

1. Why did the military coup in Myanmar occur?

The Myanmar Military wants to maintain their dominance and power in the country as can be seen by the way the constitution was developed to give them 25% of seats in parliament by default. With a second landslide election win by the National League for Democracy (NLD) in November 2020, and talks of changing the constitution, their dominance and rule over the country was under threat. They did not like the idea that the military will need to report to and follow the directions of an elected civilian government.

The Military wants to continue to enrich themselves. They felt that with advancements in communication technologies, the younger generation are more aware about freedom and democracy. They felt threatened.

2. How long is military rule in Myanmar likely to last?

It will likely last a long time. The Military will continue to hold a firm grip on the money, power and dominance they already have. Myanmar has been under military rule since 1962 in one form or another.

Even after the current elected party won a landslide in previous elections, they still hold 25% of seats in each of both chambers of parliament. No significant laws can be passed without their approval. Myanmar has never achieved true democracy.

Even in recent years where there were some progress towards democratic reform, the Myanmar Military held power over key areas like defence and foreign affairs. The country continued to be run by the Military cloaked under 'democratic transition'.

3. What have been the regional reactions to the coup in Myanmar?

The ASEAN has not formally recognised the military as a legitimate government. South Korea and Japan have strongly condemned the coup.

4. What are the implications for Australians in Myanmar?

They have arrested Sean Turnell and detained 2 other Australians (and now released). With the global pandemic of COVID-19 and the ongoing injustices in Myanmar, it is unsafe for not only Australians, but for everyone within the country (citizen and non-citizen).

5. What are the implications for Australians doing business in Myanmar?

The military has shown that it has no respect for local or international laws. They can siege the business for any reason. The law is in their hands and they will change, abolish or create any new law in a knee-jerk fashion without following any due process or motion. Even if businesses are legally operating in Myanmar, following all the rules, doing the right thing, what's legal and permissible could change overnight. Business owners/operators may find themselves in trouble, their assets confiscated, arrested and even sent to prison having breached some rule or law they never knew existed. Furthermore, even if the business was legally operating in Myanmar, they will indirectly be funding human rights abuses perpetrated by the Military through taxes, dividends and payment of licences/fees.

6. What is the impact on bilateral cooperation, such as military, human rights and international development support?

Australia has previously run programs in Myanmar to educate the police and military on human rights and development support. Recent actions by the Military are clear evidence that these trainings fell on deaf ears as the behaviour of the Military personnel has not changed. They have completely ignored what they've 'learned' in these trainings and continue to blindly follow orders from the military top brass.

7. What can or should Australia do to support the return to stability and democracy?

Australia should:

- recognise the elected party from the November 2020 election as the legitimate government of Myanmar.
- impose targeted sanction as well as freeze assets of members of the military junta and their relatives in Australia.
- encourage Australian companies and businesses to suspend their operations in Myanmar.
- extend visas for Myanmar citizens including university students (and those under scholarship arrangements) currently in Australia for their safety
- provide financial assistance to Myanmar students in Australia who are facing difficulties in Australia