

Burmese Democratic Futures Working Group – BDFWG

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China's plan for interim government in Myanmar

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China is well aware of the deteriorating state of the Military Council in Myanmar and acknowledges that Min Aung Hlaing's leadership is ineffective. There is a concern that if the current situation persists, the revolutionary forces could potentially seize control of the entire country. The rise of the National Unity Government (NUG) could lead to increased influence from the US and the West in Myanmar, a scenario that China seeks to avoid.

China's disapproval of the Military Council stems from various factors, including their dissatisfaction with Min Aung Hlaing's incompetence and refusal to heed their advice. Despite China's efforts to mediate talks between the Northern Brotherhood Alliances and the Military Council, following the January 5th Haigen Agreement, aimed at upgrading ceasefire already achieved, for the reopening of border trade, tensions rose as the military increased its presence in Northern Shan State and engaged in provocative attacks.

The breakdown of negotiations in May 2024 left China disappointed with Min Aung Hlaing and the Military Council, highlighting the urgent need for reforms within the council. There are unconfirmed reports that during the outbreak of the 1027 (Part 2) operation, the Military Council sought China's intervention to halt the Northern Alliance's offensive but received no response.

The unfolding events indicate that the Myanmar Military Council is losing ground to the revolutionary forces, signaling an eventual relinquishment of power and loss of control over the entire country:

1. As operation 1027 (Part 2) commenced, the revolutionary forces swiftly captured over 50 Military Council camps and key cities in Northern Shan State like Kyaukme and Naungcho, along with cities in mainland Myanmar, Singu, Madaya and Mogoke. The revolutionary forces also secured control of the Union Highway from Mandalay to China shortly after the operation began.
2. The Arakan Army (AA) has effectively taken control of almost the entirety of Rakhine State, including strategic locations like Ngapali beach and Thandwe Airport. Additionally, all Military Council camps, bases, and headquarters in the region, including the Western Regional Military Headquarters in Rakhine State, have been encircled and blocked. These developments are expected to lead to the eventual surrender of the Military Council in Rakhine State.

3. The People's Defense Forces have gained control over significant portions of Singu and Madaya Townships, which are bordering with the Sagaing Region. Since the onset of the Spring Revolution, Sagaing Region has remained beyond the Military Council's grasp, with around 80% of the region under the control of the revolutionary forces. Only limited urban areas, primarily town centers, in Sagaing Region are currently under the Military Council's grip. The combined control of Singu and Madaya in Mandalay Region by the People's Defense Force in the East, alongside the control of Chin State by Chin revolutionary forces and Rakhine State by the Arakan Army in the west, is poised to encircle the Military Council in the remaining urban areas, leading to their defeat or eventual retreat from besieged territories.

4. In Karen State, the Aung Zeya operation, designated as a national-level effort and commanded by the Military Council's second chief, Soe Win, aimed to recapture the city of Myawaddy, lost to the revolutionary forces. Despite the ambitious goal of reclaiming the city within four days, the operation faced a prolonged standoff on Dawna Mountain with many casualties for over three months under the relentless offensive by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and allied forces, ultimately forcing a retreat by the Military Council.

The Military Council's continued grip on power in Myanmar is viewed as most favorable for China, as it aligns with their strategic interests. However, the current uncertain situation in Myanmar presents challenges for China's interests. In addition to concerns about Min Aung Hlaing's leadership capabilities, China recognizes that the situation could deteriorate further under his continued rule. Following the passing of the Burma Act by the US Congress, China perceives the National Unity Government (NUG) as being influenced by the US government, raising doubts about its ability to safeguard China's interests compared to the military. As a result, China seems to oppose the NUG taking control in Myanmar.

China seeks a stable government in Myanmar that can safeguard the country's current state and protect Chinese interests. To achieve this, China envisions establishing an interim government that is receptive to their input and capable of conducting elections where feasible, thereby legitimizing its authority. China appears to be committed to implementing this plan through various means, including diplomatic, economic, and potentially military support. Central to this strategy is the need for a government that China is currently shaping, one that is prepared to collaborate with China and equipped with the essential capabilities. This serves as the cornerstone of China's allegedly proposed interim government plan for Myanmar.

This analysis is my initial assessment of China's recent moves and intentions regarding Myanmar.

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