



Examining relationship between China and Myanmar after the 2021 Military Coup

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Abstract

This paper aim to explore the existing relationship between Myanmar and China in the aftermath of the coup. Following its violent takeover of power from the elected civilian government on February 1, 2021, the country went into economic and political turmoil which impacted all sectors including neighboring countries' partners such as, Thailand, India, Bangladesh, and China. This study focuses on China, the most significant country regionally and globally, and aims to address Myanmar's foreign policy diplomacy between Myanmar and China. This paper aims to examine the relationship between China and Myanmar after the 2021 military coup and how to maintain and increase this relationship. Six semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the information, including interviews with a freelance journalist to Ph.D. candidate and officers from the Ministry of Foreign affairs. Overall, this research found that both countries need to adopt alternative approaches to maintain their "brotherhood" relation, and the Chinese government also needs to make pragmatic policy in terms of solving the Myanmar crisis.

Keywords: Myanmar, Coup, China-Myanmar, Diplomacy, Foreign Policy, Politics, Economic and Development.

1. Introduction

China is playing as a powerful decisive player not only for Myanmar's sovereignty between the State Administration Council (SAC) and anti-SAC groups, including Ethnic Armed Organizations, also Economic Development, and the security granting since the two-year of military coup of Myanmar, affecting of international relations. On the other hand, China's policy towards Myanmar is slightly changing depending on the tense conflict situations between SAC and EAOs, PDF and LPDF. Speaking of Investments, China's One Belt One Road is crossing through Western Part of Rakhine State to the Southern Part from Shan State, with the mapping of Y-line, as geo-politically and economically, Myanmar is eye-catching for China. During the 2021 Myanmar Democracy Movement, China played a villainous role with the State Administration Council, formed by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, the leader of the coup. According to the Irrawaddy News (2021a) reported that China has been building a good relationship, so called forever friend, with the Myanmar Military. Besides, China as of late would not censure the tactical takeover at the Assembled Countries Security Council (ACSC). In fact, China's refusal of inclusion in building a firewall came after Myanmar web-based media clients distributed a rundown of five freight departures from China's Kunming, the capital of Yunnan region, that arrived at Yangon International Airport on that day, and barely a week after the coup (Irrawaddy, 2021a). However, the Chinese Embassy in Myanmar on the days later, denied reports that alleged "China is sending IT faculty to Myanmar," saying such claims are "baseless" and calling for correspondence and exchange in the nation to settle contrasts and take governmental issues back to normal (Liuliu & Xiaole, 2021).

At the macro level of diplomacy between China and Myanmar governments, in fact, the relationship between China and Myanmar has been good neighbors for more than 70 years. Both countries continue to maintain their image as a good partner as they could for this current regime even though Myanmar was using a closed-door policy during the military regimes from 1961 to 2011, and China was the biggest investment partner in the country for those periods and until today in Myanmar (Samsani, 2021). The tension between civilians, especially ethnic groups and China diplomacy towards Myanmar has occurred intermittently because of the Chinese projects that were impacted negatively in Myanmar. Conversely, according to the Lanuzo (2018) report, a major event that the public recognized was the monetary system reformed under the

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Thein Sein government, rejected participation with China because of developing public strain in 2011. While attempting to gain public support, Thein Sein suspended the Myitsone Dam in Kachin State, which was one of the biggest Chinese undertaking projects in Myanmar, and China applied their policy as “Only stakeholders” towards Myanmar at that time. Alongside, Myanmar’s choice to decrease ties with its biggest financial and military supplier astounded both China and the worldwide community (Lanuzo, 2018).

According to Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China (2015), President Xi Jinping invited President Thein Sein’s ambassadors visit to China for the recognitions denoting on the 70th commemoration of the triumph of the Chinese Public’s conflict of Obstruction against Japanese Animosity and the World Enemy of Extremist Conflict mirrors the incredible significance of append to the China-Myanmar relations during Thein Sein’s government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 2015). In early 2016, after the National League of Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi, gained power to control over the country, China’s approach and strategy on Myanmar is going to move to the opposite party of the ruling party Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). According to the Mechanix (2020) reported that three Chinese envoys who were Li Junhua, Yang Houlan and Hong Liang met consistently with the Myanmar State Counselor, Aung San Suu Kyi, and Chinese authorities, researchers, columnists and organizations regularly visited to NLD office in Yangon, center city of economy and politics in Myanmar. And Chinese authorities invited many NLD members to visit China in order to strengthen ties and demonstrate the Chinese government’s achievements, as well as to express the Chinese government’s desire to maintain friendly relations with Myanmar (Mechanix, 2020).

China’s diplomacy was increasingly approaching interference since the NLD party won the 2015 election. China built good friendships with the NLD, and the Myanmar military generals. On the other hand, China was trying to dominate with many partnership investments over other Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) in Myanmar in line with his OBOR plan. Consequently, the NLD government also decided to continue their projects which were signed with the Chinese government (Myanmar Times, 2020). However, China is currently changing its policy towards “multi-key players” in Myanmar. However, many significant people dislike China projects in their area - that makes an effect of displacing their lands, environmental issues, and labor unfair wages. According to the International Commission, the situation of Jurists’s monitor to Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zones (SEZs) - China Investment in Rakhine State, shows that lack of transparency in projects that can have a detrimental impact on the environment and society can make communities vulnerable to abuse. It can also affect investors and expose them to project delays, proceedings, and reputational damage (International Commission of Jurists, 2016).

In recent years, China has begun to diversify its investments beyond energy, oil, and gas. China and Myanmar signed an agreement on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects in 2020. One of the major ventures was the USD 1.3 billion advancement of a profound seaport at Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Deep Sea Port Project for becoming developed as a Special Economic Zone. The Chinese consortium China International Trust and Investment Corporation Group (CITIC) Group Corporation owns a 70% stake in the project. Other projects, such as the development of three economic zones along the Myanmar-China border and the development of a new quarter for the city of Yangon, were also announced. However, generally China projects are not well-liked by the people of Myanmar.

Breaking down the simmering situation of Relationship China and Myanmar in the post-military coup after the military overthrow of the democratically elected government, led by the National League of Democracy (NLD) on 1st February 2021, the perception of Myanmar people of the Chinese government on the count of being accusations of support for military coup has been changing. Given that, China and Russia disagreed on the UN meeting to move out of the actions against the military over the situation of the Coup. As a result, pro-democracy Protesters in Yangon gathered near the massive red entryways of the Chinese government embassy, and they were accusing China of allegedly supporting military tactical uprisings before the military coup in February 2021 (McLaughlin, 2021).

Furthermore, the Boycott of China government and its products appeared later. Additionally, the tension over China became more and more, especially when the Chinese industries were burned in the early anti-coup movement in Myanmar. Following that, irate hordes outfitted with iron bars, tomahawks and

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petroleum put a match to 32 Chinese-moved manufacturing plants in the municipalities, causing US\$37 million in harm and harming two representatives, as per China's Global Times Newspaper (Kyaw, 2021). After all these, China used their “vaccine policy” towards Myanmar but it failed because of the Military Coup (Irrawaddy, 2021b) and the Chinese government started changing their voices and becoming softly gradually. Many international committees and intellectuals were paying attention over the China government changing actions over the military coup.

However, the relations between China and Myanmar recently became a controversial subject in the field of international politics, and geopolitically, particularly China's influence on Myanmar's government either direct or indirect ways when mostly projects were started in 2011 during the Thein Sein Government (Kye, 2018). The Anti- China movements appeared within both government terms that was started when the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was introduced. Along with the China Belt and Road Initiative project, many controversial issues, arose, including land and environmental issues. Out of them, the popular word was “the death trap” among Myanmar citizens who did not agree with those projects - mainly from ethnic communities and complained about it. Consequently, the Anti-China movement also increased among the Burmese people (Myanmar Times, 2020).

All of the above circumstances indicate that China's diplomacy and interests in Myanmar are not entirely straightforward or reliable. The National Unity Government (NUG), as known as the Parallel Shadow government, formed by the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), which were democratically elected representatives in 2020 November National Election after a military coup in February last year. Therefore, the interim National Unity Government (NUG) of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is identified by most Myanmar people as the genuine Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. So, the National Unity Government (NUG) will execute the objectives and steps of the political street outline as endorsed in Portion I of the Popular government Constitution in discourse with the National Solidarity Consultative Board. By the time, the NUG might be responsible to the Committee Speaking to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, China should have started to build a good relationship with the NUG rather than the State Administration Council (SAC). Many scholars criticized that although China can still stay aside with the SAC when the military can give more interest than the NUG, these situations are becoming shadier and more difficult to guess above all these circumstances (Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, 2021).

Given above all the reasons, the historical relationship background is strong between China and Myanmar since 1988 is learned in the primary section. While the Western countries economically did sanctions against the Myanmar regime, China became a long-term partner and biggest investment country within Myanmar. More precisely, focusing studies is on the dimension of between Myanmar and China diplomacy's interaction before and after the military seized power in a coup on 1st February 2021. Likewise, the relationship between Myanmar and China after the 2021 military coup and how to maintain this relationship is important to study. Since 1988, China has also been becoming one of key players over the Myanmar democratic transition and peace process before and aftermath of the 2021 coup with their more controversial investments. Therefore, this paper will discuss various reasons why China became a key partner with Myanmar in the past and present.

2. Objectives

- 1) To examine the relationship between Myanmar and China after the 2021 military coup.
- 2) To propose ways to maintain and increase relations between China and Myanmar in the future.

3. Methods

Semi-structured interviews were used and approximately six participants were interviewed. The research objectives and areas of study are the best addressed using a qualitative research method to investigate the real-life problems and challenges affecting China-Myanmar relations and their impact on China's foreign policy towards Myanmar. To achieve the primary research objectives, the study is conducted as a qualitative method to examine existing information about the issues related to the current situation of relationship between Myanmar and China, including historically their real-life problems dealing through diplomacy in



both countries. This research also used the secondary sources from many scholars who emphasize China and Myanmar bilateral relations, the impact of Myanmar political transition over China, and the sources provide additional information about the historical relationship between both countries and indicate China's perspective towards Myanmar's diplomacy. This information is used to clarify and analyze the secondary sources.

3.1 Participants

In this research, the six participants were chosen in line with the three categories of their personal background, professional background, and their ages. The first criterion is their experience and knowledge of Myanmar politics, which is important to provide political terminology, necessary information, and to clarify the study findings. Each participant was born and raised in the country, and lived at least 15 years, and graduated with their degree in Myanmar.

Based on their expertise and personal background, at least three political analysts, one journalist and two government officers were selected to conduct interviews. More specifically, among the three political analysts, one of them is pursuing his Ph.D. in public policy at Chiang Mai University, another one is undertaking as a senior researcher for the China-Desk program at Yangon Based Think Tank, Institute for Strategy and Policy Myanmar (iSP-Myanmar), and the last one is an MA student at Taiwan University majoring in international studies. The other two participants are working for the National Unity Government (NUG), which is a parallel government that opposes the military junta ruling the country. The last one is a freelance journalist who is writing analyzed and featured stories on Myanmar affairs for international media outlets including TIME, Foreign Policy, Nikkei Asian Review, The Diplomat, and Al Jazeera. Secondly, professionally most of the interviewed participants are working for different sectors including governments, think tanks, mainstream media sectors, and some are studying for their graduate degree at international universities. Therefore, the participants come from a range of places since the researcher wishes to be as inclusive as possible within the findings of the research.

The last criterion is “the arrangement for age”. The participants, who are between the ages of 26 and 35, were selected to provide fresh analysis of the relationship between Myanmar and China and to verify information from secondary sources. The researcher believed that the middle-aged participants typically have precise ideas and information about what they have been experiencing in terms of political knowledge and background and thinking about the future of the country. The detailed information on participants can be found on table 1.

The interviews were conducted through email and phone calls from March 20th to 30th, 2022. Some of them were conducted through zoom meetings. To protect the participants' identities and ensure confidentiality, the participants were referred to as Participant A, B, C, D, E, and F.

Table 1 List of interviewee's information

No	Participants	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Position/Organization	Country
1	Participant A	Male	26	Bamar	Volunteer - Ministry of Foreign Affair - NUG	Thailand
2	Participant B	Male	35	Bamar	Junior Officer - Ministry of Foreign Affairs	-
3	Participant C	Male	28	Bamar	Public Policy Analyst/ Ph D Student	Thailand
4	Participant D	Male	28	Rakhine	Senior Researcher- China Desk - iSP-Myanmar	Thailand
5	Participant E	Male	26	Bamar - Chinese	Member - Research Working Group (NLD)	Taiwan
6	Participant F	Male	26	Rakhine	Freelance Journalist	The United States



3.2 Limitations

Speaking of limitations, the researcher was unable to contact members of the SAC. This is because the current situation of Myanmar is facing a legitimacy crisis. Therefore, out of ethical and moral concerns, the researcher chose not to contact the SAC, and to prioritize the safety and security of the interviewees, as the SAC is monitoring people who are working against the Junta. However, the researcher will add the updated timeline of the meeting between SAC and China Special Envoys since the military coup in the sections of findings and discussion.

4. Results

This finding is divided into two sections. Firstly, the primary section is considered in talking over Myanmar's current confronting challenges since the military coup in February 2021. Consequently, the second section is Myanmar's challenges equitable moving to China and the results of the political benefit with perspective, whereas the moment is prioritized analyzing the potential challenges and future political landscape between China and Myanmar's diplomacy-based the move utilizing auxiliary through sources including interviewing, universal observers' reports, as well as news and articles analysis.

4.1 The relationship between Myanmar and China

In the section on research finding, the interviewees' reports are mainly described by being divided into three different points - 1) Current situation of Myanmar politics, 2) Analysis of the role of the Military regime and the NUG government, which is leading to the deterioration of China-Myanmar relations, and 3) the sequences of China and Myanmar diplomatic relations analyzed - that an essential outcome to boost up the diplomatic relations between China and Myanmar. And this study intends to explain how the problems of the internal democratic crisis are affecting the diplomatic relationship between China and Myanmar in the post-coup crisis in Myanmar.

4.1.1) The Legitimacy crisis of Myanmar impacted towards China-Myanmar relationships

All interviews reported that Myanmar is politically and economically in turmoil that impacts the neighboring countries and worldwide. The reason for this conflict appeared in the post 2020 national election resulting in the multi-layered of the country's political sectors and the future of people from Myanmar. Commonly, all interviewees said that the same scenario of current politics of Myanmar that also negatively affected the relation with China. Participant D stated that the current military coup appeared because of the bad outcomes from the civil- Military relation that rooted in the period of National League of Democracy (NLD) government term from 2015 to 2020. Because of their political disagreements among political elite groups, that led the military to seize power in a coup, and then people revolted in the mass uprising that led to this current political crisis (Participant D, Personal Communication, May 27, 2022). In February 2021, after the military ousted democratically civilian government, the members of parliament who were elected by 2022 national election founded the National Unity of Government (NUG) of Myanmar which is now taking a leading role in political competition with the military regime to get recognized by the international community (Participant B, E and F, Personal Communication, May 27, 2022).

Besides, Participants B, E and F stated that many ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), rural and other Jungle areas such as Kachin, Kayin and Kayah, are hosting to take care of not only opposition politicians who are warranted by the military dictatorship and human rights activists, other scholars were brutally arrested and killed in their places. Additionally, people's defense force- PDFs were formed with support from EAOs who are now fighting against the military junta (Participant B, E and F, Personal Communication, May 27, 2022). Participant B further reported that the current political situation is the medium to determine either the good or bad of Myanmar country's future, and it gave the worst civil war experiences to the people. Additionally, he said, "This would be one of the worst situations that people are suffering, and it would also be the best opportunity to eradicate the military dictatorship. This intense event was the most significant event of my entire life in which people showed their true feelings towards the military coup. (Participant B, Personal Communication, May 27, 2022). It is obvious that a wide range of young people from middle-school to



university student level, as well as various professionals from academia to ministry officers, have joined the civil disobedience movement (CDM).

Regarding international recognition, it has been commonly said from the researcher's interviews that although there are underground movements ongoing and rising, the people's government- NUG is also attempting to get recognized by the United Nations and international community, and to gain "de facto" power over the people of Myanmar. Participants A, B and E said that however, the real is not hardcore, and even the NUG has experienced many politicians from the NLD party in earlier political transition. But the researcher's interviewees were not satisfied with this slow-moving step by the NUG government's actions of fighting against the junta (Participant A, B and E, Personal Communication, May 27, 2022). Participant B suggested that the NUG government should move faster than the military junta and attempt to meet with major EAOs while the military is attempting to start a peace process with EAOs even though the military are committing war crime, the crime against humanity and violating the dignity of human rights in real life (Participant B, Personal Communication, May 27, 2022).

In the same sequence, Participant B also criticized that the government [refers to NUG] not working effectively, and they are running like local NGOs, with fixed office hours, and organizing unnecessary ministries while many local citizens, PDFs and some political activists are being killed in war zones across the county (Participant B, personal Communication, May 27, 2022). Furthermore, Participants E and F also pointed out that some weakness of NUG in delaying political action has affected the security and safety of local people (Participant E and F, personal Communication, May 27, 2022). Therefore, Participant A suggested that the shadow government needs to consider those sectors and take swift response as much as possible (Participant A, personal Communication, May 27, 2022). Participants B and C highlighted that there has been a lack of collective leadership from the ousted government to drive and steer the public's revolutionary wave. Meanwhile, China has played a major role in Myanmar's politics. In addition, Participant C stated that they have been adopting a "wait and see" strategy since the February 2021 coup (Participant B and C, personal Communication, May 27, 2022). It has been observed that not only China, but also the ASEAN, US and International community have not taken significant action on this current situation. Participants A and F highlighted that China maintains a significantly better relationship with the military regime than the NUG. Apparently however, the anti-China movement is rising nationwide. That is why China could not remain silent any longer after the one-year coup (Participants A and F, Personal Communication, May 27, 2022).

4.1.2) The role of military regime and the NUG Government, and its sequences

In the sequence of current interference, the initial government institution was totally scattered, and many scholars have suggested reforming it as a new institution for civilian government to gain public recognition quickly in the short time. There are some weak factors in de facto power between the parallel government NUG and the military regime. That's why Participants A and D stated that after one year of the 2021 coup, the military regime is still ongoing from the group situation trying to get recognition power from the international community. By the perception of people, they want to annihilate the military's political role, but in reality, this is unlikely to happen. However, the military regime is now facing multi-fronts from armed revolutionaries, plus with EAOs. (Participant A and D, personal Communication, May 27, 2022).

Participants A and D highlighted that, on the other hand, they (military regime) are using their veto power to reach out to the international community while its forces launched intensively an offensive in rural and urban areas arbitrarily arresting and detaining civilians since the coup. This includes sexual abuse of women, war crimes, burning houses and churches, as well as the destruction of people's homes especially in Karen, Chin, Sagaing and Kayah States, which are being targeted. And the country's economy system is down, the rate of inflation is out of control. Foreign trade in their (military regime) hand is decreasing sharply, making them too weak to make progress and their plans to buy weapons to defeat the anti-junta armed groups have not worked properly as they were expecting. Therefore, the military regime is attempting to quickly reopen the China - Myanmar border gates, and restart China's Investment in Myanmar as soon as possible (Participant A and D, Personal Communication, May 27, 2022).



To analyze the political players of the shadow government and the military, Participant D reported with another opinion, same with Participants A and E, that the NUG is also still weak in De Facto power compared to the military junta. Even though NUG is trying to function as a full government function, the armed revolutionaries can give the best short results in real situations instead of public provisions. Participants B stated the NUG, especially the Ministry of Defense Department, should meet and discuss with EAOs leaders to get better outcomes. Participant E also said that NUG does not have strong political power like the military junta which has Russia and China to provide weapons. Most EAOs from the North are influenced by China, and the West treats NUG as an NGO. (Participant A, B, D and E, personal Communication, May 27, 2022). Participant C reported that “at the same time, international politics has been changing – democratic principles are under threat, the rise of populism around the globe”. At the same time, Participant F also reported that NUG should reconsider their strategy plan and military tactics to find better ways to gain de facto power over Myanmar’s political landscape. (Participant C and F, personal Communication, May 27, 2022).

4.2 Ways to strength between China and Myanmar Diplomacy

All participants reported that the above chaotic internal circumstances impacted the international sectors, especially the relations of China, ASEAN and the USA. Like China, Myanmar's political crisis is bringing many disadvantages of trading, unstable economics, and being partnership with stakeholders. All Participants stated commonly that there has been an Anti-China movement soon after the 2021 post- Coup. And it has been significantly impacted by China's investment in Myanmar. As a result, the strategy of China upon Myanmar starts changing and trying to communicate with the key players from all sectors with multi-strategy. On the other hand, geopolitically, Myanmar could not avoid the growth of China’s power so the government (NUG) should consider the possible outcomes from all those aspects. But China's role in the Myanmar political crisis remains and needs to be watched for their response towards Myanmar that the Participant D reported China will continue whenever Myanmar’s political situation is, but China only wants stability. Therefore, China will change its policy towards Myanmar according to the current unstable political situation. Participant B reported that NUG should cooperate with China to gain support for the political background rather than military regime. The rest of the participants - A and F are the same with Participant D’s reports (Participants A, B, D and F, Personal Communication, May 27,2022).

Additionally, Participants D and B stated that the environmental issues persist and impact Myanmar even if China is a partner or not. That means the issue has responsibility on the state’s interaction and how to react to the local civilians. Participants B reported the environmental issues are not necessarily related to China’s investment but if China could consider those impacts, there will be better public recognition. Participants F and A reported that China should consider the possible impacts and the states should take responsibility for them (Participants A, B, D and F, personal Communication, May 27, 2022).

5. Discussion

Based on the research findings and secondary sources, the discussion parts are analyzed on the relationship between Myanmar and China and maintaining their relationships because of current Myanmar’s political turmoil. The researcher discussed how both countries can improve their relations and strengthen them beyond the coup’s circumstance.

5.1 The relationship between Myanmar and China after the 2021 military coup

In the current political dynamics of Myanmar, the military controlled supreme level decisions according to the country constitution, which was drawn by the military regime in 2008, but the military did not get support from the people of Myanmar until the present (Myanmar Times, 2020). In addition, Participant D (Personal Communication, May 27, 2022) said that “Myanmar is a third world country and is influenced geopolitically by other superpower countries such as China, India, Japan and the United States.” In this situation, the researcher’s interviews have the same point of view on that scene. The coup was brought to decide the future of the country will be going backwards or forwards.

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The underground situation in Myanmar is now tense, and people are living in danger for their every day and beyond. According to the Assistant Association Political Prisoners (AAPP)'s documentation, at least 547 houses and buildings have been burned by the Junta since the 2021 coup as of March of 2022 (AAPP, 2022). And a total of 10,161 people is currently in detention as of April 11, 2022. Moreover, 990 people have been sentenced in person, out of which 59 have been sentenced to death including 2 children, 1976 are evading arrest warrants, while 120 people have been sentenced in absentia, out of which 41 sentenced to death in absentia. In total 100 were sentenced to death, in person and absentia. The exact identities and total figure remain to be verified (AAPP, 2022). Participant C (Personal Communication, May 27, 2022) also reported that, Myanmar is an unfinished political and economic country; the chapters on racism and democracy struggling are too long to begin with.

Moreover, Participant C, B and E also reported that a part of the reason for the coup can be that the military was worried about their role in the future politics of the country. Politics has been shrinking, as a result of the landslide victory of National League of Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi. Another reason could be the personal ambition of the coup leader Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing's involvement in the country's politics (Participant C, B and E, Personal Communication, May 27, 2022). As a result, the opposite party NLD has emerged for a long time, but it failed to operate within the 2008 constitution and ended up in a 2021 coup. Although there are underground movements ongoing and rising, the people's government NUG, is also attempting to gain recognition by the UN and international community, and gain "De facto" power over the people of Myanmar. However, the reality is not as harsh as the NUG has experienced many politicians from the NLD in earlier political transitions. As many observers assume that China is always emphasizing its national interest rather than the others, it is obvious that China dislikes much if the country's politics is unstable that will affect their economic interests (USIP China Myanmar Senior Study Group, 2018).

5.2 Ways to strength relationship between China and Myanmar

Currently, the country's unstable situation is impacting foreign affairs such as ASEAN, the US, India and China. The USIP, China Myanmar Senior Study Group (2018) reported that China dislikes the 2021 coup because it delays and loses their investment projects in Myanmar. To strengthen both countries' relations, as a result, the governments must consider the possible strategies and transparency into their Foreign Policy. Participant C (Personal Communication, May 27, 2022) said that;

"International politics has been changing – democratic principles are under threat, the rise of populism around the globe at the same time". After one year, I think the escalation between the two sides (NUG and military regime) will be going on. The crisis might be at a deadlock. The recent 'Arms Forces Day' (March 27, 2021) speech shows the military does not have yet intention to come to the negotiation table, which is contrasting the consensus of the ASEAN and other international communities, which have been failing to unfold the crisis."

Following that statement, all participants reported that the role of the shadow government must consider those sectors and act as much as possible. (Participant A, B, C, D, E and F, Personal Communication, May 27, 2022). According to Participant C (Personal Communication, May 27, 2022), there has been a lack of collective leadership from the ousted government, which should have driven and guided the public's revolutionary wave. However, all interviews commonly say that the shadow would win in the end, and they also believe it. But it is difficult to predict how the shadow government will end the military dictatorship and can bring a better solution to maintain the diplomatic relationship between China and Myanmar.

If the country tries to maintain the stability, there are no huge difficulties to engage in foreign affairs to strengthen and promote the ways of keeping the partnership with neighboring countries such as Thailand and India, especially with China.

As for Myanmar,

- i) Need to annihilate the coup to end the civil wars,
- ii) The shadow government needs to reconsider the realistic policies, economic development, and reveal transparency towards the people.



All interviews have the same point of view that China has been a major key player in Myanmar politics since President Thein Sein, however, announced the suspension of the Myitsone Dam project in 2011. China's relations with Myanmar have been closer to military leaders, but China is changing their strategic plan to multi-layered sectors. Therefore, the shadow government should reconsider to expand the “De facto” power with the support of superpower countries like China and think of better strategies to maintain the relations with China to gain power in hand instead of pushing into the military to make the enemy stronger (Participants A, B, C, D, E and F, Personal Communication, May 27, 2022).

Tower and Clapp (2021a) stated that China has the potential to be a reliable partner for democratic forces seeking good governance, peace, and stability. Many scholars claim that geopolitically, economically, or globally, China has become a super country and wants to maintain their image internationally nowadays. Therefore, China does not want to be a villain role between the Military and the Shadow Government in Myanmar. Moreover, China has good outcomes with the initial NLD government rather than the military before the coup in February 2021 (Tower & Clapp, 2021b).

To repair the economic destruction in the country, Myanmar needs reliable partners for economic development. As both countries, China investment projects and border trade are major factors to maintain the bilateral relations between China and Myanmar. However, the SAC-military regime is also attempting to carry out major projects according to the CMEC agreement. On the other hand, NUG is also taking swift action with ASEAN, China, and international communities to gain power with their new foreign diplomas. Hence, China is aware that it is making careful strategies to handle the Myanmar crisis and is awaiting the best outcomes from Myanmar's dramatic changes.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this paper, the researchers concluded the research paper with the factors that are challenging to the diplomatic relations between China and Myanmar, and the possible outcomes to promote the foreign strategies with recommendations for both countries' future.

6.1 Conclusion

6.1.1 Relationship between Myanmar and China

In fact, Myanmar and China cannot avoid being partners with each other according to their long-term history and geography. Both countries have their own national interest and possible outcomes geopolitically. For Myanmar, many internal crises still need to take swift response but ongoing with these to get back democracy hopefully to overcome the dictatorship.

The country needs a specific long plan of economic development to rise again in the post-coup and Covid- 19 pandemic. Especially for Myanmar, there will be more homework about the peace process, economic and social development in terms of addressing reconstruction and rehabilitation, and possible outcomes as the new government deals with the current situation.

6.1.2 Promoting the relations

Myanmar must put an end to the longevity of the coup and avoid turning into the same mistakes in the history that led to the coup. In addition, the shadow government must bring peace towards the EAOs to engage in the future's federal democratic country. Now is the time for China to extend the bilateral relations with NUG rather than the SAC could be granted to prevent China's investment no longer. Significantly, China has always had a big influence only economically and politically in Myanmar including EAOs in the north. Obviously, China could handle cautiously regarding Myanmar's conflict and should not play a villain role between the Military and the NUG among the international community's response.

Furthermore, Myanmar, the shadow government, should consider the possible outcomes, and take accountabilities to establish a civil peace. And a structured inquiry about China's policy towards Myanmar and the need to take swift actions and state interaction to promote the country's economy for the future. China will become one of the main reasons for a major reliance on the reforming economic benefit from their CEMC investments in Myanmar beyond the coup in the future if the shadow government can fix their ways to engage the foreign strategies.



6.2 Recommendations

Myanmar's political crisis has jolted into the world today. Over decades, Myanmar people in general and, ethnic minorities, have been subjected to military oppression. Therefore, the researcher would like to add recommendations to the Shadow Government and China to keep the diplomatic relations for border security.

6.2.1 The China government

For China, it will have better outcomes and economic benefits and the partnership will be long-standing with Myanmar for the future if China supports the NUG and respects the will of the people especially in this situation. And China should consider the possible adjustments to gain local support to gain trust and regional stability in Myanmar to maintain diplomatic relations.

6.2.2 The Shadow government - NUG

To be certain, the shadow government needs to be strengthened, to guard the will of people and engage with the leaders of EAOs - more precisely - as a government, the executive level should not only work with upper-level government officials traditionally also advance checks - balance with the real-life situation on the ground as the revolutionaries' government needs the most. At the international level, the government cannot avoid the superpower countries like China and India - geopolitically and should engage for national interest to get better outcomes to solve the country's disasters. Therefore, the following recommendations that will support to advance the government's infrastructure.

- 1) The winning government needs a full infrastructure of the country's sectors to build from the bottom up.
- 2) For the government, it needs the skillful experience of scholars and experts to fill the gap in every sector of governments.
- 3) The role of EAOs should not be missed in the key players of politics while reconstructing the country.
- 4) For better economic development, the government should consider the bilateral relations with China, promote the possible outcomes and transparency to the people of Myanmar.

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