



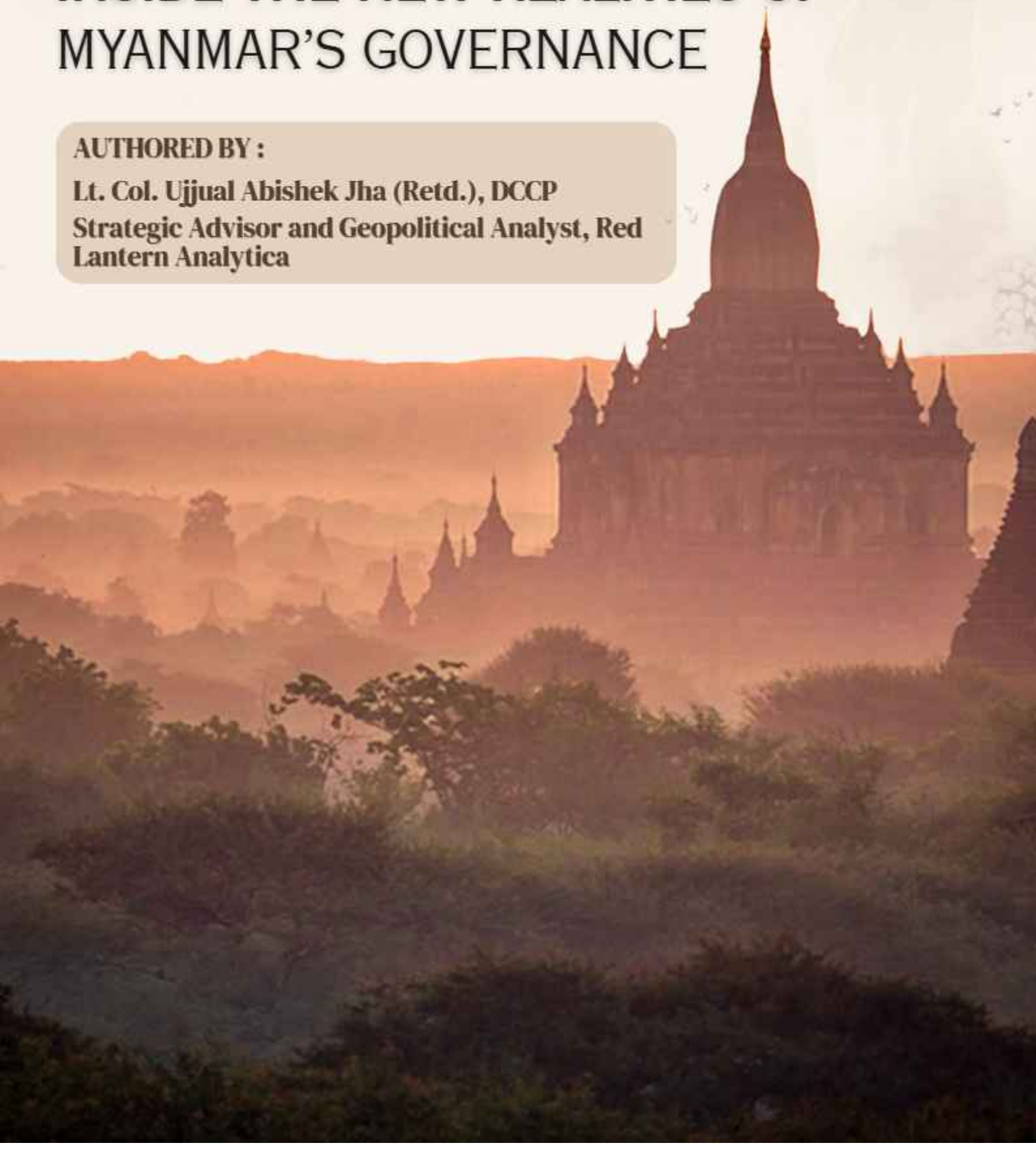
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# THE NEIGHBOUR IN THE SHADOWS: INSIDE THE NEW REALITIES OF MYANMAR'S GOVERNANCE

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On 10 April 2026, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing was sworn in as the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and stated in the parliament of Myanmar's return to the path of democracy and moving towards better future. His party, Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), won 339 of 586 parliamentary seats, although only 44% voting was done in the election (21 constituencies in 56 townships were excluded and National League for Democracy (NLD) was barred from contesting).

The new Myanmar government, formed on 10-11 April 2026, presented the formal framework of a civilian government while preserving military control. The military control is highlighted through four instruments, firstly, the President himself is the former Commander-in-Chief (stepped down on 01 April 2026), secondly, the military reservation of 25% of seats in the parliament (the 2008 constitution of Myanmar) gives Tatmadaw (military) legislative power over constitutional amendments (requires more than 75% of approval), thirdly, key positions in the new government are occupied by the loyalists of Min Aung Hlaing and most importantly, the new National Defence and Security Council (NDSC) and newly authorised Union Consultative Council (a body established February 2026 with the power to advise and coordinate on national security, international relations, peace processes and legislation), provides institutional mechanisms for Tatmadaw to involve in state policy without formal executive office.



## International Response on New Myanmar Government

The international response to the new government under the president Min Aung Hlaing is mixed and divided. A tabulated 's' election' has been sharply divided, providing a real-time test of which states are willing to confer legitimacy on the new administration:

| Country                                                | Response                                                                                                                                  | Implication                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <a href="#">India</a>                                  | Min Aung Hlaing first official visit, referred as president, effectively recognition                                                      | Significant legitimacy boost for Myanmar government                      |
| <a href="#">Russia</a>                                 | Putin congratulated on general election and presidential appointment                                                                      | Complete political and continued material support                        |
| China                                                  | Foreign Minister Wang Yi <a href="#">met</a> Min Aung Hlaing in Naypyidaw April 2026 & <a href="#">visit of President to China</a>        | Most substantial external patron, calibrated support                     |
| <a href="#">Thailand</a>                               | PM Anutin Charnvirakul first ASEAN leader to congratulate                                                                                 | Indicates weaning away from collective non-recognition position of ASEAN |
| <a href="#">Kazakhstan</a> , <a href="#">Nicaragua</a> | Formal congratulatory messages                                                                                                            | Marginal, aligned states                                                 |
| United States                                          | State Department made no comment                                                                                                          | Continued non-recognition but no fresh sanctions                         |
| Japan                                                  | No statement                                                                                                                              | Avoiding explicit position                                               |
| EU, Canada, Australia                                  | Continued non-recognition; sanctions maintained political support for NUG                                                                 | Formal isolationist position sustained                                   |
| <a href="#">Malaysia</a>                               | Formally not recognised new government in Myanmar, but kept communication channels open, visit of foreign minister in May 2026 to Myanmar | Avoiding any diplomatic vacuum, marginal diplomatic gain for Myanmar     |



## Stakeholders in Myanmar (Internal & External)

**The New Government** - The Myanmar government, under president Min Aung Hlaing, is holding the formal centre of power, including major cities (Naypyidaw, Mandalay, Yangon) and the Bamar heartland. Tatmadaw has superior air power, access to state revenue and continued supply including arms, from China and Russia. The enforcement of the conscription law is an attempt to overcome shortage of manpower. However, losses in Rakhine and Kachin States, despite sustained efforts, demonstrates the limits of Tatmadaw combat capability against well-organised and equipped groups.

**Steering Council for the Emergence of a Federal Democratic Union (SCEF)** – On 30 March 2026, another anti-junta (Myanmar military led government) alliance was formed, SCEF. The SCEF alliance members are National Unity Government (NUG), the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) and four Ethnic Armed Groups (EAGs) namely Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), Karen National Union (KNU), Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and Chin National Front (CNF). SCEF provides a unified platform for planning and coordinating anti-junta operations.

However, Arakan Army (AA), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) and Spring Revolutionary Alliance (SRA) are prominent and critical stakeholders who have not joined SCEF, thereby efficacy of SCEF remains to be seen.





**United League of Arakan (ULA)/ Arakan Army (AA)** – AA has emerged as one of the stronger Ethnic Armed Organisation (EAO), post 2021 military transfer of power. It controls majority territory of Rakhine state and reportedly carries out its own local governance. However, it has not joined any anti-junta alliance (Bamar ethnic linkages), including recently formed SCEF. Notably, AA controls the territory through which Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project of India passes through.

**China** – It continues to remain the most significant external stakeholder. Chinese relationship with Myanmar is pragmatically transactional rather than ideological. Through its Dual Policy, China continues to leverage on both Junta (brokering of ceasefire and helping Junta to re-establish in Northern Shan) and EAGs (through supply chains of food, fuel and pharmaceuticals), to gain outcomes aligned to its own priorities as frontier stability, restoration of overland trade and continued access to natural resources, particularly rare earths.

**Russia** - Post the military transfer of power in 2021, Russia emerged as one of the most dependable partners for the Junta. Further, Russian diplomatic circles assess the Tatmadaw as a long-standing and reliable partner in Southeast Asia. Beyond defence cooperation, the relationship between the two has expanded to nuclear and energy sectors, which reflects Russian designs to build a strategic partnership, sidelining the West. The congratulatory messages (February and April 2026) by president Putin indicate continued alignment.





# New Government - Internal Measures

**Structural Alignment** – The newly formed government has retained many individuals from the previous State Administration Council (SAC) and positioned Min Aung Hlaing loyalist for key appointments, thereby, ensuring continuity under the changed institutional tags. Conception of the Union Consultative Council in February 2026, as a body to advise and coordinate on national security, international relations, peace processes and legislation, without affecting executive or judicial powers, provides continued military influence irrespective of being formal office bearer.

**Security Measures** – Tatmadaw has improved drone capability and logistics, partially attributable to enhanced Chinese support since 2025. Sustained, airstrikes and artillery attacks on anti-junta held areas including strikes on healthcare facilities and health workers. These actions have isolated and terrorised civilian populations and denied resistance forces local support. In addition, Tatmadaw has enforced conscription to address manpower shortages, although this has led to degrade the fighting capability.

**Internal Confidence Building Measures** – Post formation of government, as internal confidence-building measures, the government has invited all armed resistance groups and EAGs to engage in a fresh round of peace negotiations, announced the pardon and release of 4,000 prisoners including several political figures, economic recovery plan that seeks to restore stability and provide immediate relief to those most affected by the conflict and emphasis on “National Solidarity” reflects an attempt to move towards a federal system, respecting the rights and identities of various ethnic groups in Myanmar.





# New Government - External Measures

**Diplomatic Consolidation and Legitimacy** – The first foreign trip of Min Aung Hlaing as president was to India (30 May - 3 June 2026), possibly a deliberate effort to extract maximum legitimacy from the visit. There is effort to re-integrate with ASEAN and virtual meeting between ASEAN and Tin Maung Swe, Foreign Minister of Myanmar with facilitation of Thailand, is partial success. Foreign Minister-level meeting with China in April 2026, preceding the India trip, demonstrates the calculated sequencing of external relationship management. In addition, the Myanmar government is pursuing to recover UN seat of Myanmar, presently occupied by the ambassador appointed under the previous, NLD- government.

**Economic Measures** – Myanmar continues to expand its engagement with China on the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, particularly the Kyaukphyu deep-sea port and associated infrastructure. In the Indian context, June 2026 meeting led to focus on operationalisation and expansion of the India-Myanmar Rupee-Kyat bilateral trade settlement (established May 2024) mechanism, with steady growth in the volume of transactions, thereby, allowing bilateral trade to partially bypass dollar-denominated international financial systems that sanctions complicate. Moreover, inclusion of senior Myanmar businessman in Min Aung Hlaing's delegation to India clearly signals intent to expand cooperation in trade and investment sectors.





**Security** – On 01 June 2026, Myanmar explicitly assured India that its territory will be permitted to be used against security interest of India, primarily highlighting Naga and Meitei insurgent groups camping in Myanmar. Military-to-military engagement for cooperation and joint exercises was an agenda of May 2026 meeting between Ye Win Oo, new Commander-in-Chief, Myanmar Defence Forces and Admiral Dinesh Tripathi, Chief of Naval Staff, India.

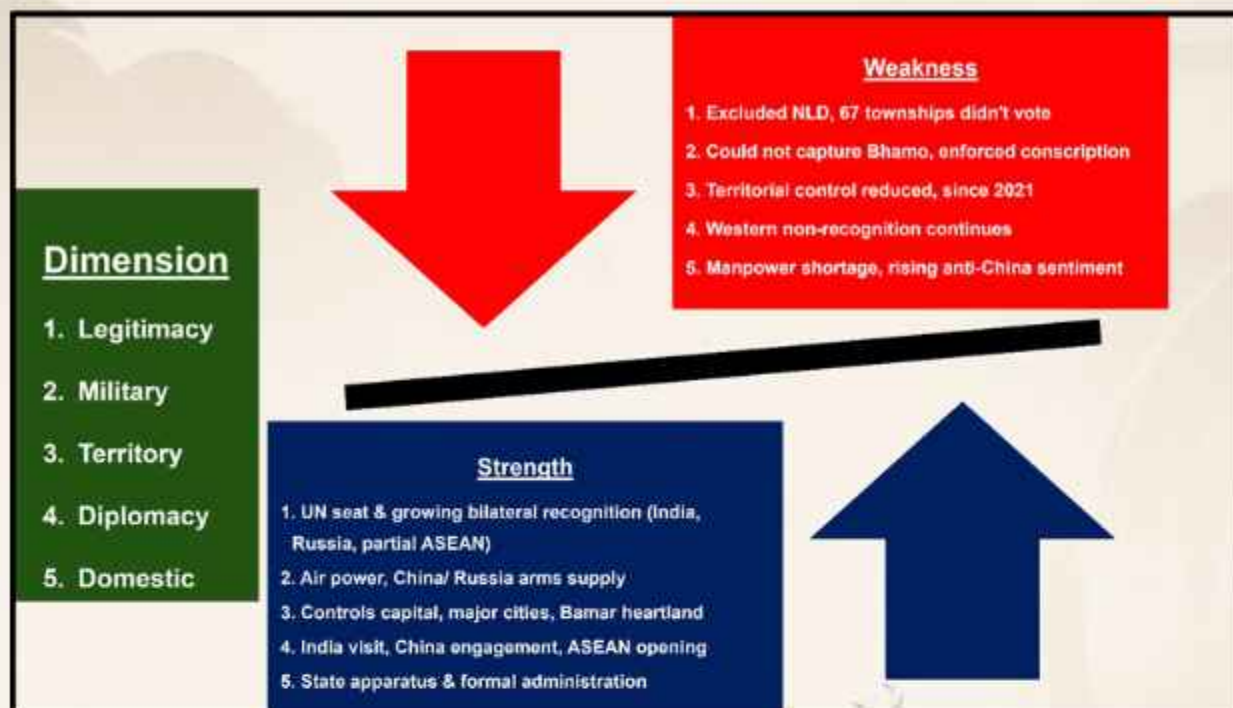


## Analysing Strengths and Weaknesses: New Government in Myanmar

A tabulated analysis on new Myanmar government on five aspects (Legitimacy, Military, Territory, Diplomacy and Domestic) is as given below: -

| Dimensions | Strength                                        | Weakness                                |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Legitimacy | UN seat & growing bilateral recognition         | Excluded NLD, 67 townships didn't vote  |
| Military   | Air power, China/ Russia arms supply            | Could not capture Bhamo, enforced       |
| Territory  | Controls capital, major cities, Bamar heartland | Territorial control reduced, since 2021 |
| Diplomacy  | India visit, China engagement, ASEAN            | Western non-recognition continues       |





## STRENGTH & WEAKNESS OF NEW GOVERNMENT IN MYANMAR

Myanmar has become a critical aspect into the larger Indo-Pacific strategic equation and has emerged as competitive ground for major powers. China continues to expand its footprint through the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC), leveraging its unique position to engage both the military government in and powerful Ethnic Armed Groups. For India, Myanmar sits at the confluence of its Neighbourhood First and Act East policies, while sharing a 1,643 km border with four sensitive North Eastern States. Although, continuous engagement with Naypyidaw is essential but the ground realities demand more nuanced and multi-layered approach.

The ongoing transition in Myanmar is fundamentally reorganising sovereign framework of the state. As the junta adjusts to a landscape where large landmass is under control of Ethnic Armed Group and pro-democracy forces, has led to dent in its sole leadership of the country. In the present scenario, stability in Myanmar cannot be achieved only through military consolidation or anti-junta gains but only through the efforts to establish **“Federal Democracy”**. To navigate this shadow, neighbours require to pivot from obstinate framework towards a dynamic and real-world politics that involve everyone.





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