

PANEL

Experiences from the ground after 2026 Myanmar Elections

Convener

Alison

Panel Description

Myanmar's current reality is defined by the hardening of internal boundaries between the junta and various armed groups that the 2026 sham election has done nothing to resolve. As the military junta's control recedes, various ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) and other resistance groups have established parallel governance systems which provide public services like education, healthcare, and justice. The dispersal of authority is not a post-coup phenomenon but the culmination of more than seven decades of unresolved ethnic conflict. What the post-coup period has done is accelerate this shift. However, this has created significant governance challenges due to their governed territory being often in the center of ongoing armed conflicts. The multiplication of autonomous governing bodies also presents a challenge to the formation of a cohesive federal union. Despite rhetorical commitment to federalism, some EAOs maintain covert relationship channels with the military junta, raising questions about the sincerity of their federal aspirations.

Meanwhile, inter-ethnic conflicts and emerging warlordism threaten to fragment the civil war further. Territorial disputes between armed groups are often symptomatic of deeper competition over resource sharing, including access to border trade routes, taxation of goods, and natural resource extraction sites. A coherent natural resource governance policy among diverse resistance forces is urgently needed but remains under-explored. This challenge extends beyond ethnic borderlands into the central region, where the Bamar majority – long seen as outside the ethnic armed conflict – has risen forcefully against military oppression.

Into this landscape of fractured governance, inter-ethnic conflict, and resource competition step the geopolitical calculations of Myanmar's most powerful neighbor – China. Beijing pursues a dual strategy: it engages Myanmar's junta to protect Belt and Road investments while maintaining direct ties with border-based EAOs to secure its strategic and economic interests. By fostering Myanmar's fragmentation instead of trying to resolve it, China has positioned itself as an indispensable interlocutor between ethnic armed groups and the junta. Understanding China's political and governance approach –prioritizing stability, protecting economic interests, and expanding influence through flexible engagement with both state and non-state actors – is essential for comprehending how external powers navigate and, in some cases, deepen Myanmar's fragmentation through their engagement.

Therefore, it is crucial to examine how these intersecting dynamics of fractured governance, resource-driven conflict, and external involvement are redefining Myanmar's post-election reality, shedding light on a landscape where the prospects for political resolution remain deeply uncertain.

5th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
BURMA/MYANMAR STUDIES
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Henrich Boell Stiftung would like to conduct a roundtable discussion on the below topics:

1. Fragmented Governance and Civilian Protection in Post-Coup Myanmar: Comparative Insights from Shan and Karenni States
2. Resource Sharing and Governance after Politic Dimension Shift in Post-Election
3. External Relations of Myanmar from Post-Coup to Post-Election