6 people in Keekan South and Keekan North Villages in Welet Township, Sagaing Region. In both, people were beheaded, arms and legs cut off, and some were burned alive.

In addition, on March 4, another military unit committed crimes against humanity, including the massacre of 6 people in Okakyak Wat village, Long Lone Township, Tanintharyi Region on March 4 and the killing of 22 local people in Nam Nim Village, Pin Laung Township, Southern Shan State on March 11.

On March 30, 10 innocent civilians were killed and another 20 injured from a military airforce bombing of Khu Po village, Thang Talan, Chin State.

Of the four massacres described above, two have been in the Sagaing region, which has been the focus of the military's offenses, and where the civilian population have endured the brunt of the SAC's atrocities and human rights violations. The total estimated number of deaths in March in Sagaing is 29 civilians including 9 children and an additional 107 innocent civilians who were arrested. A total of 1,815 houses were burnt down by military council soldiers, from 29 different villages.

Across the country, 28 children and 113 civilians were killed by the military council, and 358 innocent civilians were arrested in the month of March. As many as 44 villages and 2,526 houses were burned down by the military council.

Human rights violations committed by the Military Council during March can be seen in Table 2, below.

Table 2: Data of Human Rights Violations by SAC in March 2023								
States	Children Killed	Children Injured	Children Arrested	Civilians Killed	Civilians Injured	Civilians Arrested	Villages Set on Fire	Houses Burned Down
AYEYARWADY						52		8
BAGO	1	2			13	2	1	78
CHIN	4	4			11	4		15
KACHIN	2			11	2	237	1	120
KAYAH (Karenni)	1	3		3	5			140
KAYIN	1			1	1	3	1	5
MAGWAY	1	2		14	16	24	3	35
MANDALAY				11		37	5	72
MON	5	4		2	9	10		40
SAGAING	9	1	1	48	10	177	29	1815
SHAN (North)				2				
SHAN (South)				23				21
TANINTHARYI	1	1		8	9	43		62
YANGON				1		4		5
TOTAL	25	17	1	135	69	589	40	2416

List of Acronyms

ALP - Arakan Liberation Party
DKBA - Democratic Karen Buddhist Army
ERO - Ethnic Resistance Organizations
FPNCC - Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee
KIO/KIA - Kachin Independence Organization/Kachin Independence Army
KNU/KNLA(PC) - Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army (Peace Council)
LDU - Lahu Democratic Union
MNTJP/MNDAA - Myanmar National Truth and Justice Party/Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army
NCA - Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement
NDAA - National Democratic Alliance Army
NMSP - New Mon State Party
NSPNC - National Solidarity and Peacemaking Negotiation Committee
SSPP/SSA - Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army
PNLO - Pa-Oh National Liberation Organization
PSC/NDAA - Peace and Solidarity Committee/National Democratic Alliance Army
PSLF/TNLA - Palaung State Liberation Front/Ta'ang National Liberation Army
RCSS - Restoration Council of Shan State
ULA/AA - United League of Arakan/Arakan Army
USWP/UWSA - United Wa State Party/United Wa State Army

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