

Renegotiating Militarized Masculinity: How Alternative Masculinity Can Contribute to Reparation During and Post Conflict Myanmar

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Abstract

Since the 2021 coup, Myanmar's resistance movement, largely led by Generation Z, has been characterized by a unique paradox: a political commitment to federal democracy and gender equality alongside the rapid growth of armed resistance through the People's Defense Force (PDF). While the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) has institutionalized gender equality as a core revolutionary principle, the practicalities of armed struggle often reinforce "militarized masculinity", a social construct that prioritizes violence, dominance, and male-centered power. This research addresses a critical gap in peacebuilding literature by examining the social expectations and identities of young men within the PDF and explores how moving toward "positive masculinities" characterized by empathy, non-violence, and accountability can serve as a form of social reparation. The study examines how participation in the post-2021 PDF constructs militarized masculine identities among youth, and what these constructions mean for reparations processes. Employing a qualitative method, the study draws on semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of former combatants, activists, and peace education educators to analyze the social expectations and institutional narratives within the PDF. Drawing on theories of gender-transformative peacebuilding and "positive masculinities," the research argues that unless the social drivers of violence are deconstructed, there is a significant risk of entrenching new forms of patriarchy that will undermine long-term stability. By identifying the harms of militarized norms, this research provides a framework for institutionalizing gender-responsive practices that prevent the resurgence of patriarchal systems, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and sustainable peace in post-conflict Myanmar.