

Myanmar's Military Rule Returns

Background

The most recent military coup is an **attempted bold reset** by the military after a sense that a transition to civilian rule had not worked in its favor. The concern is **how the military will deal with civilian protests**. Historically, the military has resorted to **widespread violence** to simmer civilian protests.

Structural problems exacerbate the gravity of the most recent coup, including the **lack of progress on agricultural reform** and civil-military ties, and **the persecution of Rohingya** and ethnic conflict.



Myanmar Within the Region

CHINA

China aims to advance the **China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC)**, which is a part of the Belt and Road Initiative. China hopes to **connect Yunnan Province to the Indian Ocean via Myanmar**, a long-term strategic goal. This has caused concern in the United States and India.

ASEAN

Singapore is the largest Foreign Direct Investor in Myanmar and is **unlikely to impose sanctions**. The ASEAN chair in 2021 is **Brunei** and next year is **Cambodia**. Neither will likely take strong action against Myanmar and ASEAN operates by consensus, which makes agreement difficult.

JAPAN

Japan is a **major economic player with links to personalities within the new military-led government**. Japan is “concerned about pushing Myanmar into China’s orbit” like Cambodia.



Information courtesy of

**Lucas Myers &
Prashanth Parameswaran**

Program Associate of the Wilson Center's Asia Program. More info on Mr. Myers [here](#)

Global Fellow of the Wilson Center's Asia Program. More info on Mr. Parameswaran [here](#)





Myanmar's Military Rule Returns

U.S. Policy

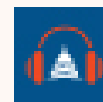
Look for how the military **sticks to one-year timeline or cements longer-term rule**, how it **impacts the economy and peace process**, and **the fate of Suu Kyi and the NLD**. The U.S. can't let Myanmar policy contaminate broader regional U.S. policy towards ASEAN: it needs to **engage grouping on wider issues including economics, climate, geopolitics**, etc.

Coordination among **"coalitions of the willing"** is important but should also appreciate and leverage differentiation (e.g. Japan's economic role). The U.S. needs to **support new civil society groups with like-minded partners beyond Aung San Suu Kyi and NLD** to act as a check against military rule for the future.

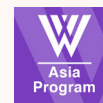
There's a need to get voices out of the country to **combat the military's decent disinformation campaign leveraging U.S. networks such as Radio Free Asia**. There is also a need to ensure that **Myanmar remains a relevant issue to the Biden administration** if military repression drags on for months. The U.S. should showcase the full extent of its engagement and punitive actions beyond sanctions – including **preventing repatriation of funds by the military and coordinating diplomatic messaging with its partners**.



Go Deeper! More Resources



Need To Know Podcast
[Military Rule Returns To Myanmar](#)



Read the Asia Program's Analysis
[Democracy in Southeast Asia: Between Discontent and Hope](#)