



# Coup Year in Review Analyses Series

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## Political Developments Since the Coup

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### Introduction

The February 01 Coup triggered several responses from all facets of Burma. From public demonstrations and protests to the formation of the anti-junta political forces, the military takeover prompted a sudden and difficult political realization of Burma's democratization process. The anti-junta forces from the public and political spheres culminated to the creation of various pro-democracy forces while several EAOs continue to engage politically and militarily as the political and security crisis unfolds.

### Civil Disobedience Movement

One day after the February 01 Coup, the healthcare professionals in Burma started a nationwide civil disobedience movement, commonly known as CDM, where they refused to work under the military regime.<sup>1</sup> The motive of the movement was to demonstrate resistance to the illegitimate military regime. Within days, the movement gained widespread support from the civilians and prominent figures including the 88 Generation student leader Ko Min Ko Naing and the Pulitzer Prize winner Ko Wa Lone.<sup>2</sup> Even though the CDM was initiated by the healthcare workers and civil servants, the movement quickly gained traction in other important sectors such as education and the financial sector. Merely within a week after the coup, the movement consisted of faculties and administrators from 18 universities and 91 hospitals nationwide.<sup>3</sup> By November 2021, the country's democratically-elected civilian government, the National Unity Government (NUG), claimed that more than 400,000 civil servants had joined the movement since the coup.<sup>4</sup>

The civil disobedience movement also inspired the nationwide boycott of military products and services owned by the junta and their business affiliates.<sup>5</sup> These campaigns encouraged more citizens to join the CDM movement and the pressure campaign against the military junta. For instance, the public rebuke of

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<sup>1</sup> FRONTIER, "Teachers, students join anti-coup campaign as hospital staff stop work", Frontier, February 3, 2021, <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/teachers-students-join-anti-coup-campaign-as-hospital-staff-stop-work/>

<sup>2</sup> Myanmar Now, "Veteran Activist Calls For Civil Disobedience In Wake Of Coup", Myanmar Now, February 3, 2021, <https://www.myanmar-now.org/en/news/veteran-activist-calls-for-civil-disobedience-in-wake-of-coup>; Jen Kirby, "Myanmar's Pro-democracy Protest Movement Is Strengthening", Vox, February 22, 2021, <https://www.vox.com/22295138/myanmar-protests-strike-coup-military>

<sup>3</sup> The Irrawaddy, "Thousands Join Peaceful Protests Against Myanmar Military", The Irrawaddy, February 5, 2021, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/thousands-join-peaceful-protests-myanmar-military.html>

<sup>4</sup> Myanmar Now, "80% of Htilin civil servants join CDM after facing ultimatum", Myanmar Now, November 9, 2021, <https://www.myanmar-now.org/en/news/80-of-htilin-civil-servants-join-cdm-after-facing-ultimatum>

<sup>5</sup> Zyar Hein, "Myanmar Calls Boycott Tatmadaw Linked Products And Services", Myanmar Times, February 3, 2021, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmar-calls-boycott-tatmadaw-linked-products-and-services.html>

the military-owned telecom giant Mytel prompted 71 engineers to resign from their positions.<sup>6</sup> The CDM movement also provided support to active-duty members of the junta's security force to defect to the Tatmadaw. As of January 2022, more than 2,000 soldiers and 6,000 police forces have defected and fled to either ethnic-controlled areas or neighboring countries such as India.<sup>7</sup>

### **Formation of CRPH and NUG**

On February 04, 2021, the elected lawmakers from the 2020 general election vowed to honor people's mandate and carry out their civic responsibilities.<sup>8</sup> As this elective body was forcefully dissolved by the junta, the 70 elected members of parliament (MPs) formed the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) in an act of defiance to the illegitimate junta.<sup>9</sup> Since the formation of the committee, the CRPH has been advising and working together with the UN diplomats and the international community to deliver humanitarian aid and carry out the functions of a government.<sup>10</sup> On March 01, 2021, the CRPH declared the Tatmadaw (military junta) as a terrorist organization for the murders of peaceful protestors throughout the country.<sup>11</sup>

On April 16, 2021, the CRPH announced the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG) consisting of ousted lawmakers, representatives from ethnic organizations, and prominent pro-democracy activists.<sup>12</sup> Unlike the junta's State Administration Council (SAC), the public viewed the NUG as the legitimate governing body and the true representative of the people of Burma.<sup>13</sup>

### **Federal Democracy Charter and National Unity Coalition Council**

The CRPH abolished the 2008 constitution and introduced the two-part Federal Democracy charter on March 31, 2021.<sup>14</sup> This charter serves as the political roadmap for the NUG during this interim period.<sup>15</sup> Part of this roadmap is the formation of the National Unity Coalition Council (NUCC), a consultative platform

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<sup>6</sup> FRONTIER, "Teachers, students join anti-coup campaign as hospital staff stop work", Frontier, February 3, 2021, <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/teachers-students-join-anti-coup-campaign-as-hospital-staff-stop-work/>

<sup>7</sup> The Economist, "A Growing Number Of Soldiers Are Deserting The Burmese Army", The Economist, January 8, 2022. <https://www.economist.com/asia/2022/01/08/a-growing-number-of-soldiers-are-deserting-the-burmese-army>

<sup>8</sup> FRONTIER, "Nld Lawmakers In Nay Pyi Taw Defy Military, Take Oath Of Office", February 4, 2021, Frontier, <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/nld-lawmakers-in-nay-pyi-taw-defy-military-take-oath-of-office/>

<sup>9</sup> VOA News, "New Civilian Government Formed In Myanmar To Counter Military Regime", April 1, 2021, VOA News, <https://www.voanews.com/a/east-asia-pacific-new-civilian-government-formed-myanmar-counter-military-regime/6204027.html>

<sup>10</sup> The Irrawaddy, "Amid Coup, Myanmar's NLD Lawmakers Form Committee to Serve as Legitimate Parliament", February 8, 2021, The Irrawaddy, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/amid-coup-myanmars-nld-lawmakers-form-committee-serve-legitimate-parliament.html>

<sup>11</sup> CRPH Myanmar, "We Declare The Myanmar Military Junta's State Administration Council (SAC) As The Terrorist Group", Twitter, March 01, 2021, <https://twitter.com/CrphMyanmar/status/1366368462554107905?s=19>

<sup>12</sup> Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw - CRPH, "Formation Of The National Unity Government", March 01, 2021, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/crph.official.mm/posts/153313873461259>

<sup>13</sup> AP News, "Myanmar Politicians Defy Coup, Say They Are True Government", February 4, 2021, AP News, <https://apnews.com/article/myanmar-coup-politicians-a576dcd73070070877e8d567ec5e8a5c>

<sup>14</sup> Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, *Federal Democracy Charter*, <https://crphmyanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Federal-Democracy-Charter-English.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Moe Thuzar and Htet Myet Min Tun, "Myanmar's National Unity Government: A Radical Arrangement to Counteract the Coup," January 28, 2022, *ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute*, <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2022-8-myanmars-national-unity-government-a-radical-arrangement-to-counteract-the-coup-by-moe-thuzar-and-htet-myet-min-tun/>

under the collective leadership of the CRPH, political parties, Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs), representatives from the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), and civil society organizations (CSOs).<sup>16</sup> Disagreements over its membership, role, and functions delayed its formal launch to November 2021. The main objective of NUCC is to develop a new federal constitution.

The informal interim version of NUCC played a prominent role in developing the Federal Democracy Charter. However, during its informal stage, many stakeholders such as strike committees and political parties were left out of discussions. The CRPH claimed that the charter was drafted in close consultation with ethnic partners. Part I of the charter outlines the principles of a future federal system. Part II, dealing with the interim arrangements for the NUG, grants the sole legislative decision-making power to the CRPH. This caused frustrations among some members of the NUCC since it left ethnic minorities with little formal leverage. EAOs, ethnic political parties, strike committees, and CDM representatives all felt that the charter drafting process was rushed and was without sufficient consultation. Rather than walking away from the negotiations, the EAOs expressed disappointment with Part II of the charter and agreed to continue negotiation, which had led to significant progress. Through the NUCC, the CRPH and NUG have engaged in discussions with ethnic armed groups on amendments to address some of their concerns. After its formal launch, the NUCC had been expected to provide a stronger mechanism for cooperation and policymaking.

The NUCC held the first People's Congress on January 27, 2022.<sup>17</sup> It reviewed and agreed on Part I and II of the Federal Democracy Charter, reaffirmed the authority of the NUG, and discussed its progress since its formation. The Congress also announced the additions and amendments to the Charter, and clearly defined the roles of the NUCC and the NUG to strengthen the leadership of the NUG and improve coordination between the two. The Congress re-enacted the two-part Federal Democracy Charter introduced in April 2021, announced the official establishment of the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC), and witnessed the pledging of the NUCC members to implement the framework set out by the Charter. Members of the CRPH and NUG, other elected MPs, representatives from political parties, student unions, CSOs, CDM representatives, strike committees, EAOs, and committees representing states, regions, federal entities, and nationalities formed created by the Charter, international observers, and guests attended the Congress.

Being an outgrowth of the Bamar-dominated National League for Democracy (NLD), NUG's efforts have been hampered by the low level of trust from the EAOs. At its inception, the CRPH was mostly constituted of elected NLD members of parliament. It has attempted to be more inclusive of gender and ethnic backgrounds in forming and expanding the NUG.<sup>18</sup> Duwa Lashi La, a Kachin politician and the chairman of the Kachin National Consultative Council, is currently serving as the acting president of the NUG, and

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<sup>16</sup> Moe Thuzar and Htet Myet Min Tun, "Myanmar's National Unity Consultative Council: A Vision of Myanmar's Federal Future," January 5, 2022, *Fulcrum*, <https://fulcrum.sg/myanmars-national-unity-consultative-council-a-vision-of-myanmars-federal-future/>

<sup>17</sup> *Public Voice Television (PVTV)*, "ပြည်သူ့ညီလာခံက အချက် ၈ ချက်ကို အတည်ပြုဆုံးဖြတ် [People's Congress Decides on Eight-point Conclusion]," January 30, 2022, <https://pvtvmyanmar.net/%E1%80%95%E1%80%BC%E1%80%8A%E1%80%BA%E1%80%9E%E1%80%B0%E1%80%B7%E1%80%8A%E1%80%AE%E1%80%9C%E1%80%AC%E1%80%81%E1%80%B6%E1%80%80-%E1%80%A1%E1%80%81%E1%80%BB%E1%80%80%E1%80%BA-%E1%81%88-%E1%80%81/>

<sup>18</sup> Moe Thuzar and Htet Myet Min Tun, "Myanmar's National Unity Government: A Radical Arrangement to Counteract the Coup," January 28, 2022, *ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute*, <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2022-8-myanmars-national-unity-government-a-radical-arrangement-to-counteract-the-coup-by-moe-thuzar-and-htet-myet-min-tun/>

Mahn Win Khaing Than, former Union Parliament speaker of Karen ethnic origins, as the prime minister. Despite these efforts, the legacy of NLD failing to fulfill the wishes of ethnic political forces during its five years rule still haunts the relationship between the NUG and ethnic minorities. Elites from the EAOs and ethnic political parties often talk about the unforgotten history of broken promises by the Bamar-dominated central government, including the military juntas since independence in 1948. After all, the composition NUG, despite its efforts to be inclusive, is majority Bamar, and former Bamar NLD members still dominate its decision-making.

### ***NUG's Limited Success in Cooperating with EAOs***

The National Unity Government (NUG) is under public pressure to deliver results and to prove to both the Burmese public and international stakeholders that it is capable of challenging the military regime. As most EAOs already control some territory, and organized and trained forces, the NUG aims to form political and military alliances with EAOs to substantiate its legitimacy through more tangible control of the country. This gives EAOs an upper hand in their post-coup relations with the NUG. After the initial months of brutal crackdown, the NUG declared the Tatmadaw as a terrorist organization<sup>19</sup>. It cleared the previous terrorist organization designation for the Arakan Army (AA), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), and Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) by the previous government. The CRPH announced the people's "right to self-defense" on March 15, 2021. Early on, the public and some NUG members have called for a "Federal Army," an interethnic military alliance under NUG's command. This still seems to be a far-fetched idea given the historical grievances between the ethnic groups and the Bamars and the conflicting interests among the EAOs. On September 07, 2021, the NUG declared a "people's defensive war" and called for a nationwide resistance against the military junta. This call prompted a large-scale escalation of attacks on military targets by the People's Defense Forces (PDFs) and limited responses from the EAOs.

With the introduction of the framework for People's Defense Forces (PDF) on May 5, 2021, the NUG had made some progress in mobilizing an organized, armed resistance against the junta.<sup>20</sup> Under this framework, numerous new armed groups that call themselves PDFs and associate with the NUG have sprung up in lowland majority Burmar areas and in the highlands. They have been waging guerrilla warfare against the Tatmadaw. The NUG has minimal to no control over their operations. On October 28, 2021, the NUG announced the formation of a Central Command and Coordination Committee.<sup>21</sup> This body is intended to coordinate military campaigns and operations with EAOs and to formalize the command of the PDFs. It formally allows ethnic armed groups to control all forces within their territory, including PDFs, and creates a mechanism for managing and deploying forces. The Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and Karen National Union (KNU) have incorporated some PDFs into their armed forces since the formation of the Central Command and Coordination Committee.

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<sup>19</sup> *National Unity Government*, "Announcement on Counter Terrorism and Designation of Terrorist Organizations," June 18, 2021, <https://gov.nugmyanmar.org/2021/06/18/announcement-on-counter-terrorism-and-designation-of-terrorist-organizations/>

<sup>20</sup> *Ministry of Defense, National Unity Government*, "People's Defense Force," <https://mod.nugmyanmar.org/en/peoples-defence-force/>; "Unity govt announces 'people's defence force,'" <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/unity-govt-announces-peoples-defence-force/>

<sup>21</sup> *Myanmar Now*, "NUG establishes 'chain of command' in fight against regime," 28 October, 2021, <https://www.myanmar-now.org/en/news/nug-establishes-chain-of-command-in-fight-against-regime>

Several major EAOs welcomed the steps taken by the NUG.<sup>22</sup> EAO leaders are well aware that Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing is unlikely to accept a genuine federal system. At least four EAOs have been closely engaging with the NUG and another half dozen have cooperated with the NUG in limited capacity. Since the coup, the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), Karen National Union (KNU), Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), and Chin National Front (CNF) have emerged as the closest partners of the NUG. They have offered safety to NUG members, activists and protestors evading the Tatmadaw, engaged in negotiations for the new constitution, appointed members to the NUG, and cooperated with the NUG in combating the COVID-19 and distributing humanitarian aid. They have also accepted and trained youths from cities and lowland Burma for urban guerrilla warfare and have fought the junta forces alongside PDFs, assisted NUG to stock up weapons, and advised the NUG on military strategies.

Since March 2021, both KNU and KIO, and their respective armed wings – the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and Kachin Independence Army (KIA) - have adopted a more aggressive stance towards the Tatmadaw.<sup>23</sup> Some members of the KNU leadership first insisted that disputes with the Tatmadaw must be resolved through the pre-coup National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) framework in consideration of the potential civilian casualty. Other KNU leaders including its Vice Chair Naw Zipporah Sein outright declared the NCA invalid and called for EAOs to work more closely with the NUG and PDFs in fighting the Tatmadaw.<sup>24</sup> These differing opinions disappeared once heavy clashes between the military and the KNLA in Lay Kay Kaw region of Karen State took place in December 2021. KNU Chair Saw Mutu Say Poe said on January 2, 2022, that further negotiations would be impossible without a radical change in approach from the military regime. KNU has a long history of providing public services in the areas they control along the Thai border and has a close relationship with local CSOs. It has assisted the NUG with initiatives such as the COVID-19 Task Force and the National Health Committee.

Kachin political and social organizations inside the country and abroad, including the KIO, formed the Kachin Political Interim Coordination Team in March 2021 to advocate for the interests of Kachin nationalities in the post-coup political dynamics.<sup>25</sup> Since then, KIO has delegated political negotiations to this body. KIA/KIO has worked directly with the NUG on creating the PDF and training fighters, but it has not named any one to the NUG cabinet as of this writing. KIA even fought alongside some newly created militias in northern Sagaing Region.

The Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP)/Karenni Army of Kayah State and the Chin National Front (CNF)/Chin National Army of northern Chin State have launched attacks on Tatmadaw forces. CNF remains to this day the only EAO that has struck a deal with the NUG to fight against the junta.<sup>26</sup> The newly created Chinland Defense Force based in Thantlang have also been confronting Tatmadaw forces with

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<sup>22</sup> *Crisis Group*, "Myanmar's Coup Shakes Up Its Ethnic Conflicts," Report No. 319/Asia, January 12, 2022, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/319-myanmars-coup-shakes-its-ethnic-conflicts>

<sup>23</sup> *Crisis Group*, "Myanmar's Coup Shakes Up Its Ethnic Conflicts," Report No. 319/Asia, January 12, 2022, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/319-myanmars-coup-shakes-its-ethnic-conflicts>

<sup>24</sup> *Myanmar Now*, "The military is a terrorist group, so the ceasefire is null and void' - former KNU vice chair," September 3, 2021, <https://www.myanmar-now.org/en/news/the-military-is-a-terrorist-group-so-the-ceasefire-is-null-and-void-former-knu-vice-chair>

<sup>25</sup> Kachin News Group, "Kachin Organizations Form Interim Coordination Team in Burma," *BNI*, March 19, 2021, <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/kachin-organizations-form-interim-coordination-team-burma>

<sup>26</sup> *The Irrawaddy*, "Chin National Front Signs Deal with Myanmar's Shadow Govt," May 31, 2021, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/chin-national-front-signs-deal-with-myanmars-shadow-govt.html>

the assistance of CNF. They are also more politically engaged with NUG; CNF has nominated a minister to NUG, and KNPP a deputy minister.

### *Activities by EAOs outside the Anti-Junta Resistance*

Other EAOs indifferent to the NUG's cause have been taking advantage of the fact the military is stretched thin by seizing new territories or expanding their influence. Weeks after the coup, the EAO signatories of the NCA suspended political negotiations with the Tatmadaw. The United Wa State Army (UWSA) and Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) based along Burma's border with China in eastern Shan State, already have de facto autonomy in the areas they control. They have little interest to resist the Tatmadaw or participate in discussions in building federal democracy. The Arakan Army (AA) of Rakhine state had declared that their goal was to attain a "confederate" status similar to that possessed by UWSA. AA leaders have also talked about the re-establishment of an independent Rakhine State. UWSA and MNDAA have remained largely disengaged from post-coup politics. MNDAA launched offensive assaults on Tatmadaw holds around the town of Mong Ko, on the China-Burma border in December 2021, to regain control of territory that it historically claims.<sup>27</sup>

The Arakan Army had denied NUG's outreach and invitation to join the anti-junta armed resistance. It has been taking advantage of this period of relative peace and minimal interference in Rakhine State by the central government to consolidate its authority. Even though the Rakhine state experienced the heaviest fighting in recent years before the coup, the Tatmadaw and Arakan Army reached a de facto ceasefire in November 2020. The Tatmadaw had made concessions to AA, such as lifting the internet shutdown, releasing detained relatives of its leader, and offering COVID-19 vaccines.<sup>28</sup> These efforts were made to minimize the Tatmadaw's involvement in fights throughout the country. With the absence of the central government's bureaucratic apparatus on the ground, the United League of Arakan (ULA), the executive core of AA, has introduced its own administrative and governance structures.<sup>29</sup> It has launched a small-scale judiciary system and has begun providing some public services. It issued stay-at-home orders during a COVID-19 outbreak in mid-2021 and achieved compliance in Rakhine State.<sup>30</sup> The Tatmadaw is displeased with these developments and has warned the population to stay away from ULA institutions. The first fighting in a year between the AA and Tatmadaw broke out in northern Maungdaw Township near the Bangladesh border on November 9, 2021.

Three of the most powerful EAOs, all based in Shan State, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), the Shan State Progress Party (SSPP), and the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS), have been ambiguous in their engagement with NUG.<sup>31</sup> Like in Rakhine State, Shan State experienced large-scale conflicts before the coup. The two Shan EAOs, SSPP and RCSS, are in support of creating a federal state, but these rival groups also have other priorities in competing for territorial control with each other. In June

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<sup>27</sup> *The Irrawaddy*, "Scores of Myanmar Junta Troops Die in Failed Attack on MNDAA Base, Kokang Fighters Say," December 21, 2021, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/scores-of-myanmar-junta-troops-die-in-failed-attack-on-mndaa-base-kokang-fighters-say.html>

<sup>28</sup> *DVB*, "AA receives COVID-19 vaccines from the junta," January 25, 2022, <http://english.dvb.no/arakan-army-junta-covid-vaccines/>

<sup>29</sup> Eugene Whong, "Arakan Army, not military junta, run the show in Myanmar's Rakhine state," *Radio Free Asia*, January 19, 2022, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/arakan-army-01192022193040.html>

<sup>30</sup> Kyaw Hsan Hlaing, "Arakan Army extends administrative grip on Rakhine State," *Frontier Myanmar*, August 6, 2021, <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/arakan-army-extends-administrative-grip-on-rakhine-state/>

<sup>31</sup> *Crisis Group*, "Myanmar's Coup Shakes Up Its Ethnic Conflicts," Report No. 319/Asia, January 12, 2022, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/319-myanmars-coup-shakes-its-ethnic-conflicts>

and July of 2021, SSPP and TNLA together mobilized large-scale forces and artillery to fight against RCSS in Kyethi Township in central Shan State.<sup>32</sup> They successfully pushed RCSS out of the positions they occupied in 2017.

RCSS immediately condemned the coup in February 2021, but neither the RCSS nor SSPP has actively cooperated with the NUG in anti-junta efforts.<sup>33</sup> Neither has allowed any PDF to operate within their territories. TNLA, on the other hand, had helped form a PDF, communicated with the NUG, and launched several attacks on the Tatmadaw. However, its support for the anti-junta resistance has been limited. TNLA also competes with RCSS and SSPP for maintaining and expanding territorial control. All parties blame each other for the violence and it is clear that they prioritize territorial expansion over fighting the junta. Despite the rivalry, both Shan groups participate in the Committee for Shan State Unity (CSSU), a coalition of actors in Shan politics formed in 2013 to serve the political interests of Shan nationalities as a unified force. Two major Shan political parties, Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP) and the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), are the other powerful members of CSSU. This committee has been preparing a Shan state constitution based on federal principles. The committee adopted an initial draft of the constitution on December 28, 2021.<sup>34</sup> CSSU is currently presenting this draft to all ethnic armed organizations, political parties, and civil society organizations in the Shan State.

### ***Junta's Measures Against Anti-Junta Coalition Efforts***

The junta has taken measures to prevent EAOs from cooperating with the NUG. In April 2021, junta's Lieutenant Generals Yar Pyae and Aung Zaw Aye held talks with UWSA and SSPP, pressing them to maintain relations with the Tatmadaw.<sup>35</sup> In December 2021, Yar Pyae went to Mong La, a border town with China in Southern Shan controlled by the National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA), a strong EAO closely allied with UWSA, to meet with the Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee (FPNCC). It was reported that China helped organize this meeting.<sup>36</sup> The FPNCC is composed of AA, KIA, UWSA, MNDA, SSPP, and TNLA, the EAOs that dismissed the Tatmadaw-led peace process and battled against the Tatmadaw in the past decades. The junta Lieutenant General persuaded the alliance not to associate with NUG. Yar Pyae also approached Kachin religious leaders and community leaders in November 2021 in a bid to re-open channels of communication with KIO.<sup>37</sup> The junta has been neglecting AA exerting control over large parts of Rakhine State but has also appealed to the group. It had strived to keep historically military-affiliated Border Guard Forces (BGF) such as the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) and People's Militia (Pyithusit) forces loyal. Since the coup, the junta has established a quid

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<sup>32</sup> *The Irrawaddy*, "Rival Armed Groups Fight Over Territorial Dispute in Myanmar's Shan State," July 1, 2021, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/rival-armed-groups-fight-over-territorial-dispute-in-myanmars-shan-state.html>

<sup>33</sup> *The Irrawaddy*, "Ceasefire Signatories KNU and RCSS Condemn Myanmar Coup," February 2, 2021, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/ceasefire-signatories-knu-rcss-condemn-myanmar-coup.html>

<sup>34</sup> *Shan News*, "ဖက်ဒရယ်အခြေခံသည့် သျှမ်းပြည်ဖွဲ့စည်းပုံမူကြမ်းကို သျှမ်းပြည်တွင်းရှိ EAOs နှင့် ပါတီများ၊ CSO များ ထံသို့ CSSU ချပြမည် [CSSU Will Present the Draft of Shan State Federal Constitution to EAOs, Political Parties, and CSOs in Shan State]," January 3, 2022, <https://burmese.shannews.org/archives/26120>

<sup>35</sup> *The Irrawaddy*, "Myanmar Regime Shores Up Ties With Two Powerful Northern Ethnic Armies," 10 April 2021, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-regime-shores-ties-two-powerful-northern-ethnic-armies.html>

<sup>36</sup> *The Irrawaddy*, "China Facilitates Myanmar Junta and Ethnic Armies' Talks," December 16, 2021, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/china-facilitates-myanmar-junta-and-ethnic-armies-talks.html>

<sup>37</sup> *Eleven Myanmar*, "Peace Coordination Committee and PCG, Kachin religious leaders meet in Nay Pyi Taw to discuss resettlement of refugees," November 2, 2021, <https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/peace-coordination-committee-and-pcg-kachin-religious-leaders-meet-in-nay-pyi-taw-to-discuss>

pro quo with Karen Border Guard Force; by allowing them to carry on with the construction of the controversial Shwe Kokko Economic Zone and reopen its border trade and casinos, in return for assistance and support in fighting against the KNU/KNLA.<sup>38</sup>

The coup abruptly ended the peace talks.<sup>39</sup> Negotiations with the junta by EAOs or by the NUG seem unlikely at this time. The junta to this day insists that the peace process remains active. In September 2021, the junta announced a unilateral, five-month ceasefire from October 1 to the end of February 2022.<sup>40</sup> EAOs, NUG, and experts saw this as an attempt by the Tatmadaw to help itself from facing multiple adversaries. The ceasefire did not include the PDF forces and had no practical effect. Civilian armed resistance in both urban and rural areas is ongoing to this day.

## Conclusion

The junta assured that its hold on state power is temporary. It has promised elections in 2023 but has been exploring ways to secure its hold on power even if elections were held.<sup>41</sup> On August 1, 2021, the military regime formed a caretaker government and junta chief Min Aung Hlaing appointed himself the prime minister. The junta has declared that the state of emergency under which it staged the coup will last until the planned elections in August 2023. In October 2021, representatives from a handful of political parties (excluding major parties such as the NLD, SNLD, ANP, and People's Party) met with the junta representatives in Nay Pyi Taw. In the meeting, the junta presented a proportional representation (PR) system that it wishes to use in 2023.<sup>42</sup> The junta is presenting the PR system as a system that will prevent a single political party from gaining landslide victory, as the NLD did, and allowing ethnic minority parties to win more seats.<sup>43</sup> The Tatmadaw is unwilling to step back from politics. Even if the elections were to happen, the Tatmadaw will continue to dominate the political landscape under the 2008 constitution. Despite overwhelming resistance from political parties, the newly formed Union Election Commission (UEC) declared the results of the 2020 Elections void. UEC has also been advocating for the PR system on behalf of the junta to the anti-resistance political parties.

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<sup>38</sup> *Frontier Myanmar*, "With conflict escalating, Karen BGF gets back to business," May 13, 2021, <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/with-conflict-escalating-karen-bgf-gets-back-to-business/>

<sup>39</sup> *Radio Free Asia*, "Myanmar Ethnic Armies Wary After Peace Talks Body Scrapped By Junta," February 10, 2021, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/nrpc-scrapped-02102021185150.html>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/cease-fire-09282021184553.html>

<sup>41</sup> *Radio Free Asia*, "Myanmar Junta Calls 'Goodwill' Cease-fire With Ethnic Armed Groups, Omits Anti-Coup Militias," September 28, 2021 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/01/myanmars-military-ruler-promises-multi-party-elections>

<sup>42</sup> *The Irrawaddy*, "PR စနစ်ကို အနိုင်ရ နိုင်ငံရေးပါတီများ ထပ်ကန့်ကွက် [Winning Parties of 2020 Elections Reject PR System]," November 9, 2021, <https://burma.irrawaddy.com/news/2021/11/09/247382.html>

<sup>43</sup> *Radio Free Asia*, "PR စနစ်နဲ့ အကောင်အထည်ဖော်မယ့် စစ်ခေါင်းဆောင်ရဲ့ သမ္မတ ရည်မှန်းချက် [Junta Leader's Presidential Aspirations Realized by PR System]," January 12, 2022, [https://www.rfa.org/burmese/program\\_2/min-aung-hlaing-intend-president-with-pr-system-01112022234253.html](https://www.rfa.org/burmese/program_2/min-aung-hlaing-intend-president-with-pr-system-01112022234253.html)