

## Military Coup in Myanmar and Idea Of Security Sector Reform

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper will describe the need and obligation of a State to carry out Security Sector Reform on the concept of civil and military relations by taking the example of the military coup that is currently taking place in Myanmar in 2021. It aims to obtain an overview of the efforts made by military groups in Myanmar that carried out the coup. Against civilian government, which is not the first time this has happened in Myanmar. Using Huntington's approach to Civilian Control, military professionalism can be formed if civilian supremacy has been built. Edmunds' presentation on Security Sector Reform can run if democratization has been implemented in a country. Public resistance to the Min Aung Hlain Military Junta government is a form of support for the idea of democratization promoted by the NLD in Myanmar.*

**Keywords:** Myanmar Military Coup, Security Sector Reform, Democratization

### Background

The November 2020 general election resulted in Myanmar forcing General Min Aung Hlaing's Myanmar military to take over the government. The military arrested State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, President Win Mynt, and several Partai Liga Nasional Untuk Demokrasi (NLD) figures. Myanmar, which recently began a transition to democracy, was again controlled by the military on February 1, 2021. The military coup prompted massive protests accompanied by strikes in various parts of Myanmar. Various elements of Myanmar society protested against the coup and scattered with the demonstration movement fell victims experienced by the people of Myanmar for rejecting military rule. The demonstrations by the community called for the military to release the president and critical figures held by Min Aung Hlaing.

Myanmar's community demonstration movement became *chaos* resulting in many victims losing their lives. According to sources reporting on the demonstrations, the military is considered to be acting inhumanely, the atrocities were captured in images and videos uploaded by Myanmar people through various social media. With hashtags #savemyanmar, #justiceformyanmar, #saveburma, #prayforMyanmar, and others. The people of Myanmar are trying to call for justice, peace, and help like other countries to help Myanmar (Paramita, 2021).

The democratization movement in Myanmar has been going on for quite some time, the rejection of the Tatmadaw military regime that often thwarts the results of elections won by the NLD has repeatedly occurred in Myanmar. The results of elections held in Myanmar in November 2020 are constitutionally valid by Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD party. The NLD won 396 of the 476 seats, and the military-backed opposition Partai Solidaritas dan Pembangunan (USDP) gained 33 seats. A certainty thanks to the constitution established in 2008, the military position in parliament still has a ratio of 25%, so military control will remain in Myanmar's government losing or winning elections. Not only is the seat of parliament locked by the Tatmadaw's constitution, but it includes strategic positions in the government such as national security, including ministries of internal affairs, borders, and defense (APNews, 2021)

The military government led by General Min Aung Hlaing and Suu Kyi as head of government is considered to have good relations before the 2020 elections. Suu Kyi has appeared in public to defend the Myanmar military accused of the massacre of Rohingya in Myanmar as a representative of Myanmar. The February 1, 2021 coup showed the opposite. This then becomes a question, what prompted the military to stage the coup this time, and how should the steps taken by the civilian government in building security sector reforms in Myanmar.

### **Literature Review**

National defense is a *concern* for developing countries in the face of the living conditions of nations with many potential threats, both in terms of military, political, social, cultural, ideological, and economic, especially in the time or post-cold war. Post-cold war, the belief in the change of conventional war to non-conventional war prompted the State to consider non-military aspects as an issue that could endanger the Country's security (Witarti & Armandha, 2015).

Civil defense is a program integrated into national security (Muradi, Civil Defence and National Security: Composition and Implementation Model in National Denfece, 2017). The concept of civil defense was born during the Cold War (1948-1989) as a precautionary measure against airstrikes, with the development of plans to relocate large civilian populations in the event of a nuclear attack threat (Alexander, 2002). Post-cold war civil defense developed based on the belief that the possibility of open and conventional war did not occur in the future (Muradi, Civil Defence and National Security: Composition and Implementation Model in National Denfece, 2017). Ultimately civil defense is present as an effort to strengthen the public response to non-military threats and tends to be part of public participation in protecting and managing their territory to avoid non-military threats (Muradi, Civil Defence and National Security: Composition and Implementation Model in National Denfece, 2017, hal. 13-14).

The concept of civil defense can occur if a country has undertaken more specific security sector reforms related to establishing various appropriate structures for civilian control. As explained by Timothy Edmunds (2001), demanding the strength of other vital elements, there are:

1. The process of civilization of various security sector bureaucracies, and
2. De-politicization of the security sector. Civilians are part of a "larger security family" whose role is essential for developing democratic security forces and the Security Sector Reform process.

This article seeks to link the issue of military force in Myanmar (as a security threat) to the importance of RSK in Myanmar. The presentation will be divided into sections. The first part will illustrate the importance of promoting democracy in the fight against militarism. The following section will explain the impact of militarism on security sector reform as part of democratization. In the last section, this paper will discuss various lessons that the public can learn in studying the military coup in Myanmar.

## **Method**

To answer the problem formulation in this study, researchers use qualitative research approaches with case study methods. The study used secondary data sources. Data obtained through the results of literature studies, apnews online newspaper reports with the topic Myanmar charges Suu Kyi, giving legal basis to detain her Describing the updated conditions of the coup in Myanmar, then data can also be from Devi K. S. journal Myanmar under the Military Rule 1962-1988 describing the condition of the military in Myanmar since 1962 as well as other manuscripts discussing the topic of military coups in Myanmar collected as a source of data and information on this study.

The data obtained from these sources is then analyzed with the security sector reform approach, several security sector reform approaches that have been successfully carried out in several countries such as the Yuda research, D. P. (2010) on the reform of the security sector of the SBY Government 2004-2009, in addition to the Huntington security reform approach, S. P. (1996) on reforming civil-military relations and Edmunds, (2001) about Security Sector Reform: Concept and Implementation. Report for Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces This research is used as a basis for security sector reform. The need for security sector reform of the conditions that occur in Myanmar over the data that has been obtained is also matched by Muradi's research (2017) about Civil Defence and National Security: Composition and Implementation Model in National Defence so that research on the needs of Security Sector Reform in Myanmar with the phenomenon of coups carried out by the military against the government can be described objectively.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **Myanmar's Civilian Control**

*This definition of SSR contains two key normative elements. The first of these is the importance of democratization and civilian control in any process of SSR. The second is the importance of developing effectiveness and efficiency in SSR. While related, these two pillars of SSR can have their particular demands, rewards, and problems (Edmunds, 2001)*

The process of enforcing civilian supremacy in the concept of Civilian Control means separating the role of the military from the political activities of statehood to focus on the security and defense areas. This will not be easy because there are aspects of history attached to the institution of militarism. In the example in Indonesia, the establishment of Professional Civil and Military Relations is going quite slowly because the Indonesian military was formed to have a role in the liberation of Indonesia from colonialism so that it has services in Indonesia's economic and political development (Kardi, 2014). In the New Order period with a different model of supremacy, the enactment of the doctrine of Dual Function (Dwifungsi) ABRI has made military power completely dominate aspects of Indonesian society's life so that it takes a long time to separate military duties and functions from the political affairs of State.

Military coups against civilian-led democratic governments in Myanmar have occurred several times. In the history of democracy in Myanmar, the military has a long record in political dynamics. The military has ruled Myanmar's government for decades, and the democratization movement grew following the military's development. The 1962 coup against the military's semi-democratic government in Myanmar was vital to military rule in Myanmar.

**Figure 1.**  
**Graphic Details of Military Coups History in Myanmar**



Sources: Tirto.id

The Tatmadaw military has been formed since Burma gained independence from British colonial rule. The Tatmadaw played an essential role in 1948 (Herindrasti, 2012). In addition, the military has a long history of involvement in government in Burma. 1962-1974 was a period of direct military rule under the Revolutionary Council (RC). In 1962 General Ne Win staged a military coup, overthrew the civilian government, and was arrested. After the coup, the military formed a Revolutionary Council (RC) entirely of military officials loyal to him. The coup in 1962 marked the end of constitutional democracy and the immediate start of military rule in Myanmar. After the coup d'état in 1962, General Ne Win under the Revolutionary Council (RC) imposed the order, and the university was one of the first targets. Ne Win quickly rescinded U Nu's statement on Buddhism as a country religion.

Organizations with democratic backgrounds were dissolved, and power was centralized in the Revolutionary Council under the leadership of General Ne Win, which consisted of elements of senior officers led by General Ne won. The military replaced civilian leadership with members of its organization. The constitution was suspended and became invalid in areas where the Revolutionary Council issued decrees and orders promulgated in the form of a constitution, Myanmar remains a federal state, but in practice, the military junta treats the Country as a unitary state (Devi, 2014)

The next momentum became a setback for democracy in Myanmar when the constitutional dictatorship began in March 1974, marked by the dissolution of the Revolutionary Council that ruled Burma directly since 1962. Ne Win introduced a new constitution called the "new basic law." The first national elections were held in 1974, the junta

government gave a promise to give power to the government that won the election and thus transfer power to the newly elected government.

The enforcement of *Civilian Control* became a hope for establishing a democratic path because the NLD won the election. The transfer of power only from General Ne Win to U Ne Win was to himself. The military continued to rule the Country legally and thus concentrated all power under his party. Two national elections have also been held since 1978 and 1981. This period showed civil society unrest so that it staged large demonstrations and took an estimated 3000 to 10,000 lives (Meixler, 2018)

Myanmar's junta government has come under pressure both domestically and internationally. In 1990, the election was won by the NLD. With the NLD's victory, the military rejected the result and took steps to take Suu Kyi into custody. By being placed under house arrest by the military, the government could be reined in by the Tatmadaw to represent Myanmar's military. The Military Government at that time drafted the composition of parliament from the local and national levels for officials with military backgrounds by 25%. Re-election was held in 2011 and won by the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) based on the constitution created by the Tatmadaw.

During the USDP's reign in 2011-2016, the NLD was unable to make much change to civilian and military relations in Myanmar. Although in 2015 elections were won by the NLD, Suu Kyi was later unable to become President in Myanmar automatically. General Min Aung Hlaing's power is still very dominant and influential in civilian political affairs in Myanmar, with a limit of 25% in parliament based on the constitution drafted by the Myanmar Military. Suu Kyi was only made the State Counsellor of a position of head of government created by then-President Htin Kyaw.

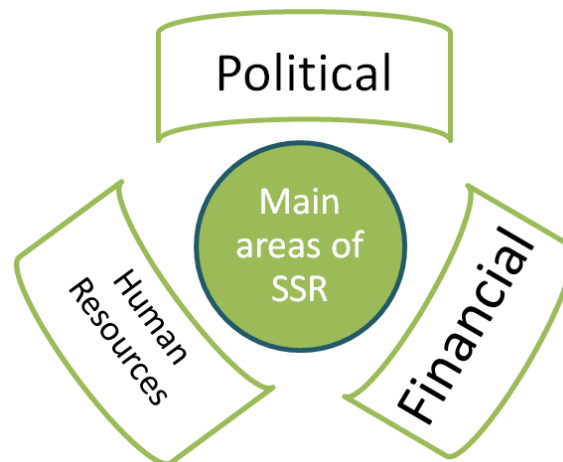
### **The Idea of Security Sector Reform**

A country with a state of government dominated by military groups tends to be an authoritarian state. Myanmar has become very authoritarian since the military took control of the government there. The journey of democracy in Myanmar will result in many tasks in the future in the direction of democracy. Min Aung Hlaing's military junta rule has taken a heavy toll on humans. Military shelling will automatically leave a horrible history for military unity in Myanmar. In Indonesia (Dwipayana, 1989), Soeharto, in building a militaristic regime, carried out shootings, kidnappings, and closed-door operations to create *shock therapy*. This is expected to create control over people who oppose military rule. In civil society, the idea of Security Sector Reform is not so well understood at the community level. This idea is usually only understood by the middle class who struggle in the academic world and by activists in the city. It can be seen with anti-military slogans, not anti-militarism or anti-militaristic, while the State always needs the military. At first, the perpetrators of security sector reform are very difficult to gain the trust of many actors of the popular movement because it is considered to have become part of the military itself.

In Myanmar, accountability for the dark historical record created by min Aung Hlaing's military government in the future is not just handing over or releasing the government to civilian rule. However, the Myanmar government also needs to reform the security sector to improve military professionalism in Myanmar. Improving civilian and military relations is a crucial step to take. More than two months have passed since the military coup in Myanmar. As of this week, according to a report by Amnesty International, 714 people have been killed by Myanmar's (Tatmadaw) military, 3,504 have been detained or convicted, and 717 have received arrest warrants (Amnesty, 2021)

Security sector reform has so many concepts, every Country that has experienced a regime of militarism reforms the security sector with a concept and approach according to the material conditions that develop in each Country. However, the concept of security sector reform can be seen broadly, creating a separation of power to improve military professionalism. In Indonesia, after the collapse of military power in the political affairs of civilian government, the government then carried out the separation of powers written by the government (Huntington, Prajurit dan Negara; Teori dan Politik Hubungan Militer-Sipil, 2003) the civilian government de-politicized the military for the creation of *Civilian Control*.

**Figure 2**  
**Pattern of Security Sector Reform**



Source: Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

Reforming the security sector said by Edmund (2001), two things must be done, first, related to the granting of authority by the State to military formations aimed at protecting the State itself and its citizens. This concept starts from clarifying the status of security institutions formally authorized by the government to create security. Only then was the second reform carried out in the broader institutions, not only security agencies but in private security guard institutions to the judiciary.

*Two approaches define the scope of the definitional debate. The first is concerned with those militarised formations authorized by the State to utilize force to protect the State*

*itself and its citizens. This definition limits SSR to armed organizations such as the regular military, paramilitary police forces, and intelligence services. The second approach takes a broader view of SSR, defining it as those organizations and activities concerned with the provision of security (broadly defined), and including organizations and institutions ranging from, for example, private security guards to the judiciary. (Edmunds, 2001).*

The ongoing military coup in Myanmar is a severe challenge to democracy to create rsk in Myanmar. Edmunds (2001) said that SRK could run when democratization in a country is already running only then can talk effectiveness and efficiency in SRK. In this case, what Edmunds interprets about democratization is that civil supremacy in the government of the State in Myanmar is a beginning to start the SRK.

Edmunds (2001) There are at least six variables that could be the reason for the State to create a Security Sector Reform. This variable can be an idea and evaluation of the development of professional military, civil relations in Myanmar.

*First*, democratization, security institutions, and actors can be the main obstacles to creating democratization. Security sector actors can be influential in domestic politics, with state coercion monopolies (or at least dominance) (Huntington, Reforming civil-military relations, 1996). If, as happens in Myanmar, every military coup occurs, the Tatmadaw leader always promises a democratic government but only becomes jargon to attract public sympathy and never be kept. Military Tatmadaw actors also fill government positions in every election or post-election military coup (Devi, 2014).

As long as security sector actors are politicized, they will act partisanally or pretorianly concerning domestic politics. Even if the security sector actors themselves do not have pretorian tendencies, they can be subjected to efforts by partisan factions in the civil sector to draw them into politics and disrupt the democratic process. Thus, effective and democratic civilian control over the security sector is crucial for any democratization process (Edmunds, 2001). Democratic organizations once dissolved by the military junta in Myanmar need to be revived to create civilian supremacy and *balance* military rule.

*Second*, is Good Governance refers to the mechanisms and regulations of public policy. Good governance provides an effective and efficient regulation in the public interest. The primary public interest is security. Security guaranteed by the government allows people to live their lives and carry out normal economic activities without fear of conflict violence. Therefore, the security sector can be a force that allows for good governance and, at the same time, becomes a significant barrier in its journey. Thus, an effective security sector is vital in dealing with corruption or organized crime (Edmunds, 2001).

In this concept, the Myanmar government is expected to provide security guarantees to the community. In the history of the conflict in Myanmar, economic growth has always been a lump on the issue of conflict that leads to violence that often occurs in Myanmar. The



security conflict in Myanmar is carried out by security actors, namely the Myanmar military itself. For example, in the case of the Rohingya in Rhakine, the killing of the ethnic group was carried out by the Myanmar military. The conflict has continued for the past ten years and culminated in 2017, marked by attacks and expulsions against the Rohingya (Haryanto, 2021). In this case, the Government of Myanmar cannot provide security guarantees to access the lives of its people.

The government can also change the concept of defense instead of war, namely anticipating threats from non-military that will develop in the security system of a country, the concept is described by Muradi (2017) as civil defense, where the government can provide security to the public from threats beyond the threat of war such as radicalism that develops in Myanmar against racism and ethnic issues that are often a threat to ethnic minorities in Myanmar with establishing an integrated civil defense with the government.

*Civil Defense focuses on response against disaster and non-military threats. The government considers the involvement of citizens in Civil Defense must be integrative and comprehensive in the form of total defense governed by several obligations in peacetime. However, related to the threat against the State, Civil Defense could be directed at strengthening support in the form of Reserve Component and incorporated within paramilitary commando whose management is bound at the Defense Ministry (Muradi, Civil Defence and National Security: Composition and Implementation Model in National Defence, 2017)*

*Third*, Economic growth, development, and economic activity can be hampered by instability and uncertainty, stemming from the government's failure to provide inadequate security. Among them is the behavior of corruption that can damage legitimate economic activities. Companies may be reluctant to invest or operate in states that provide guarantees for employees or legal protections for their benefit, such as through non-existent contract laws. Regarding good governance, the security sector can play a crucial role in addressing these issues through the provision of a safe environment conducive to effective development (Edmunds, 2001)

The Country's economic growth can be described in the performance of Myanmar's manufacturing sector, which suffered a decline caused by a military coup that caused economic activity to stall. Unsafe conditions forced the factories out of operation. Production activities, orders, purchases of raw materials, and stocks have decreased dramatically. Since February 1, 2021, a national emergency forced transportation to be hampered and complicated workers' activities. From a businessman's perspective, martial law caused bookings to drop as their clients shut down operations. The impact of employment is shrinking. About 70% of companies experienced a decrease in production because factory operations were hampered. Decreased production causes the company to be forced to make job cuts (Pemutusan Hubungan Kerja (PHK)) (Setiaji, 2021).

*Fourth*, professionalization, professionalization used in this context refers to security sector actors who can meet the demands of the Country's civil government effectively and efficiently. Professional armed forces, for example, have clearly defined roles and have the structure to fulfill these roles in the most appropriate way (Edmunds, 2001).

Huntington's concept of military professionalization is called *The Military Mind*, which became the basis for military and state relations. *The Core of the Military Mind* is a concept that contains recognition by military professionals of the supremacy of civilian rule. Huntington sees military intervention in politics as a sign of political death. For Huntington, who emphasized political development through political institutions, military intervention is most acceptable if it is a transition period to create solid political institutions (Huntington, Prajurit dan Negara; Teori dan Politik Hubungan Militer-Sipil, 2003). The concept of military professionalization needs to be applied to the Myanmar military, which often never wants to recognize the NLD group's victory in elections and political institutions that are continuously changed following the needs of Myanmar's military government.

*Fifth*, security sector reform is essential in the broader conflict prevention agenda, especially in areas where conflicts often lead to violence, such as Myanmar. Successful security sector reforms that create effective and efficient security within a democratic civilian control framework can create economic and political stability (Edmunds, 2001)

Security Sector reform can provide adequate facilities for managing conflicts and problems that can resolve instability and conflicts like Myanmar's prolonged ethnic and ethnic conflicts. Security Sector Reform can build the trust of the People of Myanmar because it can provide predictions professionally under democratic civilian control and, with a clearly defined role, can act as an essential benchmark.

*That every citizen is entitled and obliged to participate in the effort of State Defense and Security, and the role in State Defense and Security carried out through the Total Security System (Sistem Pertahanan Keamanan Semesta) by the military and police as the main component, the People as a Component Support.* (Muradi, Civil Defence and National Security: Composition and Implementation Model in National Defence, 2017).

In the prevention of conflicts such as those in Rhakine Myanmar, the threat can be managed by the community because the community also plays a role and has responsibility for the security of a country actively, by participating in the resolution of the conflict in Myanmar, it is also a point for the establishment of professional civil and military relations in addressing security issues.

*Sixth*, Integration and International Institutions, in this context, the coup in Myanmar has triggered a push directed towards ASEAN as an international association to play a more active role. As the Country that heads ASEAN, Brunei Darussalam asks Myanmar to immediately seek dialogue, reconciliation, and normalization as a path to be taken.

Referring to the ASEAN charter, Myanmar must uphold and abide by the principles of democracy, good governance and the rule of law, protection, and respect for human rights

and fundamental freedoms and reminds Myanmar to maintain political stability in ASEAN. ASEAN's response has so far been considered very weak, especially member states individually showing different attitudes. Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan called the coup an internal affair of Myanmar. Philippine Foreign Minister Teodoro Locsin Jr. considered the events in Myanmar as a form of protection carried out by the State to protect democracy. Cambodian leader Hun Sen also called it an internal affair and ignored it. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore expressed concern over the situation in Myanmar and called on all parties to carry out dialogue efforts (Roza, 2021)

## **Conclusion**

The NLD's victory in elections in Myanmar in 2020 is a hope for the democratization process in Myanmar. The democratization process that will take place in Myanmar will encourage the creation of military professionalism in the concept of Security Sector Reform. The characteristic of the start of the democratization process in an authoritarian state is that a transition of democratic government has entered the consolidation stage of actors and power elites to accept a democratic principle (Larry, 1999)

When the military regime is completed in Myanmar, there is expected to transition from an authoritarian regime to democracy. The productivity of the excellent security work sector and professionalism is crucial considering that in the history of the military regime in Myanmar, security actors are often misunderstood by the State to be a tool of state repression to the public to perpetuate its power. This has an impact on security actors being unprofessional in the public interest and showing partisan attitudes towards the ruler's interests. Security actors argued in the public interest, Min Aung Hlain staged a military coup against the election results won by the NLD based on the NLD Party's fraud in the election so that the military showed a state attitude to provide security. Thus, Security Sector Reform means changing from disfunctionalization of the security sector to functioning, or reducing the security deficit (lack of security) is as much as reducing the deficit of democracy (lack of supervision over security actors) (Yuda, 2010)

*Civilian control* formed in civilian and military relations in Myanmar is a good start for the enforcement of civilian supremacy in a democracy in Myanmar that has always been repressive by the Myanmar military. The military's enforcement of professionalism in Myanmar becomes a significant issue in the future if Myanmar wants security sector reform to make Myanmar more democratic on the political affairs of the State.

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